

What's In It For God?

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Assembly

Introduction:

Right now, even as we speak, we are in a life and death struggle, in which our souls hang in the balance. Paul described the battle in **Ephesians 6:10-13**. Satan will stop at nothing to send our souls hurtling into everlasting torment. We see his attempts all around us. Our peers apply pressure. Satan is behind that. Hollywood glamorizes immorality. Satan is behind that. Our society degrades God's word. Satan is behind that. Satan is making a bold frontal assault on those who would serve God. But, even Satan knows that some will not fall prey to such obvious maneuvering. And so, he has another tactic, a more subtle approach, with which he hoodwinks his victims and then devours them. Satan has subtly deceived numerous would-be followers of God into believing they are serving Him, when in fact they are only serving themselves. And teenagers, Satan is particularly targeting you with his treachery. Churches everywhere view you as the lifeblood of their future. Churches, therefore, want your membership. But with this mindset comes a dangerous shift. Too many churches today are focused on simply having you as a member of their church and are not necessarily focused on making sure you go to heaven. Church growth has become a business, it is about marketing. Churches are asking, "How can we attract young people to our church? What can we give them and provide for them that will get them committed to this church?" The question is no longer, "What can we teach them that will devote them to Christ Jesus?" Church leaders think to themselves, "Maybe if we build a gymnasium, a baseball diamond or a soccer field, we can attract those who like sports. Maybe if we have a fellowship hall, a game room or pizza parties, we can attract those who like social activities. Maybe if we sponsor a tutoring service or academic scholarships, we can attract those who want to further their education. Maybe if we have plays, musicals, bands and choirs, we can attract those who want to be entertained." No doubt, churches say that Jesus is the reason they are doing all of these things. But, who is really being served by these secular attractions? God or man? Teenagers everywhere look at churches and ask, "What is in it for me?" Frankly, I do not blame you for such a question. I think our society has trained you to ask this question. After all, how many times have you heard your parents ask church leaders what their church has to offer you? But can I encourage you to ask a better question? When you look at a church and the works it sponsors, do not ask what is in it for you. Rather, ask, "What is in it for God? Is what is going on in the church really about serving God or is it about serving me?"

Discussion:

- I. The root of the problem.
 - A. Satan wants to convince you that as long as you go to a church, any church, then your eternity is secure. He wants to persuade you that as long as a church is sponsoring an activity it is pleasing to God. He wants you to believe that as long as you say Jesus is Lord, you can do what you want and you are glorifying Him. But, do not be deceived, that is not true.
 - B. In **Matthew 7:21-23**, Jesus looked to the Judgment Day and spoke about deceived souls. Jesus said that many would tell Him all about the religious things they had done. But He would say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"
 - C. They were going to church, they were doing seemingly spiritual things, what was the problem? The problem was they were not doing the will of the Father. They were doing what they wanted in religion. There was nothing in it for God and their religion was useless.
 - D. Satan wants to convince you that you are honoring and glorifying God, even if your hearts are far from God. He will do this by getting you to follow manmade religions and teachings (**Matthew 15:8-9**). "But I go to church," he wants you to say, "and we honor God at my church. So we must be serving Him!" But are you? Or are you really serving yourselves? What is the work and worship of your church really about? Is it about what's in it for you? Or is it about what's in it for God?
- II. God has a pattern and Satan wants you to believe it is unimportant.
 - A. Have you ever asked yourself, "Why did God give us the Bible?" Notice God's answer in **II Timothy 3:14-17**. God gave the Scriptures to make us wise for salvation. They teach us, reprove us, correct us and train us in righteousness. The Scriptures equip us for every good work. God has provided a pattern for us, a blueprint of how to serve Him.

- B. Notice **I Timothy 3:15**. Paul told Timothy that he was explaining how one should conduct himself in the church. He was providing a pattern for serving God. The New Testament is a pattern. We must not pass over this lightly. When we do something other than follow the pattern of God in Scripture, we are serving ourselves and not serving God.
- C. God expects us to follow this pattern. But Satan wants to minimize it. He wants to convince us that the pattern is unimportant. Consider some of the following statements. Have you ever heard any of them or perhaps even thought any of them?
 1. "God gave us the Bible just to tell us that He loves us. And all He wants in return is for us to love Him as best we can."
 2. "Surely a loving God is not going to care if we do just a few things differently."
 3. "We are all going to heaven; we are just taking different ways to get there."
 4. "Do not spend too much time worrying about the letter of the law."
 5. "As long as Jesus is your Lord, nothing else matters."
 6. "God just really wants us to be happy. So if what we are doing feels right, then it must be pleasing to God."
 7. "I know what the Bible says, but I just can't believe God would condemn us for this."
 8. "It is all about getting people to turn to Jesus. Surely God wants us to do anything and everything we think might cause one more soul to learn about Him."
 9. Do you see how all of these statements minimize God's pattern, exalting our own opinions and desires? The service any church offers to God must be authorized and approved by His pattern, the Scriptures. Otherwise, we are serving ourselves, not God, and we will be in that group of people mentioned in **Matthew 7:23**.

III. Does God really care as long as we are honoring and glorifying him?

- A. Churches today have pizza parties and they call it fellowship. They have gymnasiums and basketball camps and they call it evangelism. They have show choirs and dance teams and they call it glorifying God. How can there be anything wrong with any of that? After all, as long as we are honoring and glorifying God, does He really care what we do? But we have to ask ourselves, are we really honoring and glorifying God, just because we classify it that way?
- B. Ask Cain. In **Genesis 4:2-5**, Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. It was called an offering, how can there be anything wrong with that? But God did not respect Cain's offering. The text does not tell us exactly why Cain's sacrifice was displeasing. But what we do learn that God does care how we honor Him. Just because we call something an offering to the Lord, does not mean He accepts it.
- C. Ask Uzza. In **I Chronicles 13:6-11**, David was moving the ark of God to Jerusalem. They placed it on a cart and Uzza and Ahio, men of Judah, were driving the cart. Uzza touched the ark and God struck him dead. These people thought they were serving God. But just because we think we are serving God, does not mean God accepts it.
- D. Ask Nadab and Abihu. In **Leviticus 10:1-3**, Aaron's two sons were ministering in the tabernacle of the Lord. They made one small change. They "glorified" and "worshipped" God by using strange fire. In an instant, they were devoured by fire from heaven. Moses told Aaron that this is what God was teaching, "By those who come near to me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I will be glorified." You may call something "fellowship", "evangelism" or "glorifying God" that does not mean God accepts it.
- E. Now, let me ask you, does God care? **Romans 15:4** says these things were written for our learning. We learn from these passages that God cares how we glorify Him. If we are not following the pattern He has established, then no amount of justifying, explaining or renaming what we are doing authorizes our actions. We are only glorifying God when we do it His way. Anything else is really serving ourselves, not God.

IV. "What's in it for God?"

- A. The devil has deceived far too many today. And he is actively striving to deceive the young. The fact is, you are at a very difficult and turbulent age as you are trying to find your place in the world and in the Lord's church. You do not simply want to follow in the footsteps of your parents and yet you are not quite sure of your own footing. You desire to serve God fervently with all of

your heart and be an active part of his people. But by sheer lack of time on this earth, you have not yet been able to learn all of God's pattern for us. The devil wants to capitalize on this difficult age by appealing to your emotions and desires. He wants to offer "fun" and "good times" and convince you that in following what appeals to you, you are following after God. If he can get you to commit to that emotionally while you are young, he knows it will be difficult for anyone to convince you scripturally of the truth, even when you are old.

- B. I know that a lot of what you see in churches today seems good: the parties, the fellowship halls, the family life centers, the game rooms, the theme park trips, the movie nights, the Super Bowl halftime devotionals, the donuts and coke in Bible classes and much, much more. I know how preachers have reclassified these things to seem good. But remember, the devil himself can appear as an angel of light (**II Corinthians 11:14**). How much more then will he strive to make these works seem right. But there is nothing in them for God. They are not about glorifying God. When you examine them, you will find that they are about pleasing people.
- C. Ask yourself about every action of the church, "What's in it for God?" And remember, there is only something in it for God if we can turn to a book, chapter and verse and demonstrate that God wants us to do it. Otherwise, we are like Cain, Uzza, Nadab and Abihu. We will be like those in **Matthew 7:21-23** who called Jesus Lord with their mouths, but acted with lawlessness. In the end, we will hear, "I never knew you, depart from me." Do you want to hear that? Then do not be deceived, glorify God and not yourselves. Do not let Satan tempt you with Hollywood style entertainment worship. Do not let him tempt you with cheap attempts to buy your membership with fun and games. Do not let him tempt you with all kinds of activities that profess to be based in concern for your soul, but are not based in the word of God.

Conclusion:

Perhaps you are here because someone invited you. Perhaps you have wondered why your friend's church does not have the choirs, solos, cantatas, youth groups, fellowship halls, bands, parties and trips that your church has. Or perhaps you have grown up in this congregation and looked longingly at your friend's churches that have all those things and wondered why we do not. I hope you have seen why. Because at the Franklin Church of Christ, our concern is not to entertain you. Our concern is not to provide you with recreation. Our concern is not to provide you with fun and games. Our concern is with glorifying our Father in heaven and with saving your soul. We cannot accomplish either of those goals if we allow Satan to turn us from the pattern God has set for us. Instead, if we follow in the footsteps of mainstream churches today, we will condemn your souls and lose ours as well. We have made our choice at this congregation. We will not attempt to buy your membership in this congregation with secular attractions. Instead, we will work to draw you to Christ with the teaching of the gospel (**John 6:44-45**). Now, you must make your choice. And please remember, you will stand before God in judgment and answer to Him for the choice you make. Will you serve yourself, pretending that you are devoted to God? Or will you submit to what His Word has authorized and serve God His way?