

Be the Church (Rms.12)

Jesus has always demanded one's all in following him. He never made an exception. If he ever did, it would have been the time a rich young man came to follow Jesus. Outwardly the man had all the trappings that would make for a great follower. Inwardly, however, he was holding back. Jesus recognized that. He will not accept a partial commitment. He didn't then; he doesn't now. The apostle Paul provides a theological framework for what it means to follow Christ totally and the consequential changes it makes in a person's life. Paul counsels the Saints to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, to use their own grace-given gifts, and to live as Saints should live.

Most people do not come into a worship service prepared to give our whole selves over to God. We brought sins that need to be confessed and cleansed before we leave. We brought questions that need answers and problems that need solutions. We brought burdens that need lifted and anxieties that need to be dispelled—and frustrations and depression and boredom and preoccupations, all kinds of distractions. For most of us it would be easier to take out our checkbook and double our offering and put it in the plate than it would be to turn ourselves over to God. But dare I say that we have not worshiped until we have given ourselves to God.

Worship is the total commitment of the total person for the total life. Anything less is not genuine worship. Real worship is not the offering of elaborate prayers to God. Neither is it inspiring liturgy or ritual. Nor is it making large donations. Nor is it singing majestic songs of praise, or listening to a sermon. Real worship happens when we confess sin, turn from that sin, and then offer ourselves completely and wholeheartedly to God.

7 Things Holding the Church Back

1. **Thinking that it's too late to...** it is never too late for anything when God is a part of it. A thing passed may be a thing overlooked needed in order to be aligned with His will. Change for the better is never too late and often ignored especially when we are caught up in feelings.
2. **Going for a job, not a ministry...** We serve a God who is progressive and never concerned with yesterday. What you may be doing now has perhaps run its course and there is something much greater than the dead-end street that you are on. A job is about self, but ministry is about people- serving people.
3. **Listening to Haters...** people are funny. You can never please them all the time and sometimes never at all. Being the church is never about pleasing people, it is about pleasing God. If there are those in your life who never encourage you, but always find a way to discourage you and sap your strength, you don't need them. They are haters; and haters never need victory, but satisfaction.
4. **Living larger than life...** You've got the latest car, "bling," dress, handbag, hairstyle, suit, and never support the church. If you've got stuff, but don't have a dollar or a pot to pee in, then perhaps you have sought the wrong kingdom. It's time to change lanes and know that prosperity is peace of mind and not a piece of paper.

5. **Confusing Big Sexy with Big Health Risk**...we can appreciate your curves, but make sure they are healthy ones. The church needs to go on a diet. You can't eat your way to heaven. Moderation is the best practice when it comes to eating and exercise is not a sin. The body is the temple of God, not the shack of God. Not all coke bottles are alike. If sexy is what you are, make sure that it is healthy and pleasing to God.
6. **Having tunnel vision**...change is good. There is nothing wrong with gathering at your church, but there must be a scattering also. Get out into the community and see what others are doing to promote Jesus. The reason we don't want to change is because we have not been anywhere other than our back yards.
7. **Forgetting our history**...Jesus is our Past, Present, and our Future. He has brought us!!!

What we must do

1. Be the church - **We offer ourselves to God because of His mercy (v. 1)**

Paul presents God's mercies as his strongest argument for giving ourselves to God. "I urge you," Paul said, "by the mercies of God . . . to present your bodies" (Rom. 12:1). When we recognize what God has done for us through his son Jesus Christ, the only response is to give ourselves completely to him.

2. Act like the church - **We offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice (v. 1)**

Just as the people of Israel presented their animal sacrifices to the priests we are to hand over our bodies to God. Out of celebration for what God has done for us through his Son, Jesus Christ, we give ourselves to him. When Paul uses the term body he is implying the whole person, or the physical means whereby the whole person is expressed.

3. Speak like the church - **We offer ourselves to God all the time**

Living implies life. Life is an everyday experience. Offering ourselves to God is not something that should be contained within a sixty-minute worship. A living sacrifice is a sacrifice that is alive and continuous in action. This means worship occurs not just in the sanctuary but in our whole world. This means that worship moves away from just this hour to all the hours of our lives, and it moves away from one activity of coming to worship to all of our activities: each relationship, each task, each opportunity, each problem, each success, and failure.

True worship is our personal linking of faith and works, the offering of everyday life to God, and it isn't something that takes place only in church. Real worship sees the whole world as the temple of the living God and every common deed as an act of worship. Real worship is the offering of everyday life to God.

(DuBois, Amy, 2013) Editor in Chief, *Ebony Magazine* "*7 Things Holding Us Back.*" The "*7 Things Holding Back the Church*" was divinely inspired as an answer to what ails the Christian community.