

“How Do You Go To Church?”

Questions from “How Do You Go To Church” Excerpted from the worksheet “How to Get the Most Out Of Your Pastor’s Preaching”.

The following questions are intended to help personalize and apply the already-discussed principles. I would encourage you not to skim through these questions, but to set aside some time for thoughtful, prayerful reflection and response.

Do you highly esteem, respect, and reverence the Word of God (Neh. 8:5; Ps. 138:2)?

Do you prepare your heart to hear the Word of God (Ps. 119:18)?

Do you find delight in hearing the Word proclaimed?

Do you listen attentively when the Word is being read or preached (Neh. 8:3; Ps. 85:8)?

Do you expect God to speak to you every time you hear His Word proclaimed?

Do you have a teachable spirit (Ps. 25:9)?

Do you tremble at the Word of the Lord (Isa. 66:2; Ezra 9:4)?

Do you pray for those who proclaim the Word to you, that they might be pure, anointed vessels of God (1 Thess. 5:25)?

When the Word is preached, are you conscious that you are not listening to the words of men but to the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)?

Do you have a commitment to obey anything God shows you from His Word (Matt. 7:24; James 1:22–25)?

Do you respond in faith, that is, acting on the Word you have heard (Heb. 4:2)?

Is your heart good soil that receives the Word and produces fruit (Luke 8:15)?

Are you willing to let the message sit in judgment of you rather than you sitting in judgment of the message?

Do you take the message personally (James 1:22)? Or do you tend to think about how it applies to the people sitting near you?

Do you pass on to others what you’ve learned from the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:2)?

Do you express appreciation and gratitude for those who minister the Word of God to you (Gal. 6:6; 1 Thess. 5:12–13)?

Any time we have the opportunity to sit under the ministry of God's Word, it is an incredible privilege. I pray we would not just sit as spectators but as participants, eagerly responding and saying, "Yes, Lord, I hear what You're saying, and I've come here to obey."

Sermon Notes:

How to Get the Most Out of Church

*A friend of mine (from PenTab) shared an article with me, "How to Get the Most Out of Your Pastor's Preaching." They thought it was good enough to share with me, so I'll share some of it with you! (I'm writing it into the PC's!) **It got me to thinking about people and how they come to church...***

If we're not getting anything out of the service: Like my daddy told me, "When you see a broken clock, the problem isn't in the hands, it's much deeper than that..." Maybe the problem is a little deeper than the style of music, the color of the carpet or the one in the pulpit...

Most of us give some thought to the idea of going to church.

We prioritize church attendance. We show up. We bring our families. It's what we do. But how many of us prioritize the worship experience? How many of us prepare our hearts to encounter God during the service?

We need to move beyond just- religious observance and into the arena of willing passion.

Someone once wrote: *I have found that the more "professional" I become the harder it is to worship. I become more concerned about how the band is doing or how relevant the service is or how good the coffee tastes. **I've become a consumer and a critic of worship services.***

I know the misleading titles- Is worship about "getting the most" out of it- or about glorifying Jesus?

How to Get the Most Out of Your Pastor's Preaching

Do you ever find yourself . . . ?

Waking up on Sunday morning and wishing you didn't have to go to church?

Having a hard time staying awake in church?

Daydreaming during the message or making a mental to-do list while the pastor is preaching?

Picking apart the message or the preacher in your mind or not getting anything out of the sermon?

Wishing your pastor would be more _____?

Forgetting what the message was about before you get home?

If we're not benefitting from the ministry of the Word- as it is preached, the fault may not lie in the one proclaiming the Word. It may lie in our readiness to hear, receive, and respond to the Word. (My friend, after lamenting to me about their church experience, maybe before finding this said- "I know it's hard to believe, but sometimes I might be the problem.")

The article asks, "How can we prepare our hearts to get the most out of our pastor's preaching?"

I'm making it broader: "How do you go to church?"

Before the Service:

Before Sunday ever comes, we should prepare and expect God to speak to us and to work in our lives.

Pray for your pastor as he prepares for Sunday. Pray that his schedule would be free from unnecessary distractions. Pray that God will give him understanding into the meaning of the Word. Pray that God will speak to him personally through the Word and that he will respond in humility and obedience. Pray that God will help him to communicate the truth with clarity, freedom, passion, and power.

Ask God to speak to your heart before you even hear the message.

Prepare for public worship the night before.

(Daddy, "Remember, we've got church in the morning...)

Turn off the TV, limit social activities, and instead do things that will cultivate your appetite for God's Word. Ask God for a powerful move the next morning!

Or- wake up a little earlier on Sunday morning to prepare yourself for what God is going to do.

(How do you get ready for church? Text message and ask, should I wear a flowy dress or a fitted one?)

Beat the Rush! Get up early enough to avoid the Sunday morning rush. **This way you can prevent arriving at church frustrated or emotionally drained, which definitely hinders the ability to concentrate on the Lord and His goodness!** *Also, get enough rest the night before so your mind will be fresh and alert for the service.*

Ask God to prepare your heart for the preaching of the Word.

Repent of any sin God reveals to you, and get rid of the things that are standing in the way of the Word of God in your life.

Ask God to give you a sense of anticipation.

Come to church asking God to meet with you. **Expect** to hear from Him and to be different when you leave.

What if rather than just showing up, you showed up ready? Instead of waiting for a couple songs to warm you up, what if your heart was already in a position of worship?

Get to church early enough to spend a few minutes before the service quietly preparing your heart for worship. Pray for God to move—in the pastor, in your heart, in others' hearts—and surrender your heart to whatever God will say.

During the Service

We shouldn't come as spectators the way we go to a ball game or a movie, expecting to be entertained. Instead, **church is something that should actively engage all of our being.** Here are a few ways we can do that.

Attend. *You need to be there. You're not going to get a lot out of church if you don't go.*

Participate. Don't be a spectator. Participate fully in every part of the service. That means when it's time to sing—sing. When it's time to pray—pray. When it's time to give—give. While the sermon is being preached, follow along...

Singing- **When worship begins, sing.** I know it can be awkward. But just get over yourself. *Even if you're not a singer,* there's something about lifting your voice and singing that connects you to God in a special way.

It's disarming, it's vulnerable, it's emotional. *Singing helps to connect your heart to God in a way that mere speaking can't attain.*

Don't just watch or criticize. Sing and sing loud. I love hearing the raised voice of a multi-generational congregation. It's not always pitch precise, but it's a beautiful testament to the greatness of God.

Engage:

Move beyond just singing, though. **Engage your entire being in worship.** **I'm of the belief that you should be exhausted after a worship service. You should have so engaged yourself physically and emotionally that you're tired.**

Close your eyes, lift your hands, dance, sing, shout, kneel. *Realize that God is in the room and deserves your focused, rapt attention.*

Pray: Pray that God will reveal His glory to others. This often moves me to tears as I intercede for others. True worship will always be marked with a sense of reaching out – moving beyond your personal experience to crying out for others. Try it.

Lead yourself: I know there's a "worship leader" on stage. Forget about that. Lead yourself. *Make up your mind beforehand that you are going to lead yourself in worship.*

This is a habit you need to build. Don't wait for your favorite song or epic keyboard pad or perfect lighting. Lead yourself. Go for it. Cry out to God.

Listen. Listen attentively to the reading and the preaching of the Word. Try to make eye contact with the pastor. Not only does that help the pastor know that people are listening, it helps you stay alert and focused. *(Dave and Kitty!)*

Listen humbly to the preaching of the Word. Ask the Lord to make it fresh. If your heart is humble, you won't evaluate the message or how it's delivered; you will let the message evaluate you.

Take notes. **Jot down things the Lord speaks to you about;** highlight points the Spirit applies to your heart and life. Take those notes home, and work through them later.

Be realistic. Don't make your pastor a prisoner of unrealistic expectations. Your pastor doesn't have to be mesmerizing, entertaining, dramatic, or tell a lot of stories to be effective. He should just be a man of God who is humble, who loves the Word, who will open the Word, and will make its meaning plain. **The power is in the truth, not the messenger.**

After the Service

One important part of listening to a sermon is what you do after it's over—how you respond to the Word you have heard proclaimed. *Even the most incredibly delivered sermon is useless if you don't do something about what you just heard.*

Ask God to give you at least one takeaway from the message—a key concept, phrase, or verse that you can review throughout the week. Jot it down so you don't forget.

While it's still fresh on your mind (before you leave church, on the way home from church, over the meal following the service, etc.), discuss the message with others. Share how God spoke to you.

Be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer (James 1:22). Apply what you heard Sunday morning to real-life, everyday circumstances and situations throughout the week.

Making It Personal

When it comes to listening to the Word of God, you have a choice. You can hear the Word of God Sunday after Sunday, day after day, but it will be of no value if you don't respond to it with faith and obedience.

Closing Statements...

Every Christian wants to have a great church experience. But what we get out of our time in God's house depends to a great degree on what we put into it. So how can we get the most out of church?