

The Church Has Fallen Into the Deadly Trap of People Worship

Idolizing people has forever been the norm in the world. Sadly, the church is catching up, and fast.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9, ESV)

For as long as any of us can remember, adoration of celebrities, athletes and others in the public eye has been rampant in our society. Kids and adults alike are endeavoring to become Instagram- and YouTube-famous. The red carpet, paparazzi life is the dream for many. Others are satisfied being awestruck and starstruck.

Yes, this article is about people worship, but it's not really about the run-of-the-mill movie star fantasy. I'm going to take it a level deeper.

Both the World and the Church are Guilty

The hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Ecc. 9:3).

Looking beyond the glitz and glamour we will discover a wicked and brilliant strategy of the enemy to exalt mankind and, in process, destroy all who are seduced.

Our current generation, both the lost and the redeemed, has elevated mere humans into a status just south of deity.

Tolerance has been the mantra of our secular society for the last decade. This demonic game plan has been wildly successful

as what was once clearly an abomination has been established as normal and protected. People who embrace deviant ideologies are not only guarded but promoted. The argument is that people are supreme and their lifestyles, no matter what the Word of God has to say on the matter, are valid.

In the church we see the same mindset manifesting in a different way. For many, evangelism has shifted in recent years from calling people out of sin to communicating how wonderful they are. Again, the focus is on their supposed value as opposed to their hopelessness and depraved state.

The message is simply, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." The gospel message, however, is much more comprehensive—and confrontational—than that. Would Jesus have died for a single person? I believe He would have. I believe His desire is to be in relationship with us and it grieves Him deeply when people reject that invitation. That being said, we have to understand that it's not about our value. It's God's value that should be driving the conversation.

Our Gaze Must Shift

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17).

It's time we shift our gaze from the mirror to the throne. Or, at least clearly just see what the mirror is revealing when we are self-focused instead of gazing upon the glory of God. Nakedness. Blindness. Wretchedness. The world doesn't know God, so it makes sense, as sad and maddening as it is, that they are given to self-worship and to idolizing people. We as the church should know better.

Have you noticed how worship songs have changed in recent years? Instead of mostly being about the greatness of God, so many are choruses to the wonder of mankind. The beautiful

music can turn ugly quite fast when hands are lifted and eyes are closed as the congregation sings boldly about how great they are instead of how great God is.

The identity crisis in the church has resulted in a musical pep talk in an attempt to raise the spirits of people who don't know who they are. I would suggest instead that we become OK with the truth of our human condition and then, with all eyes keenly focused on Jesus, we discover our identity in Him.

"Amazing grace/ how sweet the sound/ that saved a wretch like me..."

We aren't wonderful people who would benefit from discovering just how much God adores us. We are wretches, people who are fully hopeless, given to wickedness and children of the devil who will end up in hell one day unless we repent. How glorious is it that God's love explodes through us the moment we surrender! The intimate, other-worldly relationship that follows such a radical and zealous decision to renounce the darkness and to give up our selfish pursuits is phenomenal.

I propose we can't get from point A (wretchedness, wickedness, hopelessness) to point B (repentance, surrender and life in Jesus) unless we honestly come to terms with who we are and what we've done. We aren't to be worshipped. We aren't to be adored. We are evil and our sin is an abomination. God's wrath remains on us. We deserve death.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (Romans 1:18).

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the

body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:1-3).

If we have to convince people to “get saved” by revealing how giddy God is about them, I would suggest many of those salvations are illegitimate. Invalid. It never happened.

When we truly follow Jesus, everything changes. We die daily and we discover our identity in Jesus. We are seated in heavenly places with Jesus. We are the head and not the tail, above and not beneath. These realities are not evidences of how great we are, but how great God is.

The world has been seduced by the enemy as it worships and protects people in most any identity they adopt, unless that identity is in Jesus. We need broken, humble and surrendered believers who are no longer identified as sinners, but as saints. People who die every day, who exalt Jesus and not self, who stand for truth and righteousness no matter the cost.

When we pull down strongholds and expose the wicked altars in our culture we will be mercilessly assaulted. When we refuse to worship or even acknowledge the evil, self-centered identities that society places great value on, we will be targeted.

That's OK. It's not about us. It's about Jesus.

It's time we stop worshipping people. The song isn't, “I exalt me.” It's...

*For Thou, O Lord, art high above all the earth/
Thou art exalted far above all gods/
For Thou, O Lord, art high above all the earth/
Thou art exalted far above all gods/
I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee/
I exalt Thee, O Lord/
I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee/*

I exalt Thee, O Lord/ {eoa}