

Simple Evangelism #10

**Worship**

By Bill Denton

**INTRODUCTION**

**A. Illustration – Worship Styles**

An old farmer went to the city one weekend and attended a big city church. He came home and his wife asked him how it was.

"Well," said the farmer, "it was good. They did some things differently though. They sang praise and worship choruses instead of hymns."

"Praise and worship choruses?" said his wife. "What are those?"

"Oh, they're okay. They're sort of like hymns, only different," said the farmer.

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his wife.

The farmer said, "Well, it's like this. If I were to say to you:

'Martha, the cows are in the corn'

well, that would be a hymn. If, on the other hand, I were to say to you:

Martha, Martha, Martha,

Oh, MARTHA, MARTHA, MARTHA,

the cows, the big cows,

the brown cows,

the black cows,

the white cows,

the black and white cows,

the COWS, COWS, COWS,

are in the corn,

are in the corn,

are in the corn,

are in the corn,

the CORN, CORN, CORN.'

"Then if I were to repeat the whole thing 4 or 5 times and include guitar and drum solos, well that would be a praise chorus."

As luck would have it, the exact same Sunday, a young, new Christian from the city church attended the small country church. He came home and his wife asked him how it was.

"Well," said the young man, "it was good. They did some things differently though. They sang hymns instead of regular songs.."

"Hymns?" said the wife. "What are those?"

"Oh, they're okay. They're sort of like regular songs, only different." said the young man.

"Well, what's the difference?" asked his wife.

The young man said, "Well, it's like this. If I were to say to you:

'Martha, the cows are in the corn.'

well, that would be a regular song. If on the other hand, I were to say to you:

'Oh Martha, Dear Martha, hear thou my cry.  
Inclined thine ear to the words of my mouth.  
Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear by and by  
to the righteous, inimitable, glorious truth.  
For the way of the animals - who can explain?  
There in their heads is no shadow of sense,  
hearkenst they in God's sun or his rain  
unless from the mild, tempting corn they are fenced.  
Yea those cows in glad bovine, rebellious delight  
have broken free their shackles, their warm pens eschewed.  
Then goaded by minions of darkness and night,  
they all my mild sweet corn have chewed.  
So look to that bright shining day by and by.  
Where all foul corruptions of earth are reborn,  
where no vicious animal makes my soul cry  
and I no longer see those foul cows in the corn.  
"Then, if I were to do only verses one, three, and four, well, that would be a hymn."

B. That's a funny story, but it illustrates one of the points of struggle in today's effort to reach the lost

1. We seldom think about how the worship of the church affects our ability to reach people who aren't Christians
  - a. frankly, we've become so soaked in tradition, we don't even know what the problem is
  - b. it's easier to point to the practices of others and criticize them, find fault with them, and create fear that anything different than the way we do it is going to send us straight to hell
2. In the midst of all our infighting over worship styles, the lost are truly lost because they can't figure out what we're fighting about

C. We need to know that what happens in our assemblies, the worship that we engage in, goes a long way toward winning people to Jesus

1. We need to develop a concern for how outsiders perceive what we do in worship
2. We need to be aware that what we do, does have an affect on those who are not Christians
3. Tonight I want to explore this idea and encourage you to think about the fact that worship can either simplify or complicate evangelism

## **I. CORINTH SHOWS THE POTENTIAL FOR MISUNDERSTANDING BY OUTSIDERS**

### **A. 1 Cor 14:1-33 (Read)**

1. This is not the lesson for an in-depth examination of the text
2. A few things, however, are very clear
  - a. prophecy was preferred over speaking in tongues because prophecy could be understood by everyone
  - b. 14:23 expresses a specific concern over unbelievers who may attend the assembly of the church – a concern that they might misunderstand what was happening
  - c. though at the time he wrote, speaking in tongues was legitimate, Paul knew that it was still best that even outsiders be able to clearly understand the worship of the church

### **B. I don't know that we still have that same concern**

1. It seems that we tend to think that any outsiders who attend should be the ones who adapt themselves to whatever we do
2. Christians sometimes seem determined to do what we are accustomed to doing, because we're familiar with it, and we like it – anything else will bother us, and we surely don't want to be bothered

### **C. But Paul didn't mind bothering the Corinthians**

1. He wanted them to acknowledge that what they did was important, not only to their own worship, but to how they came across to others
2. We need to recognize the same thing

## **II. WHAT ABOUT WORSHIP INFLUENCES PEOPLE WHO AREN'T CHRISTIANS?**

### **A. The atmosphere of worship**

1. I grew up in a time when entering a church auditorium was truly entering a “sanctuary”
  - a. a popular song to begin worship was taken from Habakkuk 2:20  
“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.” NASB95
  - b. never mind that it's a terrible misuse of a perfectly good verse
  - c. it was intended to set a tone, create an atmosphere of reverent, quiet, and respectable behavior in a church assembly
  - d. never mind such an atmosphere is never suggested in the N.T.
  - e. in fact, read 1 Corinthians and you'll see quite a different kind of assembly
2. 1 Cor 14:26 – the assembly is to edify, build up, encourage, etc.

3. What is perceived as a somber, dull, drab, uninteresting assembly of people seldom edifies or encourages anyone, especially people who aren't Christians
4. Something that is lively, interesting, moving, and even exciting has a much better chance of being a positive influence on non-Christians

**B. Because of this, it is important that we understand everything we do in our assemblies as potentially influencing unbelievers**

1. Announcements should be made so that everyone can hear and understand what is said, and should be made by someone who looks like he's glad to be at church
2. Singing needs to be done well – and that takes work
  - a. if a church insists on only singing the songs it already knows, it will increasingly fall behind the times, and seldom will it have a positive influence on unbelievers
  - b. you can certainly have your favorite kind of songs, but don't get to the point where you insist that only your kind of songs can effectively praise God
  - c. to follow the principle in 1 Cor. 14, you have to consider what those songs say not only to you, but to unbelievers

**C. The same is true for everything else we do in our assemblies**

1. Preachers must work hard to make sermons understandable, positive, and even a bit entertaining
2. Prayers need to be heart-felt, not rote repetition of worn-out phrases
3. Even the Lord's supper must be something by which Jesus is made clear to everyone, believer and unbeliever alike

### **III. THE INDISPENSIBLE ELEMENTS THAT BEST REACH OUTSIDERS**

**A. They are: love and respect**

1. Colossians 4:5-6
  - 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. NASU
2. These two elements ought to be found in our conversation with every person, but they take on special meaning with outsiders

**B. We must be ever mindful of people who are not Christians**

1. We must treat everyone as if they are important
2. We must make sure that we make every effort not to insult or speak negatively of anyone's religious background
3. We must display an honest interest in people, and truly appreciate them as fellow human beings
4. Outsiders must be able to see in us, something different, something unique, something positive that draws their interest
5. We must always be aware that what we do when we meet together can have a major effect on outsiders

**CONCLUSION**

**A. I have tried to reach people with the gospel, only to have them attend church with people who didn't speak, weren't interested in them, and made no effort to accommodate their unfamiliarity with assemblies**

1. That's an uphill battle you likely will never win
2. It can, and should, be so different

**B. You want to simplify evangelism? Make the experience of worship so positive that it literally draws people to Jesus**

**C. Invitation**