

Will Coffee And Bagels Improve Our Worship?

“During our years of church planting, we tried to change people’s perceptions about what the Sunday worship would look like,” wrote Michelle Lazurek, in a recent Crosswalk.com article. “We took out pews and replaced them with pub tables and chairs, added lights and a stage and most importantly,” the award-winning author and preacher’s wife said, “(we) added a breakfast bar where people could grab bagels and other breakfast foods and coffee during the service.”

Lazurek admitted, “Not everyone loved these changes.” Some of the reasons she shared why they added breakfast to worship included “it brings us closer to each other” and, of course, “it brings us closer to God.” Also, she said, “it increases the church’s level of hospitality” and, “it creates opportunities for people to use their gifts for God.”

It’s amazing the ideas and innovations that church growth experts employ to prod people to attend church. Of course, the 1,000-word article failed to contain any scripture to justify the addition of a breakfast bar.

Disrespect and desecration of the worship service is nothing new. It was a problem that Paul addressed in his letter to the Corinthians. He said there were divisions among them. The factious spirit among believers had spilled over into their worship. He said their assembly was “not for the better but, for the worse” in 1 Corinthians 11:17.

One of the specific issues he mentioned was turning the Lord’s Supper into a common meal. He wrote, “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not” (1 Corinthians 11:21-22).

Following this, Paul restated the purpose of the Lord’s Supper. It is a time to remember Christ. To remember His broken body hanging on the cross as we eat the bread. To remember His shed blood as we drink the fruit of the vine. To remember the New Covenant He established. To remember who we are, why we serve Him, and what the service means to us personally and as a witness to the world. It “proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes again” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Here are a few thoughts that might help us improve our worship without adding a breakfast bar.

First, remember we come together in a special way to worship God. Sure, we can praise God and pray to Him anytime and anywhere. But the Bible teaches that we are “to come together as a church” (1 Corinthians 11:18). Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the Father is seeking true worshipers to worship Him (John 4:21-24). Several years

ago, a preaching colleague of mine, the late Bill Fiest, offered this warning and reminder regarding worship:

It is time for us to remember in the midst of a self-indulgent period of our nation that our primary purpose in gathering together is not to please ourselves; or because it is psychologically sound for us to do so; or that it supports the family structure; or that it partakes of traditional family values (though all of these things may be by-products of our gathering together).

Then Bill emphatically stated, “Our purpose in gathering together is to prostrate ourselves before the Almighty God of heaven and pay Him homage.”

Second, worship to God contains two important elements. Jesus said, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Worship must first be accurate, according to God’s word, which is truth (John 17:17). In reading the New Testament, I find the disciples assembled to take communion, hear the word of God, contribute into the common treasury, pray, and sing praises to God (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:15). Regardless of the term you use to describe these expressions of worship, it is apparent they are according to truth. Second, worship must be authentic. It must be genuine. Worship emanates from within, so it should be heartfelt, spirited, and enthusiastic. It is not a time of mere ritual, but fervent and sincere praise to our Creator.

Third, worship should edify other believers. Regarding the Sunday assembly, Paul wrote, “All things are to be done for the edifying of the body” (1 Corinthians 14:26). In worship, we exhort one another, motivate one another, and inspire one another. We “stimulate one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). Most of Christian living is done outside the assembly. Not everything is collective. Hospitality, for instance, is an individual command (1 Peter 4:9-10). The church can’t do it for me by offering a breakfast bar. My individual gifts are demonstrated most often in my daily interactions with fellow Christians, as well as non-Christians: being merciful, doing good, sharing my resources, offering encouragement, and ministering “to the least of these.”

Improved lighting, comfortable seats, and a hot cup of coffee may make us feel cozy, but will do little to stir our hearts, awaken our conscience, and challenge our thinking. The power to convince and convict sinners is in the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16), not bagels and coffee.

Adapted from Ken Weliever