

This prevents giving so much that you don't have money for essentials, and it prohibits under-giving so that you neglect giving God what He doesn't deserve.

Never let Sunday be the day you decide to go (Luke 4:16). Gus Nichols beautifully stated "I did not decide last Lord's Day to go to worship, nor the Sunday before. That decision was made more than fifty years ago." Some make it a habit to not attend the assembly (Hebrews 10:25[5]). Luke records that Jesus' custom (habit) was going to the synagogue every Sabbath. Habits are practiced through diligence and preparation. Determining that worship will be attended on a Sunday by Sunday basis means that we cannot adequately prepare for it the previous week. We are preparing for a good work on Sunday, we cannot be distracted by outside influences (cf. Nehemiah 6:3).

Five Suggestions.

We may attend regularly, but do we worship weekly? Some come to worship yet fail to prepare for it, leaving one feeling empty and God displeased. Here are some practical suggestions to help be prepared for worship.

Go to bed at a decent time. The average adult needs about 7-9 hours of sleep. Studies show that it is healthier to go to bed early. Try to go to bed before 12:00 a.m. and perhaps you want to wake up on Sunday mornings around 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. Refrain from activities that will keep you up long until the morning. Use Saturday nights as preparation for Sunday morning events by reading Scripture, having a family devotion, or studying the material for the Bible class and sermon. If you have trouble waking up early in the morning set an alarm 15 minutes before you should need to get up that way you have some time to wake up before you have to get up.

Arrive early. A good rule is 15 minutes. This allows you enough time to go to the bathroom, get a drink of water, greet visitors, and pick up handouts or the bulletin. While traffic and accidents cannot be avoided, improper time management can. Justifying late arrivals makes worship like another common event and could be a distraction to others. We would never be late to the game, work, or a wedding, so don't be late to worship.

Eat something before you come. Hunger is a good distraction. Try to eat something even if it is little, so that you can get by. Grab a sandwich from McDonalds, eat a protein bar on the way over, or drink coffee with a pastry. Maybe you don't need to do this, but if you hear your stomach during service, it could distract you and others from worship.

Read, pray, or listen to some songs. Reading, praying, and listening to things you will be doing in worship before worship, is a good idea. Ask the preacher for the sermon topic on Wednesday night, so that you can prepare for Bible class and worship. On Sunday morning, listen to some of your favorite accapella hymns and always pray before service. You can also read through specific Scriptures to get your mind ready for every act of worship.

Don't forget your clothes. Clothing can leave impressions on others and you. It is proven that "dressing up" boosts confidence, productivity, and credibility. For worship, wear your best. Give God a better attire than you would a conference, a luncheon, or a family gathering. Set your clothes out on Saturday night so you don't have to worry about it on Sunday morning. Make sure what you choose is modest. Israel was to be clothed right before entering the presence of God and so are Christians.

Let us attempt to give God our best before we enter the worship service so we can give God our best during the worship service, which will ultimately allow us to go to the best worship service with all the saints in heaven (Revelation 7:9-12).

Endnotes

[1]Allen Webster.

[2]Biblical Illustrator.

[3]<https://sermonillustrations.com/a-z/p/planning.htm>

[4]Albert Barnes.

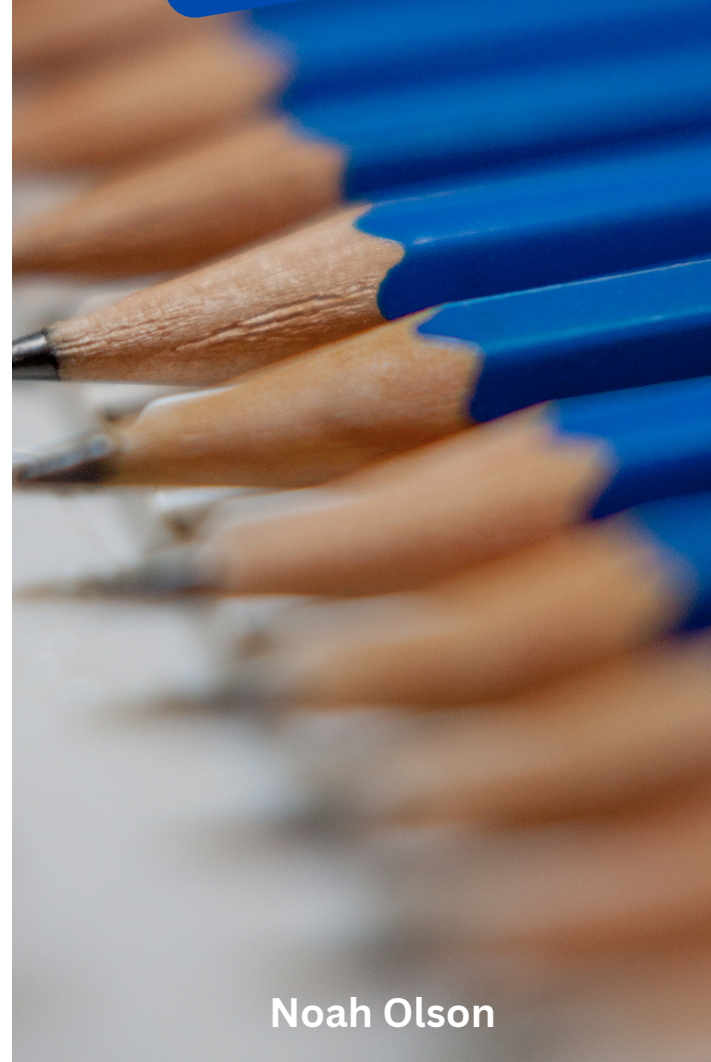
[5]The word "custom" in Luke 4:16 is *εἰωθός* and it comes from the same root word as the word *εθός* in Hebrews 10:25. Jesus habitually attended weekly meetings at the synagogue, but some Christians in the first habitually forsook services of the church.

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ARE YOU

READY

FOR WORSHIP?



Noah Olson

Jack Hyles said, "Greatness is in the preparation." Winston Churchill observed, "He who fails to plan is planning to fail." H. Jackson Brown Jr. noted, "The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today." Abraham Lincoln said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."

God deserves excellent worship even if it costs one a fortune (Mark 14:3, 8). Modern worship has been replaced with tradition, liberalism, and emotionless motions. Worship is often given to God vainly (Matthew 15:9), selfishly (Colossians 2:23), and ignorantly (Acts 17:23) all because of a lack of preparation. We cannot give God our best without proper preparation (Ecclesiastes 9:10). One British Army adage reads "Proper preparation prevents poor performance." No true worshiper would want to fail on God's special day, but unplanned worship is often failed worship.

Israel stood before Mount Sinai and claimed, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). They were about to be confronted with the presence of God; however, God through Moses demanded proper preparation before they would meet Him. He told them to "be ready" (Exodus 19:10-11). God would not have expected anything less from Israel (cf. Leviticus 10:1-3; Joshua 3:5) and He does not expect anything less from us today.

Five Questions.

Paul urged the Corinthian brethren to make examination a common practice (2 Corinthians 13:5; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:28). Survey or examine your previous worship services with these five questions:

"How would you grade your worship service now?" From A to F, what grade would you give your service to God? How well one prepares will be exemplified in the worship service. Jesus sanctified holy worship (John 4:24). What one would you choose?

- Spirit and truth worship?
- Spirit and no truth worship?
- No spirit and truth worship.
- No spirit and no truth worship?[1]

Cain had a bad performance in worship because he failed to prepare to follow the commands of God (Genesis 4). David graded non-sacrificial worship as an F (2 Samuel 24:18-24). Would you worship differently if Jesus sat in your pew?

"How much time do you spend preparing for worship?" Minutes... hours... days? Better preparation throughout the week will make the worship service better. "Nelaton, the great French surgeon, once said that if he had four minutes in which to perform an operation on which a life depended, he would take one minute to consider how best to do it." [2] An hour of worship to God demands much preparation beforehand.

"What is your heart like on Sunday Morning?" Heart service precedes action. Do you feel:

- Anger?
- Resentment?
- Lethargic?

Is worship a red-circled date on your calendar? David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1).

"What things have you observed that hinder you from worshipping?"

- Personal sin?
- Tired?
- Hungry?
- Sports game?
- Movie?
- Unresolved issues?

"What is my attitude after worship?" Do you leave worship dissatisfied? Do you wish you would have sung louder, took more notes, or gave more? Accomplished worship should leave you happy, excited to return the next time, and encouraged.

What has your worship been like? Correct if needed and plan better for next time.

Five Verses.

"During WWII General McArthur asked an engineer how long it would take to build a bridge across a certain river. 'About three days.' The engineer was told to go ahead and draw up the plans. Three days later McArthur asked for the plans. The engineer seemed

surprised. 'Oh, the bridge is ready. You can cross it now. If you want plans, you'll have to wait a little longer, we haven't finished those yet.'" [3] Inadequate preparation can lead to a disaster in worship. Note these five verses to help you prepare for worship:

Memorize John 4:24. Jesus gives us an acceptable worship service in one verse.

Treat worship as separate (Exodus 3:5). Moses took off his sandals because he was in the presence of God; it was not a common assembly. It was not holy because of the place, time, or date. The place became holy because of God's presence. [4] Worship is the time when all Christians around the world enter the presence of God together. Better prepare for worship by understanding the specialness of it. Make it more important than any day, event, or gathering of which you will prepare. It must be set apart from anything else in the Christian's life. After God destroyed the unholy priests, God explained that "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me" (Leviticus 10:3).

Clean your hands (1 Timothy 2:8). The Jews washed themselves externally, but here Paul had the heart in mind. Israel was commanded to wash before God appeared on Sinai. They didn't remember these words centuries later (Isaiah 1:10-18). Before coming around the altar, David said "I will wash mine hands in innocency" (Psalm 26:6). It is the sacrifice of the wicked that is an abomination (Proverbs 15:8; 21:27a) and "how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind" (Proverbs 21:27b)? How can we wash before we enter?

- Read the inspired checklist (Psalm 15).
- Repent and confess every known sin (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness for unknown sins (Psalm 19:12).
- Make restitution (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Put all distractions away.

Dirty worship is detestable to God.

Budget (2 Corinthians 9:7). Household budgets include mortgage, food, education, utilities, and entertainment. Preparation for worship demands that one prepare his budget to include money given to God. God never meant for Christians to give the remaining five dollar bill in one's wallet or the couple dollars at the bottom of one's purse. We can better give God the first fruits (Proverbs 3:9) if we put the amount in the budget.