

“Let All Things Be Done Decently And In Order”

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Proper worship etiquette reflects respect for the divine order in displaying adoration to God. Principles of acceptable worship are based on respect for God as seen in the word “worship” from the Greek *proskuneo* which means “to bow before, to kiss the hand toward.” The last thing a true worshiper ever wants to do is to embarrass himself in the presence of God by not following proper protocol. Scriptural precedent emerges from such passages as Habakkuk 2:20, “But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” The well known Psalm 100 verses 2 through 4 contain noteworthy principles of acceptable worship as the reader bears in mind that the old law is for our learning and the new law regulates our practices in worship today, “Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” Items some members of the church need to work on today to bring the worship into harmony with the mandate contained in the title are obvious to even the casual observer.

Slumber or Study?

Let’s begin with proper preparation for worship by resting up the night before. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead when he fell asleep and toppled out of an upstairs window (Acts 20:8-12). You wonder if he ever fell asleep in worship after that! Some are doing the best they can due to the prescription medication the doctor has them on, but honestly some slump down into a nest at virtually every service to the embarrassment of themselves and their families. How could this *not* contribute to fewer return visits from our guests? A preacher recently

observed during a lectureship lesson on “Pointers For Parenting” that children watch so much television and the picture changes every 3 to 5 seconds leaving little surprise that children become bored easily when the sermon is being presented. And, the preacher certainly cannot accept the responsibility for putting the children to sleep when they fall asleep during the singing! What can be done is obvious: Parents stay awake yourselves setting the example of good listening. Make sure the children are attentive, following along in their Bible where practical. Nudging the children verifying strong points that are being made keeps them actively listening. Recently an eleven year old girl caught herself inattentive, left the assembly, washed her face, and returned more alert. Bless her heart!

Sensational or Serious?

Concentration during public prayer urges consideration from the congregation. Is it correct to say, “Amen,” throughout the prayer? A case in point: The man gets up before the congregation to lead the prayer and says, “Let us pray.” And, someone from the audience says, “Amen.” How is that for breaking the concentration necessary to reverent prayer? “Amen” is the *last* word, not the first word in the prayer. You had him stopping before he could get started! Audible amen’s from the worshipers do not need to be heard by the whole congregation. The writer of Hebrews said, “Let us consider one another...” (Heb. 10:24). Our participation in worship must be “done decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40). When the preacher says nothing about what is going on during worship, you wind up with all manner of unauthorized athletic expression like hand clapping, arm waving, and verbal chattering that distract from reverent worship.

Silent or Singing?

Christians must sing in order to worship. Hebrews teaches, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15). No singing; no "sacrifice of praise to God." Clear? In the Old Testament worshipers were not to appear before God empty handed; they were to bring their sacrifices in order to worship God. "They shall not appear before the Lord empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:16a-17). Some gave more than others, but all gave something! Some sing better than others, but all better sing! Even some parents are falling down on this by not having their children to sing. Do you remember when Moses did not want to do the speaking God was asking him to do, and he got Aaron to do it? The question, "How did God feel about that?" finds answer in Exodus 4:14, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." Who would want to run the risk of making God angry at him today for not wanting to do what God asked him to do by "singing praises to his name"? God does not expect anyone to perform on a level on which he is incapable of performing. This principle is just as true in regard to singing as it is in connection with giving, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (II Cor. 8:12).

Summary Statement

Those interested in worshiping God "in spirit and in truth" will "let all things be done decently and in order." "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. 5:1-2).