

## **12. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Celebrate**

Change agents appeal to their congregation to display more emotion in worship, calling for them to *celebrate*. *Celebrate* is used in the same fashion as one would use it at a political campaign or an athletic event.

### **Celebrate**

**What they will say.** *Celebrate* is one of their favorite and defining words. The word is usually used in connection with joy, praise, or praise worship. In one preacher's sermon he describes the Old Testament passages on joy and praise as the worship literature of the early church as they "celebrate." He contended that the only scriptures available to them were Old Testament scriptures. Another preacher called for shouting and leaping. Applause has become commonplace in many churches.

**What does the Bible say?** In this context, the worship is like the celebration of an athletic or election campaign victory. It has the air and aura of a theater performance—the cast has done well, the focus is on them, and a celebration is in order. The word *celebrate* (*d*) is used 53 times in the Bible—only one of which refers to the church:

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor 5:6-8.

The church is to celebrate the sacrifice of Christ who is symbolically our Passover. The very spiritual nature of this celebration is described by the words *sincerity and truth*. When this passage is considered with other passages on the nature of the worship, it is very clear that we are not celebrating in any contemporary sense of the word. Rom 12:1-2 commands us:

. . . to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so *that you may prove what the will of God is*, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [Emp. Added]

How is the worship? —A spiritual service, a renewing of your mind. What is the worship? —The will of God, good, acceptable and perfect. When we approach God in the worship, the spiritual requirements are spelled out. We "worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." Heb 12:28-29 NIV.

The scripturally offensive part of celebration as worship is hand clapping, arm waving, and shouting. These all add unauthorized acts of worship to our service. In these meetings one is clapping and one is not. One is standing waving and one is not. One is shouting and one is not. The acts are not only unauthorized by the scriptures but they pave the way for other unspecified acts of worship—playing instruments of music, performances of drama, presentations by choirs and choruses to mention only a few innovations. These acts violate the teaching of I Cor. 14 where Paul confronted similar innovations when some were speaking in tongues, others were not, some were singing, others were not. "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner." Paul told us in 1 Cor 14:40. When change agents force members to perform celebrative acts of worship, they violate the consciences of some of those present. Rom 14:23 tells us "Whatever is not from faith is sin."