

WORK, PLAY, WORSHIP

I am indebted to the late John Brown of Mizzou Aviation in Joplin, Mo. for the following insight. He said: “Too often we worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship”.

Just think about it! Worship involves that which is most important to us. It ought to be God, but often it is our job. What God wants too often takes a back seat when the boss asks us to come in early, stay late, or work on weed ends. To offend the boss might affect our employment so his wishes are often given top priority. Thus it is appropriate to say that many people worship their work.

John was an avid pilot with multiple ratings and thousands of hours as “pilot in command”. He said that when he joined a glider club he was amazed at how much work was involved. First, they bought a glider, then they bought a tow plane. Then, to move the glider to the runway someone had to tow it with a pickup. Since the glider had only a single wheel on the fuselage someone else to walk along side to keep the wings from scraping the pavement. Since the airport had a control tower, they also had to request special permission to close down a runway for other traffic so they could operate their glider. Launching the glider, of course, required two pilots. One pilot had to fly the tow plane and another to fly the glider. Surely this “play” involved a lot of “work”.

What about our worship? Unfortunately, the church is often last on our list. The slightest excuse can keep us home and coming late and leaving early is not a problem. No lesson preparation is necessary and by comparison with our work and hobby, we actually “play at our worship”.

I am happy to say that John had more godly priorities. After a near death experience which required him to be defibrillated 26 times, he began to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”. He sold his business and spent the last 17 years of his life giving God the top priority in his life. He never missed church, and became an avid Bible student and teacher. He also went on multiple mission trips and died climbing into a church van to pick up men from a half way house for a Bible study. All who knew him realized that John Brown didn’t “play at worship”.

Early in his life John had gone to Bible College and wanted to be a preacher. As in the parable of the sower, however, the “worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth” choked out the good seed (Matt. 13:22). He fell into the trap he described as worshiping his work and working at his play. He even quit attending church all together. Then came that fateful day when he was standing in line to license his car. Suddenly his heart stopped and he fell to the ground like a dead man. Providentially an EMT was standing near by and kept him alive until an ambulance arrived. He found out later that several Christian people laid hands on him and prayed. Then came the heroic measures in the ER where the attending physician refused to quit using the paddles until a stable heart beat was achieved.

John felt that God had given him a second chance and he made the best of it. His Christian service was as a volunteer, yet no job was too difficult or expensive for him to do for God. For example, he made many mission trips taking Bibles, food, and clothing to the Navajos in Arizona. On one occasion he even drove from his home in Missouri to New York to pick up supplies and then turned around and headed for Arizona. A flat tire on his trailer was a minor expense compared to the money he spent for fuel. Those last 17 years were perhaps the happiest and most fulfilling years of his life.

One of John’s favorite stories involved a local surgeon speaking to a patient before going into surgery. The doctor said he had performed the surgery hundreds of times and expected no problems. As a Christian, however, he felt an obligation to ask the patient if he had made any preparation to meet God. John felt that this matter of fact approach to reality was both professional and appropriate. As a pilot, flight instructor, and designated FAA examiner, he did everything “by the book”. This is also the way he followed Christ!

What about you? If you are not following Christ there is always the possibility that God will give you a second chance as he did John Brown. It is foolish, however, to count on it. Why not get right with God “now”! Remember: “Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).