

## Want to Know More?

Interested in understanding more about the Bible and God's plan of salvation for humanity? Please visit our website ([www.jonesroadchurch.org](http://www.jonesroadchurch.org)) for the following resources.

- Audio Sermons
- Bible-based Articles
- Classes studying the Sermon on the Mount, leadership in Nehemiah, and four great teachers found in the Bible.
- We can also be found on Facebook (Jones Road Church of Christ) and Twitter (@jonesroadchurch). Email: [study@jonesroadchurch.org](mailto:study@jonesroadchurch.org)

## Please Join us for Bible Study and Worship

Sundays

9:30am - Bible Study

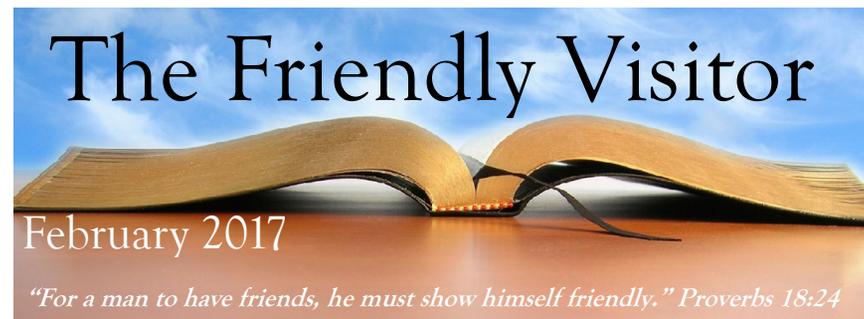
10:20am & 5pm - Worship

Wednesdays

7pm - Bible Study

## Jones Road Church of Christ

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## Reviving Our Zeal

By John R. Gibson

In recent years, Christians concerned about the danger of becoming sluggish (Heb. 6:11-12), losing their first love (Rev. 2:4-5), or falling into lukewarmness (Rev. 3:15-16) have suggested some radical changes to the collective worship of the local church. Books such as *Spilt Grape Juice* by Mike Root and *Radical Restoration* by F. LaGard Smith, along with concepts borrowed from various evangelicals and community church leaders, have had a great impact in a number of places.

In his influential book in which he pushed for radical change, Smith utilized manufactured quotes such as “Not Ritual, but spiritual” and “Not Rules, but righteousness” and attributed them to Jesus (*Radical Restoration*, p. 22). Some have lampooned their fellow-saints with somewhat humorous statements such as, “Though we sing about ‘standing on the promises,’ we’re really just ‘sitting on the premises.’” When you add to this the legitimate concerns about complacency among Christians, in many locales a climate necessary to introduce significant change has been established.

What kind of changes are we speaking of? Instead of sitting in rows that face the front, we are urged to turn and face one another in a circle as we sing. It may be suggested that “the mausoleum-like meetinghouse” is holding us back, so we should seek a park in which, in the presence of God’s glorious creation, we may be revived. To make the Lord’s Supper more relevant and meaningful we may be urged to dim the lights or increase the portion sizes of the bread and fruit of the vine. Some have suggested that we would be helped in our observance of the Lord’s Supper by turning to our neighbors and sharing with them

*(Continued on page 2)*



- “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:17
- “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.” Romans 12:11
- “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” Rev. 3:15-16

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our testimony about what the death of Jesus has meant in our lives.

While we should be genuinely concerned about sluggishness and complacency, is the solution really found in these things? Will these genuinely revive our zeal? The truth is that Smith was absolutely correct when he warned that we must not be “quick-fix artists who deal only with the symptoms of our malaise, not the root causes” (*Radical Restoration*, p. 39). I believe he was also right to say that we must “plunge ourselves with abandon into truly being his people” (*Radical Restoration*, p. 108)! However, what Smith has ended up doing and what is being proposed by an many other is exactly what Smith warned against doing. When problems of sluggishness and complacency do exist, these are problems of the heart, while the answers being proposed are simply quick-fix, external “solutions” to internal issues.

Read Eph. 5:18-19 and Col. 3:16 carefully and take note of what is said about the externals such as seating, direction we look, etc. Instead of these things which are not mentioned at all, what did the Holy Spirit emphasize? Acceptable worship results from allowing the word to dwell richly in one and making a melody in the thankful heart. While there is nothing inherently wrong with being in a circle, how does that fix the problem if the word of Christ is not dwelling richly in a person? Does looking at other *people* really instill the necessary grace or thankfulness (ESV and NASB) toward *God* in our hearts?

While God can be worshiped in a park (John 4:21-24), if the only times we can fully appreciate the greatness and goodness of God are when we are outside enjoying His creation, have we not lost focus? In reality, have we not become focused on self and the things we enjoy rather than on the Almighty who is to be served?

If we read the accounts of Jesus establishing the Lord’s Supper in Matt. 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Cor. 11, what do we learn about the size of the portions to be consumed? Obviously, the answer is nothing, since not a single word is said about it. The amounts of bread and grape juice to be consumed are incidental or we would have been given some instruction in this matter. So, instead of external incidentals, the focus is on our mindset—“in remembrance . . . let a man examine himself” (1 Cor. 11:23-29). If we reach the point that it takes dimmed lights and soft music in the background for us to remember the crucifixion of our Lord, it is time to seriously examine ourselves.

But what of the idea that while we are eating the Lord’s Supper, instead of quietly reflecting on the death of Jesus, we need to share with others what that death has meant to us? First, if we read the instructions

found in Scripture we find nothing even remotely suggesting the practice. Second, would not my church neighbor be better off considering the inspired testimony of New Testament writers instead of hearing about my subjective experiences? Third, do we not see the potential for confusion when people all over the building (or park) are talking at the same time, even if they are trying to keep their voices down? Wasn’t this addressed in 1 Cor. 14:26-33? Fourth, by what Scriptural authority would women speak during the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 14:34-35)?

Anyone who sees anything in this article as a defense of complacency or lukewarmness will have completely missed the point, for there is no excuse for that. But nowhere in Scripture do we find even a hint that one involved in heartfelt singing with others; quietly reflecting on the Lord’s death; studying God’s word by listening to a teacher; listening so as to be able to say amen to a prayer; et al is being a passive spectator who is merely sitting on the premises. It may not be exciting and exhilarating to some, but it’s what the Bible calls worship.

Certainly there are times when complacency sets in and spiritual renewal is necessary, but the need in such times is for greater internal reflection and not more external manipulation. In such times we need to thoughtfully consider what God has done for us and then obey from the heart. The instructions to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thes. 5:16-18) are to be obeyed and can be obeyed no matter the seating arrangements or the size of the container for the fruit of the vine. When with the rational mind we more deeply appreciate what it means to be in Christ and living with the hope of heaven, then all the externals that some seem so determined to change, even at the cost of dividing brethren, will seem insignificant.

If we have become lukewarm, we don’t need to go to the park; instead we need to “be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

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## An Invitation

Please join us each Thursday evening in February at 7:00 P.M. for a special series of studies focusing on prayer. Hope you can be with us February 2, 9, 16, and 23 for these classes