

What the Dallas Mavericks Show Us About Worship

We had a little excitement here in Dallas last week (June 20, 2011). Our Mavericks won the NBA Title. (For you non-sports people—like me, actually—this means that our local professional basketball team won the game that makes them Best Basketball Team in the U.S. It's like winning the World Series. Or the Superbowl. It's really big.)

The game was on the TV in our living room, and I (being a non-sports people) was working on my laptop in the same room. I enjoyed watching the Facebook news feed churn out all kinds of happy updates from ecstatic fans. Then the news showed over five thousand Mavs fans crazy happy outside the American Airlines Center in Dallas, the reporters giddy with excitement and the cameras recording people who looked like they were ready to explode with joy. Immediately, scores of people drove to sporting goods stores to buy t-shirts commemorating the freshly-minted champions.

This corporate fervor was so much more than simply being pleased that the home town boys had won a championship! Everybody was a Mavericks fan that night and for the next week, especially leading up to the big parade in downtown Dallas. People were thrilled by the almost electrical connection to The Mavs as a winning team – and the joy of being a part of something bigger than themselves. People streamed to downtown Dallas the night of the big win and to the parade the following Thursday so they could be with other people honoring and praising the heroes.

I was struck by this great illustration of our hearts' desire to be connected to the transcendent, to be part of something bigger and more important than ourselves. Our hearts were made for something greater than our lives and our individual

stories; I believe our hearts were made for Kingdom living, and for a quality and quantity of Life that is far more and better than our puny little earthly kingdoms. And there is something powerful, almost magical, about being connected to a community of joyful people all celebrating the Something-Bigger-Than-Ourselves together. I believe our hearts were made to be knitted together with other Kingdom hearts as well.

People's desires to shout out happy praises for Dirk Nowitzki (the Mavericks' superhero) and the rest of the team was, I believe, a part of our design to be worshipers. We were made to worship—and if we won't worship the One most worthy of worship, our Creator and Lord, then we will worship the creation. Such as the Mavericks. We are incorrigible worshipers. And there is such a feeling of “rightness” when we worship, because that is how we are made. Perhaps those who get the most excited about whooping and hollering at professional and college (and even high school and younger) sporting games, just might be the best worship leaders some of us will ever see, if they would direct their worship to the One worship was created for!

Whenever I hear people say they think heaven will be boring, like one interminable church service, I think about times like the Mavs' win. Yeah, heaven will be boring like the Mavs winning the NBA title is boring! We were made for worship, and worship is joyous, ecstatic union with God and with other worshipers. So maybe, just maybe, all the hoopla over our team winning the title is an emotional peek into what heaven will be?

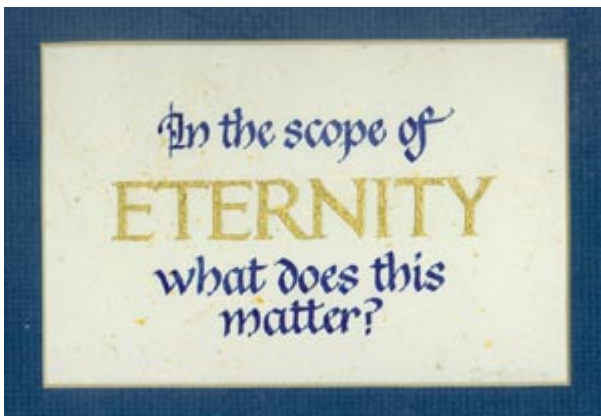
Bring it on!

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In the Scope of Eternity. . .

There's a piece of my calligraphy in our bathroom, where it's been for many years in a place where my sons would see it (over the commode!), of one of life's most important questions: "In the scope of eternity, what does this matter?"



This simple question can create a lens or filter through which we can assign value and importance to our experiences. It helps us know if something is worth getting upset about or not. If it's not going to matter two weeks from now, much less in eternity, *let it go*. Many of our stressors would be less stressful if we would just put them in perspective.

Both of my sons were athletes when they were growing up. They had a full supply of testosterone and were quite competitive. When you play sports, there are going to be wins and losses; when you're a boy or a young man, you can think those wins and losses are a lot more important than they actually are. But when filtered through the question, "In the scope of eternity, what does this matter," you can see both wins and losses as valuable for teaching and revealing character. (I put another calligraphy plaque in the bathroom as well: "Win without boasting, lose without excuses.")

I find myself invoking this question when trying to encourage

people caught in the throes of temptation. One of my friends is in the excruciating process of withdrawing from an addictive and sinful relationship. I ask her, "One hundred years from today, where will you be? When you are facing Jesus, what do you want to be glad you did now, and what do you want to avoid regretting? Think back on this difficult time from the position of one hundred years from today, when you are in eternity."

One of my dear ones has been doing hard work in counseling for over a year. When the challenge of facing one's internal pain is filtered through this question about eternity, it is encouraging to realize that cooperating with the Holy Spirit to uncover and relinquish his unhealed and broken parts is changing him forever, making him more fit for future Kingdom responsibilities and glory. The answer to the question, "In the scope of eternity, what does this matter," is "The hard work and pain will be totally worth it."

It's helpful to ask myself this question when I'm experiencing nighttime sleeplessness, or physical pain, or financial stress. And it's also helpful to ask myself this question when I'm concerned about my loved ones; when the answer is, "In the scope of eternity, this is REALLY important," it motivates me to pray. Hard. And long.

What are you wrestling with? In the scope of eternity, what does it matter, really? Does this question help?

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on Aug. 30, 2011

Is it Time to Change Your Filter?

Life doesn't just happen to us; we experience it and interpret it through a filter. That filter, like a pair of glasses, consists of beliefs and values we might not even realize we hold.

The same event could be experienced and interpreted in different ways by different people because of their different filters: for example, getting a flat tire. One person might get out of the car, see the flat, and start to rage: "What the **** is this? Why does this kind of **** always happen to me? You stupid tire!" This response is the result of a filter that believes life should be good and easy, that nothing bad should ever happen to her. This unrealistic expectation is a setup for massive disappointment and anger when life doesn't cooperate.

Another person might see the flat and think, "Oh bummer! Well, Lord, thank You for protecting me from a dangerous high-speed blowout. Please help me here—would You send a road angel to help me change out the spare?" This very different response is the result of a filter that recognizes we live in a fallen world where unfortunate and even bad things happen, but God is still good and we can call on Him to help us at any and every time.

We can't change life or the things that happen to us, but we can change our filter to bring it into alignment with biblical truth.

You might need to change your filter if:

- You consistently see the glass half-empty instead of half-full; if you always put a negative spin on any news you hear. [Check out Philippians 4:8]

- You see any comment other than glowing praise as a personal attack that threatens your well-being, and you aggressively growl back. [Check out Philippians 2:3]
- You dismiss other people's answers to prayers, and blessings they receive, as yet more proof that God loves everybody but you. [Check out Romans 8:38-39]
- You evaluate everything in terms of how you feel about it. You are nice to your spouse or your co-worker only when you feel like being nice; you don't repent if you don't feel repentant; you don't spend time with God if you don't feel like it; you are obedient when you feel like being obedient, etc. [Check out 2 Corinthians 10:5-6]
- You view everything in terms of the here-and-now, temporal, earthly sphere, and ignore the eternal, spiritual dimension. [Check out 2 Corinthians 4:18]
- You get uncomfortable when people bring spiritual conversations into Monday through Saturday because they only belong to Sunday. [Check out all references to the Lord Jesus Christ]

What do you think. . . is it time to change your filter?

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on Aug. 16, 2011.

Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life. Like It or Not.

Recently I have been engaging in an email conversation with a lady who is deeply burdened by the sinful choices and ungodly thinking of a young man dear to her. As we have talked about what she can do, our conversation turned to prayer. Yesterday she asked, "How does intercessory prayer make/change/mediate the young man's own will? How does the person we pray for 'get the message'? How can we pray for God's will to be done when it is against the will of the person we're praying for? How does our prayer help the person to *want* God's will for themselves? How does my intercessory prayer help the person I'm praying for yield their own will and turn it over to God's will?"

I answered, "You're asking about the mechanics of how something spiritual works, and I don't know that the Word gives us that kind of information. But think about how *you* have changed *your* thinking about anything. How did you go from being dead in your trespasses and sins, to being alive in Christ? How did you go from caring more about yourself than anyone else (because sinful humanity is inherently selfish) to having a desire to pray selflessly for others?"

"I would suggest that God gave you enlightenment, showing you more and more truth, at the same time drawing you into His own heart. You started gravitating toward what was true, and Jesus said, 'I am the truth.'

"At the same time, God never violated your will, allowing you to freely choose to turn to Him in faith and in choices that matured you. How those work together, I don't think anyone understands."

Ah. Mystery. We keep running into it, don't we? And that makes

sense, since God is so other, so immense, so brilliant—do we really expect that we would be able to figure out how the spiritual realm works, much less figuring out God Himself? But with our modernist, Western, scientific mindset, we are set up to disdain mystery (and all things supernatural). The progression of scientific knowledge and understanding has stripped the apparently mystical and miraculous from things like how babies are conceived and how illness spreads. Our culture's misplaced confidence in science to solve all problems extends to mystery; we tend to think, "Oh, we just haven't figured it out yet. . .but we will."

We want to know *how things work*, and there's nothing wrong with that. I think that wrestling with that question is one way we can love God with our minds (Matt. 22:37). But there are also going to be times to choose to be content with mystery, and let it serve its role of pointing us to the One who delights to weave mystery into life like a divine tapestry.

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What Bible?

May 29, 2013

Sometimes the only way you can respond to a statement is to ask, What Bible are they reading? That happened recently on my radio program when Penna Dexter and I were interviewing Joseph Farah of WorldNetDaily. He said that he allows commentators of

various political persuasions to write and post their columns.

One of those columnists is Bill Press who recently wrote: "Nowhere in the Bible does God condemn homosexuality." The predictable response from us was, What Bible is he reading? He goes on to argue that "nowhere in the Bible does God say marriage must only be between one man and one woman. After all, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines."

Actually, the argument goes the other way. If you legalize same-sex marriage, then sooner or later you will probably legalize polygamy. Every argument for redefining marriage to allow same-sex unions also is an argument for other marital arrangements.

But the more important question is whether the Bible ever condemns homosexuality. Two passages in Leviticus call it an abomination. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Rome and the church in Corinth condemns homosexuality. Those are four verses for starters.

But of course, we can also understand the negative prohibitions by looking at the positive principles. Genesis 2 sets forth the biblical principle of a man and woman leaving father and mother to become one flesh. Jesus refers back to this foundational principle in Matthew 19 (which we also can find again in Mark 10).

And the Bible also teaches that this sexual sin has consequences not only for the individual but for the nation. Joseph Farah said: "This is about as serious as the Bible gets in condemnation. This is not only sin that affects the individuals involved, it's the kind of sin that has ramifications for the entire nation."

While it may be easy for Bible-believing Christians to shake their heads and ask, What Bible is he reading? But in this culture of biblical illiteracy, many people are likely to take the word of Bill Press rather than look it up in the Word of

God. That's why we must firmly, but lovingly, teach God's Word. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Maximum Faith

May 31, 2011

How does God transform the lives of Christians? If you think the answer to that question is easy, perhaps you should talk with George Barna. Six years after beginning what he assumed would be a relatively typical research process that sought to better understand how God transforms people's lives, he discovered he had tackled a deeply challenging and amazingly revealing journey. The end product was his new book, *Maximum Faith*.

After lots of research and exhausting surveys, he was able to describe what he calls ten stop points on the journey to wholeness. Stop 1 is ignorance of the concept or existence of sin. Millions of people grow up oblivious to the fact that God exists and that we have a sin nature. Stop 2 is an awareness and indifference to sin. As life goes on, people gain exposure to the idea of sin, but many do not accept it as valid or significant. Stop 3 is concerned about the implications of personal sin. And stop 4 is a decision to confess sin and ask Jesus Christ to be savior. It is worth noting that about 2/3rd of Americans are stuck in one of these four stops.

Stop 5 is a commitment to faith activities. A believer gets involved in church activities (church service, Sunday School classes, etc.). Another quarter of Americans are at this stop. This means that nearly 90 percent of Americans are stuck at one of the first five stops and are not therefore not experiencing the other five stops that George Barna has

identified.

Stop 6 is a prolonged period of spiritual discontent. Stop 7 is an experience of personal brokenness. Stop 8 is a decision to surrender and submit fully to God. Stop 9 is enjoying a profound intimacy with the love for God. And stop 10 is experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity.

It is worth noting that only a fraction of a percent find themselves in these last two stops. In general, Christians in America are not experiencing what God intends for them. Put another way, most Christians are captive to the culture and therefore unwilling to seek godliness. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Feelings: A Lousy Idol

It's so easy to look down our 21st-century noses at the "primitive" peoples of biblical times, especially Israel's problems with idolatry in the Old Testament. "WE don't bow down before idols and false gods," we think. "That was when people were less evolved intellectually and spiritually, but we modern people are so much better than that."

I'm wondering if God agrees. I don't think so.

I think that idolatry is at least as rampant in our society, but it's more pervasive because it's so subtle; the idols we worship aren't physical, tangible items. We could create a long list of the abstractions we worship, but today I just want to focus on one.

Feelings.

Our culture treats feelings as if they were an inerrant

internal compass that always points to truth and reality. "Follow your heart." "What does your gut say?" "You can't help who you fall in love with."

High school and college students flunk out because they don't **feel** like getting out of bed and going to school. Then they become people who lose their jobs because they don't **feel** like going to work.

Young people of all ages dress, act, and talk in ways that will make them **feel** popular and accepted by their peers.

Married people find themselves attracted to someone other than their spouse, and they feed the marvelous feelings of infatuation because it makes them **feel** so alive and magical.

We indulge bodily appetites, whether for sweets or drink or overeating or sexual pleasure, because they **feel** so good and because refusing to indulge them **feels** so bad.

The materialism porn of magazines and newspapers starts an internal burning desire to buy and to accumulate. It **feels** so right to go out and get what we want! If we don't have the money, we put it on credit because, hey, "I should have what I want."

We are happily addicted to our comfort because we believe that **feeling** comfortable is a basic right of life. So we don't give ourselves away in service projects or missions trips or going without in order to use the money for someone who has less than we do, because then we wouldn't **feel** so comfortable.

Why is this? Why do we make our feelings into idols?

I believe it's because the toxic ["pickling brine"](#) of our culture puts a much higher emphasis on the immediate, the here-and-now, of the physical world (which our feelings are part of). The majority of Christians, the research shows, think just like the non-Christian world around us, and that

includes ignoring the unseen, eternal world and focusing on the visible, temporal world.

When we recalibrate our focus to include the unseen sphere of life, we are aware of the spiritual dimension of life and not just the physical. It makes us more balanced people. We can put feelings in their place: they are like lights on the dashboard of our car, indicating what's going on "under the hood." But if we focus on the dashboard lights while we drive, instead of on the road, we'll run off the road—or worse, crash. We can acknowledge them but refuse to let them lead us.

For example, Hebrews 12:2 tells us that the Lord Jesus "for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." He focused on the eternal (the joy set before Him) instead of the temporal (the shame of the cross). Corrie Ten Boom wisely said, "Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it." This lady really understood how to put feelings in their place. This survivor of the WWII death camps also said, "Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart."

Feelings are not evil; we have feelings because we are made in the image of a passionate God who experiences a robust range of feelings. But they *are* fallen because everything about us is fallen ever since sin entered the world.

That's why feelings make lousy idols.

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Ominous Ruling from the UK

March 14, 2011

A landmark ruling in the U.K. will have a major impact on the future of foster care and adoption in that country. The High Court suggested that Christians with traditional beliefs on sexual ethics are unsuitable as foster care parents. And they went on to argue that gay rights trump religious beliefs and freedom of conscience.

A key lawyer in the case was Paul Diamond, a prominent Christian barrister in England. I have had him on my radio program on two occasions to talk about how ideas in the U.K. often make it to the U.S. He has noticed that our legal system is going down the same path as England and has wanted to warn us about this trend. What happens in the U.K. doesn't stay in the U.K. It crosses the Atlantic to our nation. Many justices are interested in trends in international law and work to implement those ideas in our opinions. And when the Supreme Court takes a break over the summer, many of the justices go over to Europe to study and lecture.

This current case has ominous implications for Christians in England and could eventually have an impact in this country. A married couple (Eunice and Owen Johns) applied to be foster care parents in 2007. The Derby City Council blocked their application because the Johns were not willing to promote the practice of homosexuality to a young child. Both parties asked the High Court to rule on whether they could be foster parents.

The High Court Judges upheld an Equalities and Human Rights submission that children that might be in the care of the couple risk being "infected" (their word) by Christian moral beliefs. That stated that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be "inimical" to children. In other words, these Christian

beliefs are harmful to children.

While it is true that this ruling merely applies to this particular couple, it signals that other Christians who hold to orthodox Christian views on sex, marriage, and family are likely to face difficulties in the future. This ruling will likely be applied to any Christian wanting to be a foster parent or adopt a child. And it is possible that some day in the future we may see a similar ruling in America. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Psalm 8

April 22, 2011

If you study astronomy for very long, you can feel very small. We are a small planet in one solar system in one of many galaxies. Just consider some of the comments by scientists about our place in the universe.

Werner von Braun said: "We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people."

Astronaut Neil Armstrong said he felt very small when he was in space. "It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very small."

Stephen Hawking said: "We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the universe. That makes us something very special." I don't know about you, but I don't feel very

special just because I can understand the universe.

David asks the same question in Psalm 8. Are human beings special? Speaking to God he says: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”

David then gives God’s answer to this important question. “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”

Our significance doesn’t come from being on planet Earth or even from understanding the nature of the universe. Our significance comes from the fact that an all-powerful, loving God created us in His image and gave us dominion over His creation.

Astronomy interpreted from a naturalistic worldview doesn’t give us significance. Only a Christian worldview which teaches that we are God’s special creation can give us true significance. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

Funeral Myths

I went to a friend’s funeral yesterday where I heard a number of things to add to my running mental list of “funeral myths.” With the ever-increasing degree of Bible Illiteracy, combined with the growing number of believers who are “cultural captives,” more conformed to the culture than to Christ

(please see my earlier blog [“Are You a Pickle?”](#)), it’s not surprising that people would have unbiblical beliefs about death, heaven, and God.

Several songs were played at my friend’s funeral. One is called “Borrowed Angels,” which started like this:

They shine a little brighter, they feel a little more
They touch your life in ways no one has ever done before
They love a little stronger, they live to give their best
They make our lives so blest, so why do they go so soon?
The ones with souls so beautiful
I heard someone say—

There must be Borrowed Angels, here in this life
They come along, into this world, and make this world bright
But they can’t stay forever
Cause they’re heaven sent
And sometimes, heaven needs them back again

No, people are not “borrowed angels.” God created the angels before He created mankind. We are very different from angels; they were created to serve God and serve us, and we are created to be drawn into and enjoy the love, fellowship, joy and delight of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They made us in Their image (Genesis 1:26), which elevates us above angels. People and angels are two different kinds of creation, and one does not become the other.

Which brings me to another myth I heard yesterday: that Valerie is now “our guardian angel.” While this may be a comforting thought to those gripped by loss, no she’s not. She’s enjoying unhindered, face-to-face worship of Jesus and fellowship with those who now live in heaven.

Do we have guardian angels? The Bible doesn’t give a definitive answer on that, although the Lord Jesus did say, “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face

of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). And Psalm 91:11 promises, "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (from my article [Angels: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly](#) at Probe.org).

At yesterday's funeral, people stood up to make comments about our friend. One distraught lady concluded her remarks with an angry, "God, You'd better take good care of her." My heart went out to her, not just because of her grief but because she doesn't know that God is good and doesn't need to be cajoled, much less threatened, into caring for His beloved daughter. Sometimes people get angry with God for taking someone home earlier than they want, and the anger comes from a sense of betrayal—as if God doesn't have the right to determine the length of a person's life. Yet Psalm 139:16 says, "All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be." None of us lives a single day more, or less, than God had determined before He even created us. *A loving God is in control*—and that extends to the days of our birth and our death.

The man who conducted the funeral told a story about how they used to keep a little girl in their family in line by threatening that Valerie would get after her with her spanking switch. "Well now Valerie's not here," he told us, "so we tell the little girl, "Valerie's got her spanking switch with her in heaven and when you get up there she's gonna bust your butt."

Uh, no.

Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Valerie's not busting any butts in heaven, and part of the good news is that God isn't either!

When my aunt died, someone tucked a deck of cards under her hands in her casket because Aunt Maggi loved to play cards and

they were sure she was having a great time up in heaven playing pinochle with her brothers. When my mother died, several relatives comforted each other by laughing about how Mom had finally joined the great heavenly card party. This is another myth about heaven, that it's a lot like our human activities on earth, only better. People who believe this myth usually have no concept of the greatness and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, or they wouldn't be willing to settle for images of unending card games and fishing and bowling tournaments.

What funeral myths have *you* come across?

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