

THE CHURCH GOD USES, #2
God Uses a Heavenly-Minded Church
Dr. Greg Tyree, BBC, AM, January 18, 2004

INTRODUCTION: Keep Your **Fork**

A woman was diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. As she was getting her things in order, she contacted her pastor and asked him to come to her house to discuss some of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at her funeral service, what Scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. She requested to be buried with her favorite Bible.

As the pastor prepared to leave, the woman suddenly remembered something else. "There's one more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" said the pastor.

"This is important," the woman said. "I want to be buried with a **fork** in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say.

The woman explained. "In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part of the meal because I knew something better was coming—like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie.

"So, when people see me in that casket with a fork in my hand and they ask, 'What's with the fork?' I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork. The best is yet to come!'"

Citation: submitted by Brett Kays

Phil. 3:12-14:

¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Heb. 11:10, 16:

⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹⁶But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

PROPOSITION: The Heavenly-Minded church maintains a three-fold focus.

I. A HEAVENLY MINDED CHURCH IS FATHER-FOCUSED.

A. God the Father **Deserves** Our Worship. Acts. 13:25.

“And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’

B. God the Father **Demands** Our Worship. John 4:23, 24.

²³“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

C. God the Father **Delights** in Our Worship. Ps. 37:22:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

ILLUSTRATION:

Worship That God Wants

Early in our marriage I gave my wife a terrific anniversary gift: a rain gauge. At least *I* thought it was a great gift. Susan, after all, is a farmer's daughter and keeps close watch on the weather. I envisioned her delight and nostalgia while tracking our back yard precipitation. I congratulated myself on my creativity.

Guess what? Susan was not impressed: "A rain gauge—for our anniversary?!" The rain gauge is now a family joke, a classic example of a gift enjoyed by the giver but not the receiver.

One word I hear a lot these days is authentic, as in "we seek authentic worship." Usually this means we're trying to create an experience that helps worshipers feel something. Nothing wrong with that, but if our focus is only on our experience, we may be giving God a rain gauge.

Are we offering in **worship** a gift we enjoy and figuring God will like it?

A real gift, real worship, means knowing what's important to The Receiver.

Citation: Marshall Shelley, Leadership (Spring 1999), p. 3

II. A HEAVENLY MINDED CHURCH IS FUTURE-FOCUSED. Phil. 3:12-14.

¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have

apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A. The Future Holds the **Return** of Our Savior.

B. The Future Holds the **Rewarding** of the Saints.

i. The Saints Will **Receive** Their Crowns.

(a) **The Finisher's Crown**. 1 Cor. 9:24, 25:

²⁴Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

(b) **The Rapture Lover's Crown**. 2 Tim. 4:6-8:

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

(c) **The Temptation Endurer's Crown**. James 1:12:

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

(d) **The Pastor's Crown**. 1 Peter 5:1-4:

¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

(e) **The Martyr's Crown**. Rev. 2:10:

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev. 3:11:

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

ii. The Saints Will **Relinquish** Their Crowns.

ILLUSTRATION:

Unexpected Rules for Life's Race

I once read a story about a bicycle race in India. The object of the race was to go the shortest distance possible within a specified time. At the start of the race, everyone cued up at the line, and when the gun sounded all the bicycles, as best they could, stayed put. Racers were disqualified if they tipped over or one of their feet touched the ground. And so they would inch forward just enough to keep the bike balanced. When the time was up and another gun sounded, the person who had gone the farthest was the loser and the person closest to the starting line was the winner.

Imagine getting into that race and not understanding how the race works. When the race starts, you pedal as hard and fast as you possibly can. You're out of breath. You're sweating. You're delighted because the other racers are back there at the starting line. You're going to break the record. You think, This is fantastic. Don't let up. Push harder and faster and longer and stronger.

At last you hear the gun that ends the race, and you are delighted because you are unquestionably the winner. Except you are unquestionably the loser because you misunderstood how the race is run.

Jesus gives us the **rules** to the eternal race of life. The finish line is painted on the other side of our deaths, right in front of the throne of God himself. There you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. The winning strategy for this life and for all eternity is caring about others and not about ourselves. It is letting others go first and not pushing to the front. It is giving without the expectation of getting in return. It is to be humble, like Jesus.

Citation: Leith Anderson, author and pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota; from sermon "The Height of Humility" (September 12, 1999)

C. The Future Holds the **Removal** of Sin.

III. A HEAVENLY MINDED CHURCH IS FAMILY-FOCUSED. Heb. 11:10, 16.

⁰for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹⁶But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

A. There Will Be a Family **Restoration** in Heaven.

B. There Will Be a Family **Reunion** in Heaven.

C. There Will Be a Family **Rejoicing** in Heaven.

ILLUSTRATION:

On the final page of the final book of The Chronicles of Narnia, some of the children who have been to Narnia lament that they once again must return to their homeland—the Shadow-Lands. But Aslan

(the lion who represents Jesus) has the best news of all for them:

[Aslan spoke to the children,] "You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be."

Lucy said, "We're so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often."

"No fear of that," said Aslan. "Have you not guessed?"

Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.

"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are—as you used to call it in the Shadow-Lands—dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream has ended; this is morning."

And as he spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Citation: C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (Thorndike Press, 2001); submitted by Eugene Maddox, Interlachen, Florida

- APPLICATION:***
1. Look *Upward*.
 2. Look *Forward*.
 3. Look *Inward*.
 4. Never Look *Backward*.