

Coach House Church BEACONS

WHERE'S YOUR HEART?

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Last week I was having an interesting discussion with Andy and Steve A. We were talking about how in the past certain churches have banned or frowned upon certain activities that seemed "worldly" but were clearly in the bible, like dancing. In church history dancing has been frowned on and in some churches it is still banned but it says in 2 Samuel that David danced before the Lord.

So why did some churches frown upon dancing? And why are there things that are perfectly ok to do that some churches still dislike?

Churches disliked dancing because of all the social connotations that surrounded it. They thought that it caused sinful thoughts and that it should be banned as a result. We can see this in other ways in other types of churches. There are churches where you must wear a skirt and a hat if you're a woman or churches where men and women have to sit on opposite sides of the church because if men and women fraternise that could lead to dangerous thoughts.

We fall into this trap of legalistic tick lists. We like to feel that we can do things to earn our salvation, so if we make a lot of rules and keep them (or at least mostly keep them), we can get ourselves closer to God. We need to realise that there is nothing we can do to gain more favour with God or more salvation. We were dead in our sins, every one of us. There is no one good, not even one. Ephesians 2:4-5 says "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even

when we were dead in our transgressions (a fancy way of saying sins) - it is by grace you have been saved". We can do nothing to save ourselves.

Now this does not mean that we should continue to sin. Paul answers this question in Romans 6:1-2 "What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" There are certain things that will never lead us to God. Some are listed in Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." There are more things beside this list and each of us will have our own areas of strength and weakness. So it is sensible for us to put safeguards in place to help us to not sin. But this shouldn't be seen as a tick list by which we can be saved but instead a sensible guide for living.

The tricky thing is that almost anything can be used for worship or for worldly purposes. That list includes dancing or any kind of music or art. But the point is about where our heart is aligned and who our worship is to, rather than the action itself. So it is quite possible for dancing to lead to sin, if that is where your heart is inclined, but it is also possible to be used for pure worship to God.

Similarly the reverse can be true. We can be singing a worship song, but if it is not all about God, it will be empty. We could sing and play every note absolutely perfectly but it will mean nothing if it is not for God. Worship is only worship if it is to, for and about God. So our hearts need to be in the right place.

The thing about our heart not being in the right place is this. For a time God might just give us little pointers about what we're doing wrong rather than just step in. He wants to give us chances to repent. But eventually, our heart will show in our actions and God will remove His blessing, whatever that might look like in your life. Our hearts need to be turned

towards Him as the creator and rescuer of our souls. So from outside it might look like you are doing well but God knows your heart, sometimes better than you do. In 1 Samuel 16:7 it says "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

This verse in the bible comes from a time when Israel was looking for a new king. Their king had stopped following what God wanted, so the new king was to be from a different family line. God sent the prophet Samuel, the man who spoke God's words to the people, to a man named Jesse to anoint one of his sons king. Samuel went down the line of Jesse's sons, from oldest to youngest. In fact, Samuel got all the way through the sons that Jesse had brought him. They didn't think he'd want to see the youngest, David. But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on Eliab's (the oldest son) appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." Eliab looked successful and strong, but he wasn't who God had chosen.

Sometimes we get downhearted because we feel that we have been passed over. This verse is an encouragement to keep going. Even though others might not see your potential, as long as you keep your heart towards God and you keep worshipping Him as He deserves, your time will come. David didn't immediately become king. He still had to wait and sometimes so do we, but his time came. As long as our hearts are in the right place, God will use us to build His kingdom.

However, it is also a warning. If our hearts aren't in the right place, God won't call us to a position even if we feel gifted and led to it. So we need to look at ourselves and make sure that our heart is in the right place. There is a time to ask for a position and there is a time to decide that we are being called somewhere else, but there is also a time to make sure that we have the right attitude before we grumble to others.

So how do we keep our hearts in the right place? Well this is a tough question. It can't be solved with simple checklists. The people of Israel

found that out. They were given a list of things to do, rules to keep and even sacrifices to make when they inevitably messed up, but they couldn't even manage that. Even Adam and Eve, when they were given one, just one, really simple rule. Just don't eat the fruit from that one tree. Even then they couldn't do it. They failed in the way that each and every one of us would in that situation.

We live in a fallen world and therefore our hearts are inclined to sin and be selfish. We can't get our hearts in the right place by ourselves. So we need the help of the Holy Spirit to move us closer to God. There are also things we can do. Not a checklist, but more helpful tips that can focus us and help us think about the right things.

These are reading our bibles, so we know God's words, praying, to align ourselves with God's will and worshipping, to direct our hearts the way they should go. These three things, when done with the right attitude, will help us focus on the right things and begin to have the right thoughts and actions.

So remember, God isn't looking so much at what you are doing but more at why you are doing it. He doesn't want perfect robots, He wants us to choose to love Him and act out of that.



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