

## CHURCH SERVICE ETIQUETTE

There are many articles and sermons about the parts of a worship service, and as we grow as Christians, we come to know these well. While we should never stop writing these articles and preaching these sermons, especially for the benefit of younger people and those new to the Church, we have other issues regarding Church services not covered by these important teachings. In today's changing world with today's generation of Christians, we encounter issues not seen in past times. The purpose of this article is to address many of those issues often not covered regarding us as an audience. We'll call these things the Church service "etiquette."

In our worship services, we have one person at a time who leads a song, one person at a time who prays, and one person at a time who preaches. We are taught what these men are to do, but what about those in the audience, where there are many? The simplest answers are the following:

1. We are to quietly sit there with attentive minds during the sermon and prayer (1 Cor 14:34-35).
2. Sing with our hearts (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16).
3. Examine ourselves, focus on Jesus' pain and suffering upon the cross, and look forward to his coming during Communion (1 Cor 11:26-29).

As simple as it should be, we do a terrific job of complicating matters.

The first thing we should do when we walk into the building is find a place to sit. As Christians we should be eager to be among those of like precious faith and to worship God. We should be excited at the possibility of learning more about God's word. Yet, why is it the back of the building fills up first? It's certainly not for a better view. There are several good reasons to sit near the back of the building. Those who are sick and those with young children honestly need the back so they can quietly make their way to a restroom or outside the building. However, most of the time, I see people not even near these situations arriving as early as possible to "get a good seat" in the back. Is that where an eager Christian would sit?

We'll arrive hours early to a ballgame to sit as close to the action as possible, yet sit in the back of the building during services like we don't want to be noticed. When I was younger, I assumed those without good reason to sit in the back sat there because they didn't actually want to be there. Do we want young people to interpret this as I did? I've always viewed those who sat near the front as those who are most excited to be there.

People arrive late to services sometimes, and it can be very distracting if during the song service a family has to cross the entire congregation and make their way up to the second pew because the back filled up an hour before services started. Let's leave space in the back for those who are ill, have children, arrive late, or have other legitimate issues.

In today's modern society, we have more distractions than we used to in the Church service. Aside from the visual distractions, we're serenaded with candy wrappers crinkling, nails being clipped, and cell phone ringtones. To avoid distracting others, when we pass notes and cough drops/candy along pews, let's keep things out of sight so not as to distract those behind us. Some candy wrappers can be very loud, but we should try to open wrappers as quietly as possible. Some in the audience have enough trouble hearing as it is. The church service is not the time to do your manicure. Remember that Jesus was nailed to the cross; Jesus didn't do his nails on that cross. Save the audience from the clipping sounds and the mess it leaves behind, and do this somewhere else.

Remember to turn off our cell phones, or at least put them on silent. Five years ago this wouldn't be an issue. Now nearly everyone in the audience has a cell phone, even those who don't really know how to use one. They've become so rampantly common that cell phones are now often used to entertain the young children. It has also become commonplace for cell phones to go off during services, often without the owner realizing it's their phone causing the disturbance. Let's avoid the distraction it causes in the middle of the sermon and silence our cell phones before services begin.

If we treated the Church service like attending a movie, our etiquette would probably improve. If we were in a dark movie theater, we wouldn't dare risk having our cell phones

sound off for risk of angering the crowd of movie-goers. We would get there early, eager for a good seat. We would adjust our behavior and devices to avoid disrupting the movie, and to avoid offending the audience. Why can't we do this for Church services as well?

We need to be considerate of others in the audience by being quietly attentive and by self-contained behavior. I recently attended a high school show, and in the program was a list of golden rules of audience etiquette. After substituting a few words, this list is a guide we could follow in the Church service:

1. Go easy with the atomizer; many people are highly allergic to perfume and cologne.
2. If you bring a child, make sure etiquette is part of the experience.
3. Unwrap all candies and cough drops before the service begins.
4. Make sure cell phones, beepers, and watch alarms are off. Don't jangle your keys.
5. When the service has been called to order, please cease talking at this point.
6. Force yourself to wait for a pause before rifling through a purse or bag.
7. Leaving while service is in progress is discourteous.
8. Honor the old standby: Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you.

This is only an overview of general etiquette in the worship services. There are many more specific topics that could be covered. In the next article, we will examine etiquette regarding children in the Church service.

**BEN**

## **APOLOGIA**

**QUESTION:** God in the Bible tells that we are to acknowledge Him and He will direct our paths. Exactly what does this involve and how is it accomplished?

**ANSWER:** The verse referenced is from Proverbs where Solomon is declaring the need to live wisely in this fallen world. The context of the verse is found in a section of scripture that sets forth basic principles for living wisely. The passage reads,

*"My Son do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.*

*Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

*Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.*

*Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine."*

*(Proverbs 3:1-10)*

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to impart wisdom and instruction. To furnish people who have had their minds darkened by sin to have understanding. It is written so that the simple will have prudence and the young man can have knowledge and discretion. In short it extols the importance of seeking to live our life with wisdom as opposed to folly.

The passage given above shows that when one lives wisely there will always be blessings that follow. Note carefully the following:

If we remember God's commands and obey them, length of days, long life, and peace will be ours to enjoy.

If we are merciful and seek truth we will have favor with both God and man.

If we fear the Lord and shun evil we will have good health.

If we honor God with our possessions we will be provided with that which we have need.

We purposefully left out the one which is the subject of our study for we will deal with it in detail later in our

article. But we mention these to show that there is a sowing and reaping aspect to living by wisdom. This is why we should "cry out for discernment and lift up our voice seeking understanding, and seek her as silver, and search her as for hidden treasure" (Proverbs 2:3-4). Wisdom is the principle thing.

Now turning our attention to the inquiry we will seek the proper application. Solomon tells us that if we will trust the Lord in that which He says, if we will not be foolish enough to try and make our own way in the world but instead make Him a part of all that we do, we will have paths that are directed by Him. Remember He never leads us wrong.

The writer is exhorting us to learn to make wise choices as we live our lives. Sin has certainly had an impact upon us. Because of sin we have suffered relationship problems. These are both vertical (God and man) as well as horizontal (person to person). Sin has impacted us physically. Consequently we grow old and die. Sin has also impacted our hearts. This includes our emotions, our will, and our ability to see things the way they really are. When left to our own hearts we go astray. We desperately need guidance. If we will fear God, He will show us the way in which we should go.

There are three main principles we need to keep in mind in order to have our paths made straight. All of these deal with how we handle ourselves in this world. It is about making wise choices every day.

Principle No. 1- Make the Worship of God the main thing in your life. While there are many things that demand our attention we must never allow ourselves to forget that we all live, move, and have our very being in Him. We all live under the umbrella of His being. Since this is the case then we need to make Him the focal point of our lives. He is to be the center of our employment (either employer or employee), our marriages, in raising our children, handling our money, and any other thing our hand finds to do. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the pearl of great price that we should sell all to possess. There is nothing greater than knowing and pursuing Him. The apostle Paul wrote concerning his accomplishments before becoming a Christian. Of these he said,

*"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss*

*for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence for the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him."*  
(Philippians 3:7-9)

To acknowledge God in all you do is to make Him the center of your existence.

Principle No. 2- Make the most of the time that God has given you. We need to do as the Latin phrase "Carpe Diem" states. It means seize the day! In Ephesians 5 and verse 15 Paul instructs us to "*...walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*"

Our life on this earth is fleeting at best. We are as the grass of the field, blooming today but fading tomorrow. Redeeming the time means that we are to be zealous in doing good works. We acknowledge God when we carry out the work He has given us to do.

Principle No. 3- Flee from Sin. As Christians we all need to be reminded of the fact that we are weak and frail in our fleshly state. While we are forgiven, the scripture is clear that we are involved in a battle. Paul tells us that the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh so that we do not do the things that we wish (Galatians 5:17). This is why we are told that if anyone thinks he has no sin he is deceived (I John 1:8). Sin does not leave our lives naturally. Only by waging war do we deal with sin properly. Paul in the Roman letter warns that if we live according to the flesh we shall die but if we put to death the deeds of the body we shall live (Romans 8:13). We face temptation daily and many times we fail. We must make battling sin one of our daily tasks. We must put it to death in our lives.

If we follow these principles we are walking wisely. Those who orient their life around these truths are acknowledging God in such a way that He through His truth will direct us safely through the landmines of a fallen world.

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# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 1 – 5	Cold Springs Brookhaven, MS	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 5 – 7	Valley Valley, AL	Don Thompson (Wedowee, AL)
June 7 – 12	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Chad Prince (Oxford, AL)
June 8 – 12	Sunset View Chapmanville, WV	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 11 – 14	Athens Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 12 – 14	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
June 14 – 19	Mount Carmel Woodland, AL	Danny Abercrombie (Gay, GA)
June 19 – 21	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
June 21 – 26	Ephesus Ephesus, GA	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 25 – 26	Summer Fellowship Conference Desoto State Park, AL	Various Speakers
June 25 – 28	Bethany Windsor, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 26 – 28	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IN)
June 29 – July 3	2009 Camp Meeting Gatlinburg, TN	Various Speakers

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Under the Old Law, how long was a woman "customarily unclean" after giving birth?
2. Ruth stayed with Naomi and returned with her to Naomi's homeland, which was where?
3. According to First Chronicles, who moved David to number Israel?
4. What two things did Jesus tell the people to do when they fasted?
5. In Paul's letters to Timothy, who did Paul say was worse than an unbeliever?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What does the Bible say Manna tasted like?    WAFERS  
MADE WITH HONEY (Exo 16:31)
2. According to Psalms 112, what will be in the house of  
the man who fears the Lord?    WEALTH AND RICHES (Psa  
112:3)
3. In Isaiah's prophecy against Jerusalem, what did  
Isaiah refer to Jerusalem as?    THE VALLEY OF VISION  
(Isa 22:1,5)
4. According to Acts, who was the first apostle to die as  
a martyr?    JAMES, BROTHER OF JOHN (Acts 12:2)
5. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, what are the three  
types of evil persons who have no inheritance in the  
kingdom of Christ and God?    WHOREMONGER, UNCLEAR  
PERSON, COVETOUS MAN (Eph 5:5)