
BIBLE INSIGHT

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

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Playing Church

by Dee Bowman

Morton, Texas is a dusty little burg in the western-most part of the state just 15 miles from the New Mexico line. It is called "Texas' Last Frontier" on the masthead of its little newspaper, *The Morton Tribune*. I grew up there. It provided me with the basic things of life, a loving home life with a father and mother who loved and provided; a happy childhood with my brothers and lots of friends; a better-than-average school, complete with teachers who showed a genuine concern for all of us; and, most important of all, a small, but fine group of Christians who sincerely cared. It was not the garden spot of the world, but it was a great place to grow up.

Many of the things we kids did to pass the time of day were admittedly childish, but they were fun. We played a game we called "Plike," short for **play like**, where you could pretend to be anyone or anything. We rode stick horses made from old shop brooms we took from trash behind Butler's Body Shop or Lindsey Feed Store. We made tractors from old, discarded oil filters by tying them together with bailing wire (we usually got in trouble with these because they would sling oil up on the backs of your pant legs when you ran with them). I have rolled an old tire for no telling how far, and have even ridden down a slanted street (there were no hills in Morton) in an old tractor tire until I was so dizzy I couldn't walk when I got out.

These were happy times- red beans and cornbread times- times when life was simple, uncomplicated.

One of the games we loved the most was playing church. It was a section of

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church of Christ at Beverly Shores

Sun. 9:30 a.m.—Bible Classes
Sun. 10:30 a.m.—Worship
Sun. 6:00 p.m.—Worship
Wed. 7:00 p.m.—Bible Classes

1318 Griffin Road
Leesburg, FL 34748
352-365-9946

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad to have you visiting with us today, because you are part of our goals. This may sound odd, but please let us explain. Our goal is to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and to glorify Him in all that we do. (1 Cor. 10:31)

God will always be our number one priority, but the Bible speaks of secondary goals that this church also recognizes. Today, we consider you our honored guest, and hope to prove ourselves welcoming and hospitable. In fact, we hope that you can tell we are loving.

1 Timothy 1:5 says: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Because this is our goal as well, we hope that you can see love in our teaching. We hope you can see people with pure hearts, a good conscience, and faith that is totally genuine. Only then will we really be doing our job.

So please, stay a while after services so we can greet you. Feel free to take a welcome packet with you as you leave, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. Helping you is part of our goals.

the “Plike” game. In it we did all the things we saw done at church. One of us would lead the singing like brother Alvin Ray did, and one of us would read a Scripture like brother Blackstone did, and another of us would try to baptize someone sometimes (that nearly always ended up in a fuss as to who was to be the baptizer and who was to be the baptizee). But the best part of all was when we’d “Plike” we were taking the Lord’s Supper. We would unfold the cloth, just like old brother Abbe did, then we would pass around the emblems and each of us would partake. We even mimicked the sound of the cups by saying *untattalat* for the removal, and *tattalat* for the replacing of the glass cups. We loved it.

I still think about these times and when I do, sometimes I can’t see too good because of the tears that accompany my memories.

It seems to me that lots of folks play church today. Oh, they come, but their participation is just part of the game. They are expected to play a certain role and they have learned to do it well. They sing at the right time, remain quiet at the right time, but they’re not really serious about it- they’re just playing.

People who don’t have their heart in the right place are just playing church.

The wise man said, “*Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools*” (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Jesus said, “*God is a spirit and those that worship must worship Him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). Even the specific privileges call for heart-involvement for their acceptability before God (1 Corinthians 11:28,29; 16:1,2; etc.). We best be careful that our service is not merely ritualistic, devoid of a devoted spirit.

People who hear and don’t do are just playing church. It is sad how many of our people are not really involved. They come, they sit, they leave. They have made religion a matter of time and place- the time is Sunday morning, the place is the church building. It is not enough just to hear, we must do. “*Faith without works is dead,*” James 2:26 says, and he enjoins that we be “*...doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves*” (1:22). God has always required that His people be active, involved participants, not just on-lookers.

People who use the church only for social reasons are just playing church. We are quick to condemn those who have sought to make the church a social institution, and yet we have folks who use the local assembly only for social reasons. They love the interplay among the members, the get-togethers, the parties, the dinners. It’s kind of a country club to them. Certainly there’s nothing wrong with Christians getting together for recreation and fun, but when that becomes the primary reason for getting together, they are merely playing church. When they are not concerned for lost souls, or an upcoming gospel meeting, when they are not prepared for Bible classes, and could not tell you what the preacher just said this morning, but can tell you who’s doing what, who’s going out with whom, and who said what about whom, then the emphasis has been misplaced- they’re just playing around.

Add to the list if you like. Lot’s of folks just play church.

Mr. Queen wouldn’t let us play near his tractors. “You kids play somewhere else,” he’d say. There are places to play, places where you shouldn’t. We’d do well to play somewhere else.

“God has always required His people to be active, involved participants...”
