

=THE CHRISTIAN LIFE=

Lesson 3

Behavior at Church

AIM: to teach my pupils how to behave at church.

POINT OF CONTACT: Think about a building for a moment. If there is something broken or missing that is a part of any building, could that building be called complete and thought of as entirely serving its purpose? If there is a broken window, no matter how beautiful or costly the structure is, the beauty and the magnificence of that building are marred. If a faucet is broken, that building contains a source of aggravation and irritation.

Think about the life of a family. The behavior of one member of the family can cause unhappiness within the family. Whenever a son or a daughter is disobedient, for example, the entire family suffers because there has been a disruption in the household harmony and computability.

Think about our bodies. A tiny speck of dirt in the eye is enough to cause a person's entire body to suffer discomfort and loss of full capacity for carrying on daily tasks.

INTRODUCTION: Ephesians 2:19-22 pictures all of us Christians as being parts of a structure—a building. We Christians also are pictured as making up a family. We have a family name—we are named for Jesus. We are of the household of God. See Ephesians 3:14, 15. In addition, we Christians are also pictured as being part of the body of Christ, as we read in Ephesians 4:15, 16. Each of these comparisons—the building, the family, the body—is a unit. If one part of any unit is not serving its purpose or is not functioning properly, the unit is affected. The power of God and the witness of the Gospel are hindered in proportion to the interruption of the function or purpose that God intends for Christians to perform. One or two Christians doing wrong could cause hindering of the working of Christ. Think of the story which is found in Joshua 7. Joshua had given God's command to the people, "Go, take Jericho. In the taking of Jericho do not take anything from the city for yourselves. The silver and gold and articles made of brass and iron belong to God and should go into the treasury of the Lord. Nothing else material is to be taken from the ruins of the city." A man by the name of Achan disobeyed the Lord. He took a garment and some gold and silver and hid them in his tent. With this unconfessed, unforgiven sin in their camp, the Israelites next went into battle with the Amorites. The Israelites tried to claim the city of Ai for the Lord, but they were made to run from the enemy. Achan had caused an interruption of the conquest of the land which God had commanded they take.

The bad behavior of one Christian in our church could keep an unsaved person from being saved. The bad behavior of one Christian in our church may prevent the transfer to our church of a Christian family who is looking for a Bible-believing church where their children will be taught properly and where they may all serve the Lord. The bad behavior of one Christian within our church buildings may cause our reputation with the rest of the community to become bad. As a climax to all, the bad behavior of one Christian in our church may cause that Christian to set patterns and habits for his life which would be to his own downfall. This week's lesson tells us how Christians ought to behave in church.

I. IN APPEARANCE.

1. Be clean. (Stress the importance of being clean always.)
2. Be dressed appropriately and neatly. (Stress modest, neat, and appropriate attire.)

II. IN ATTITUDE OF MIND.

1. Expect a blessing. We pray during the week, "Lord, bless our services on Sunday and Wednesday. Bless our preacher. Give us what we need through our preacher. May many people be saved. Bless our teacher." We need to come believing that God will do just this for us. For example, the people asked Ezra to bring the Bible and to read to them from God's Word all that God had commanded the people of Israel. When Ezra opened the Word of God, all the people stood with expectation, hearing and understanding the Word of God as it was read to them, Nehemiah 8. Look for self-improvement in church.
2. Give thanks. After the Word of God had been lost to them for years, the Israelites wept as they heard it read by Ezra and taught by Nehemiah and others. In some countries and areas of the world

Christians are not allowed to conduct a public meeting for the purpose of preaching and reading the Bible. As we are able to assemble together to read the Bible, to pray, to sing, and to hear teaching and preaching of the Bible, we ought to be grateful that we can do so.

3. Be ready to fulfill all responsibilities. See II Chronicles 34:16b; Psalm 101:6b; Ephesians 3:20, 21. Is there a task which you have to perform before or during any meeting or class or service time?
  - 1) Be punctual! Be careful to be present in plenty of time before the start of the meeting!
  - 2) Have completed whatever needs to be done ahead of time. The task should be performed to the best of your ability, to the help of others, and to the praise of the Lord. First, pray about the duty so that the duty will be performed under the leadership of the Lord. If it is playing the piano, be practiced. If it is leading the singing, have the songs chosen beforehand and your pianist notified so that he or she can have the music ready. If it is leading a class meeting, have the items of business and the parts of the program listed, and have any advance telephoning or decision-making accomplished before the time of the meeting. If it is welcoming visitors to a class, be prepared with some words of welcome and some thoughts on how to make the visitors feel welcome. If it is to read the Scripture, be practiced for reading the Scripture passage aloud. If it is to act as a secretary for some department or class, have all the necessary materials needed for the completion of that task. If it is to teach a class or give a devotion, be so well prepared that what you have to give is understandable to the class, can be remembered by them, and will not cause any to misunderstand what the Bible teaches.

### III. IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CHRISTIANS. See Romans 12:9-16.

1. Upon arrival.
  - 1) Greet your friends and acquaintances. (Teach “face-to-face” behavior appropriate for acquaintances. Be friendly in greetings, be gracious toward others’ appearances and behavior, be restrained in the manner of speaking and acting toward others, prefer others while talking and walking and engaging in conversation, be polite—using the “Excuse me’s,” the “Thank you’s,” the “I am sorry’s” whenever they are appropriate.)
  - 2) Enter the assembly room as soon as possible. You might have to hang up your coat or go to a certain room to talk with someone or go to the washroom upon your arrival. As soon as every preliminary is complete, go to your assembly room and be seated. “Hanging around” in the halls and just watching the crowds go by is the best way to get into some sort of trouble. I Corinthians 10:13 says that God has made a way of escape from every kind of temptation. The Christian can avoid being a bad influence or indulging in idle conversation or hindering the punctual start of a meeting by going right to his assembly place.
  - 3) Be aware that you could meet some handicapped person on your way through the halls.
    - (1) Do not joke or jest about anybody being or acting retarded. The mentally handicapped might not understand your joke, but they could catch on to the fact that you are making fun of their condition. The members of their families will be especially hurt at hearing this kind of remark.
    - (2) Be friendly to the deaf. The deaf can “hear” a smile or can read on your lips the word “hello.”
    - (3) Do not run in the hall. If you are walking too fast or running through the halls, you may cause injury to an elderly person who lacks the strength to prevent falling should you bump into him or her. At the very least, the elderly person should be treated with respect, and you should be carefully courteous when meeting and passing them in the halls. Someone on crutches or someone who is not feeling too well may be just around the next corner from your speeding, careless walk or run. You could cause further injury or further discomfort by your rude behavior in the halls.
2. In the meeting rooms, including the church auditorium.
  - 1) Be kind to visitors and to the less fortunate. The Gospel is big enough to encompass everybody who has or who will ever live in the whole world. God intended that His plan of salvation be capable of reaching everybody. Read II Peter 3:9. The person who is not so nicely dressed or the person who has not had the privilege of being taught to behave is not to

be treated unkindly. He is to be made welcome in our midst; this is the way that he can be helped to be saved and to be taught properly. Notice James 2:1-9.

- 2) Be proper in finding a place to sit. Do not keep others who are coming in from being seated because you are “saving” a seat for someone else. Follow an usher to the seat where he directs you, especially after the service has started. Sit properly. Keep your feet off the furniture! Do not put your feet on the rungs of the chair in front of you.
  - 3) Actively participate whenever it is proper to do so. Sing when the group sings. Read the Scriptures whenever others read. Do not attract attention to yourself through any kind of misbehavior. Do not take lightly your participation in the Lord’s Supper. Read I Corinthians 11:23-29.
  - 4) Put out of your mind thoughts that are not appropriate to the meeting time.
  - 5) Treat the leaders and the preacher with respect. Listen to your teacher or the preacher or the leader of whatever type of meeting it is. Read Proverbs 5:11-13. It is within God’s will that men and women be our teachers. As preachers called of God have taught and preached the Bible, men and women have learned and then they in turn can teach the Bible in the light of these teachings and sermons. See Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:3.
  - 6) Choose among your leaders those whom you would like to imitate. The best examples to follow are found in the church. Watch these people. Seek their advice. “Hang” around them, according to Proverbs 2:20; Ephesians 4:17-24.
  - 7) Let your service be done as unto the Lord. If someone sings or plays an instrument, remember that the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are for making melody unto the Lord. Any service done—singing, playing, speaking, ushering, moderating, teaching, planning, leading—should not be done to get praise for ourselves but for the Lord. Notice Ephesians 5:19-21.
3. In social activities.
- 1) Do not mix in the wrong crowd. While we should never be unfriendly or unkind, we should be careful to choose our close friends from among those Christians who are being obedient to the Lord and seeking to please Him with good behavior. Read Ephesians 5:11-13.
  - 2) Do not sin while choosing friends. Jealousy, bitterness, gossip, and hurt feelings develop especially as young people choose their best friends. As members all of the same family there should not be quibbling among ourselves as boys choose girls whom they would like to date, as boys choose boys in whom they would like to confide and girls choose girls whom they would like for best friends. See Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 13:1.
  - 3) Watch what you say. Let your words be only for the good of your hearers. Do not lie. Notice Ephesians 4:15; 29-31. Do not tell confidential matters in front of others; in other words, do not talk secretly in front of others about things which cannot be shared.

IV. IN THE CONDUCT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH, Ephesians 4:2, 3. It is the Holy Spirit Who brings unity to any congregation when they are dedicated to doing His will. “Peace binds together the church as a condition and symbol of that inner unity which is only wrought by the indwelling Spirit of God.”

CONCLUSION: Christians should “walk as children of light.” Jesus would like to present His church to Himself ultimately as “...a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” Ephesians 5:27.