
A Lesson on Church Etiquette

Horizon Bible Church

March 2016

Church Etiquette

But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner”

1 Corinthians 15:40 (NASB)

Our Lord set forth the standard for the practice of church discipline in Matthew 18. The apostle

Paul established church orderliness and polity in his letters to the Corinthians, Timothy and Titus. Thus since the founding of the early church and throughout the ages, the church has been the only of the institution where dignity, protocol, respect, and reverence are biblically mandated. This is primarily because when we come to the church and its services we are entering the Kingdom of God on earth and we choose to honor this sacred place by our attentiveness to what is proper and ordered. We have the opportunity to reflect the image of Christ within us by our actions. *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation”* (1 Peter 2:9).

This presentation is meant for personal reflection, not as a means of judging others. We come to church to pray and worship God above all else, and that should be our only focus.

For our consideration and practice we have listed some of the thing worshippers need to know about respectful and reverent church behavior. It is intended that all congregation members,

couples and families make use of these principles/

Definition of Church Etiquette

Church etiquette is a set of rules that govern behavior in the house of God. It comes from the same principle as the etiquette that governs behavior in polite society. With that said let's look at some basic rules of etiquette.

Prepare your heart for Sunday.

Give yourself time. Plan Saturday night to leave on time Sunday morning.

Come on time ~ Punctuality is consideration of another individual' s schedule. Those who arrive late create a distraction. The experience of singing and worship is as vital to us as the intellectual experience of learning and the volitional experience of obeying.

Be respectful of others if you have a crying child... You can go to the fellowship hall.

Once you come into the Worship Center auditorium and the service begins, do not talk, especially in the back. You may think that you are not being heard but to those in your vicinity it becomes a distraction to them.

If you should come in late for some reason, sit in the back rather than coming down front.

Food or beverages are never to be consumed in the Worship Center auditorium.

Our morning services lasts less than 2 hours; from 10:30-12:30. Do not leave the service until after the benediction is given. Be respectful.

If a child (not a baby) is brought to service, then the child must behave. If a child is brought to church it is to train them in adult ways. Playing a computer game defeats the purpose as well as being disrespectful. It also teaches a child to be irreverent.

Respect the building. Kindly pick up after yourself. Habits build character.

Church Building ~ The Worship Center Auditorium

Our Lord said, “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*”(Matthew 18:20)

Arrive on time for service, at least five minutes early. Late arrivals should enter quietly and sit in the back.

A church clean ~ This is a way to honor God. Remember the outside of the church reflects the inside of the church. Make certain that trash is picked up, that the flowerbeds are tended, and that nothing unsightly mars the look of God’ s house.

Pulpit ~ Only the minister or invited speakers are allowed to speak from the center pulpit. Children should be taught at young ages that this is a sacred spot and can never be used as a play area.

Communion Table ~ The Communion table is used for the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Ministers and others who are in charge of the Communion service are the only individuals permitted to use it. Personal items should never be placed on the Communion table.

Church Bibles and Hymnals ~ Bibles and Hymnals that are placed in pews are to be treated with care and respect. They should not be written on or used to dispose of gum.

Talking during Church ~ Personal conversation with friends and family should not take place during the service. This is a time to commune with God. Talk to God while in church through your prayers, hymns, and thanksgiving, and to your friends in the social hall afterwards

Don't make unnecessary noises. Tear off your check before church, unwrap your cough drops beforehand. Adjust the velcro on your shoes after church. It is the little things that are loud and disruptive. Take a moment and prepare for a respectful and meaningful time.

Children in Church - *Christ said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 19:14)

It is never appropriate to allow a child to run down the aisles, play loudly, or carry toys that make noise. It is possible for young children to remain in church throughout a service if they are taught to be quiet and respectful. Please be respectful to those around you if your child becomes fussy or out of control and remove him from the Service quickly. Plan to have your children use the restroom and get a drink before church begins, and don't allow them to come and go continually. Consider bringing your children into the church at a time when the Service is finished to "practice" church behavior. Teach them that they are visiting God's very special house, and they will need to have very special manners there.

Leaving Before Dismissal ~ Leaving church before the Dismissal - besides being rude - deprives us of a blessing. Worship has a beginning (the Call to Worship"...) and an end ("the Benediction"). (Leaving to quiet an infant, or other emergencies are acceptable exceptions.)

Leaving Church –

Typically, you should not leave the Worship Center Auditorium during prayers, the reading of the Scripture or the Sermon. You should remain in church until the *benediction* (final prayer of the service) has been said. However, there will be times when a person really needs to leave the service. When this occurs, please do so as discreetly as possible, with the least amount of disruption to the service and the least amount of distraction to your fellow brothers and sisters who are worshipping. If you must leave the sanctuary during church service, do not pass in front of the pulpit. The following times are usually good if one must leave or re-enter the sanctuary: During a hymn.

- During the collection of the offerings.
- If possible, a person **should not** leave or re-enter the sanctuary:
- During the opening of the worship service.

- During a prayer.
- During the announcements period.

Refrain from reserving seats. Allow others to sit as they come into the church, and especially make room for visitors so they will feel welcome.

Language that Honors God - Part of your commitment to God is to use language that honors God. Swearing in the Worship Center auditorium or in other part of the church or church grounds is forbidden.

Walking

- Never walk in front or across the front of the alter and/or the pulpit area during worship
- Never walk when individuals are reading the scriptures or during prayer
- If you are walking and someone begins to read the scripture or begins to pray, **STOP** and stand until they are finished

Sitting ~ *When is the appropriate time to sit?*

- Prelude
- During prayer
- Announcements
- Greeting of Visitors

Offering ~ *When and where is the appropriate place and time, to prepare your offering?*
(Get money from your parents, fill out the offering envelopes etc...) You should take care of all business before entering the Worship Center auditorium (use the restroom, write out your offering envelope, get funds from parents if needed etc...) Once you have entered the Worship Center auditorium, you should regard it as time spent with God. You should not talk, walk, chew gum, text message or write notes during the worship experience.

Christian clothing ~ Sunday Dress

Dress for church in a manner that shows respect. Your dress reflects your heart. Be neat and properly attired. You are going to church to fellowship with and honor God. We should dress modestly, not in a flashy way that would bring attention to ourselves. Our dress should always be becoming of a Christian - especially at church. A woman's clothes should not be too low, too high or too tight (clothing that exposes the breast, very low cleavage, upper thigh, and midriff are not appropriate). A man should not be sloppy with his pants hanging below the buttock. A young person should not draw attention to themselves with T-shirts

having inappropriate slogans and symbols. Remember; use your best judgment and good taste when dressing for church.

Come as you are???

This invitation, "Come as you are," has unfortunately evolved over the years into an invitation to literally roll out of a cave and come as you are.

The Benediction ~ Why is it important to stay in the worship service until the benediction is given?

- At the end of the worship experience, the pastor or preacher will administer the prayer of benediction. It is important to receive the benedictional prayer. The benediction is a prayer that God may bestow certain blessings on His people.

In Old Testament times, a regular part of the Temple service was pronouncing the benediction. The form of the priestly benediction was prescribed in the law “The Lord bless you and keep you; / The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; / The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, And give you peace” (Num. 6:24–26).

- The benediction many call the “Apostolic Benediction,” is often used at the conclusion of a Christian worship service “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14).

Cell Phones and Texting

Cell phones and texting are never allowed in the church. If you have a situation that requires you to keep your electronic device on, turn it on silent or vibrate and answer it outside if needed.

Texting is not only distracting to those around you it is sacrilegious. We are to “*in humility receive the word implanted*” and “*as newborn babes long for the pure milk of the word.*” Texting when one should be listening is a sinful and dishonoring thing in the presence of the explanation of Holy Scripture. In a court of law if one’s cell phone rings or one is seen texting, they will be fined for contempt. How much more disrespectful is it to Him who is the very source of law? Texting and talking should be saved for outside of the church. If you are anticipating an emergency call, sit on the aisle near the back and quietly slip outside and answer the call.

Attentiveness

Don't fall asleep in church. If you are that tired, stay home. You can make an effort to stay awake by doing small things to keep your mind awake. Sit up straight. Take notes. Wiggle your toes. Consider the principles presented and how they would apply to your life. These keep your mind moving and help to keep sleep at bay.

The above list of church etiquette tips is intended to serve not as a gentle reminder to worshipers that good manners and proper etiquette are important in the house of God.

Addressing the Pastor

The Pastor of the church studies, prays, counsels, and dispenses the Word of God with all diligence. It is the proper thing to do addressing Him as “Pastor” . Addressing him by his first name shows a lack of respect for the position that God the Father has given him.

(Revised January 2020)