

**N**ews item – Carrollton, Virginia: “Go to church, put money in the collection basket – it’s almost expected. At Sweet Haven Holy Church of God in rural Isle of Wight County, you could get some money back. After each service, Bishop Nathaniel Johnson passes out green play money. Find a bill with the pastor’s initials on the back, you win between \$10 and \$100. Up to four people win each Sunday. There’s a catch – parishioners must be at church for the entire service, which often lasts more than two hours. He said attendance has doubled to about 100 people since he started the program about three years ago.”

In acceptable service to God, proper motivation cannot be separated from action. To contribute to a humanitarian agency merely for the tax advantage is a matter of economics rather than benevolence.

To consume the elements of the Lord’s supper with the mind distracted by other affairs is not to worship but to eat and drink judgment upon oneself (1 Cor 11:29).

The Jews continued their rituals but chafed under the burden: “*When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade our wheat?*” (Amos 8:5).

Christians must be careful to maintain a balance between *what* they do and *why* they do what they do. Neither of these elements should be sacrificed in favor of the other.

In the above news item, Nathaniel Johnson is more interested in filling his building with warm bodies than filling men’s souls with proper awe and reverence for God. His attendance may have doubled but at what cost? Do men have to be *paid* to serve the God who has already sacrificed Himself for them?

What a pathetic commentary on the religious destitution of our nation.

But lest we only gleefully find fault in others, we should examine our own attitude as we serve God. There are more subtle ways to selfishly serve God besides expecting a cash payment. Do we only do for God what is convenient? Are we willing to do only those things which have a tangible reward? Do we only give out of our abundance (2 Sam 24:24)?

Our public worship is not the totality of our service to God; it is merely one aspect of a faithful life. It has trappings which can be deceiving: making a fashion statement, punctual formality, “worship manners,” a “check-list” approach to fulfilling our duties. We pay to attend games, concerts, movies, etc. What would you be willing to pay for the privilege of worshipping God?