

It Is Written

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BEHAVIOR IN WORSHIP

By Gene Taylor

True worship, extended in the proper manner and spirit, will edify us and intensify the hope of heaven. But when our worship is not taken seriously, our actions are impotent and our spirituality weakened.

Worshiping God is a serious matter which should not be taken lightly. When Christians assemble for worship, Jesus is with them in a special way (Matt. 18:20). Therefore, whatever is done at worship services is done openly before Him and whatever hinders His people from worshiping Him affects Him (remember the teaching of Matthew 25:31-46, i.e., what is done to his brothers is done to Him).

Historically, as a people, we have had behavior problems at services. There is noise before services and distractions during services (in and out of restrooms, note-passing, talking, etc.).

The Heart Of The Problem

What is at the heart of these problems? Is it a lack of love? For some it is, especially young people. Some youngsters are only at services because their parents make them come. But for most this is not the reason. Is it a lack of desire? I do not think so. Most of those who are present desire to please God or they would not be there. The cause of these problems is a lack of appreciation for the sanctity of worship.

Too many people possess an attitude that is just too casual for proper worship. Some approach the worship services of the church with the same attitude they have in engaging in secular activities such as attending school, going to work or even going to the doctor. If problems with worship are going to be solved and people are ever going to worship properly, the attitudes with which they view worship must improve.

What Misbehavior At Worship Services Reveals

Misbehavior at services reveals a lack of respect for the speaker. The preacher or Bible class teacher deserves respect because of the word he is teaching (see Heb. 12:25-26). When people act improperly during preaching or in a Bible class, talking when the preacher or teacher is talking, interrupting in class, laughing and cutting up, etc., they have a disregard for both the messenger and the message. Too many, both young and old, view the speaker with the same attitude with which they view a secular teacher.

Misbehavior at services among the young shows a lack of respect for parents. Young people, your parents have often suffered to give you life, to care for you when you could not care for yourself, to clothe you, feed you, and stand by you. How do you think it makes them feel to learn you caused a disturbance during Bible classes or preaching? Consider Proverbs 15:5: "A fool despises his father's instruction, But he who receives correction is prudent."

Misbehavior at services shows a lack of respect for those sitting nearby. It is hard to teach and even harder to listen when there are distractions and disruptions all around you. All people, young and old, need to be considerate of those around them. Also, they need to remember their behavior impacts visitors. Visitors may be watching and judging the Lord's church by your actions. Just recently I heard a visitor to our services comment to one of our members after services had ended that they had never seen so many people with weak bladders.

Misbehavior at services shows a lack of maturity. All young people are anxious to grow up and become adults. But when they, and those who are older, misbehave they are acting like children.

Misbehavior at services demonstrates a lack of respect for God. It is one thing not to respect the preacher or teacher but it is another thing altogether to show disrespect to the all-mighty God of heaven. Ask yourself, are the things you do when misbehaving at services (talking, giggling, laughing, gazing about, punching each other, writing notes, playing with trading cards, interrupting, making rude remarks, etc.) worth losing your soul over? God takes it that seriously. We should have His same attitude.

Some Suggested Remedies

Parents, begin training early. Do not just teach your children to be quiet. Teach them to reverence and respect God. Sit near the front where there are fewer distractions. Sit as a family. Do not let your children routinely go to the restroom. Do not let your children play. While toddlers may need something for entertainment, children of five or six years old and up can sit quietly and listen and participate. You will be amazed how soon they will learn the words of the songs and what they might glean from the lesson. Understand, it is not enough just to bring your children to services. They must be doing what is proper while they are here if they are to benefit from them and develop an interest in spiritual things.

Set a good example before your children. Show interest and attention. Do not sleep or engage in activities which are secular. Show the proper respect for the speaker or Bible class teacher. Speak highly of worship periods in front of your children. Pray for God's help.

Realize where you are and who is there. When you are assembled with His people, you are in the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16). Both the Father and the Son are present, so act accordingly.

Follow the advice of 2 Corinthians 10:5 to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Conclusion

Worship is a blessed privilege that should be guarded with love, zeal and a realization of its worth and value. No one in his right mind should ever be guilty of misbehaving or acting inappropriately during worship services or Bible classes. All should act responsibly and properly before God.

Truthful Excuses

By Robert F. Turner, 1972

An excuse need not be a lie. It is because, factor, or circumstance that frees from blame or releases from obligation. Many excuses are both truthful and legitimate; some are outright lies; while others may be very truthful, yet reveal a most unbecoming character in the maker.

When someone explains his absence from worship with, "We had visitors," this need not be a lie. It may be truth — which tells us that this person regards social amenities as being more important than worship.

"No one is perfect!" How very very true. So — there can be no standards, no right or wrong? There can be no ideals to which we can press, nor should we urge such elevated goals upon others? Can't we see that the imperfection of man is the very reason for recognizing our failures as such, and helping one another to get up and try again?

"Many people do it," to which we all must agree. Does that make it the will of God? Many people think that man made God in his own image, and accept a situation-ethics standard; but it can not be demonstrated that such a philosophy has ever elevated mankind, or promoted a stable society. This is a poor substitute for faith in God and individual character.

"There are hypocrites in the church," — and the world has none?? Do you think that using a hypocrite as your excuse makes you a better man? And how is it that one is able to see the truth with reference to hypocrisy in others, and be blinded to the same in themselves? (Matt. 7:1-5)

"But I meant well!" This also may be the truth. It commends, to some extent; but it remains a commendation only as our honest heart leads us to further consider God's truth, and make corrections accordingly.

A radio commercial of some years back has one man excusing himself (?) from worship with, "Things are so unsettled these days. There is so little time. Why, the whole world may be blown apart at any moment."

And the reply was, "That's right!"