

**POWER
PREACHING
FOR
CHURCH
GROWTH**

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Appendix B

Prepare and Participate:

Practical Suggestions on Your Role in Worship at North City Presbyterian Church

Suggestions for individual and family preparation on Saturday evening and Sunday morning *before* worship and for meaningful participation *during* and follow-up *after* our public worship celebrations.

1. SPIRITUAL PREPARATIONS

A. *Prepare your mind and heart through meditation and confession. Remind yourself (and your family) that the body gathers to worship God himself.*

(1) Think about God's glorious, perfect attributes and character (e.g. His majesty, wisdom, power, grace, mercy). Read a portion of Scripture that deals with worship and God's character (e.g. Psalms, Isaiah 6; 12; 40:18-26; 55; 61; Ephesians 1; 2; 3; Hebrews 1; 2; 1 Peter 1; Revelation 4:5).

(2) Humble yourself before the Lord (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6) by confessing sinful attitudes toward God including indifference, lukewarmness, anger, pride, bitterness, lack of love, lack of zeal, etc.

(a) Helpful Scripture passages:

1. Ezra 9:5-15
2. Nehemiah 9:1-38
3. Daniel 9:1-20
4. I Kings 8:31-53
5. Psalm 51

6. Isaiah 66:2 'This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.'

(b) The following prayers and confessions from C. H. Spurgeon's diary (at age fifteen) may also be helpful:

1. Earthly things have engaged too much of my thoughts this day. I have not been able to fix my attention entirely upon my Savior.

(C.H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography Vol. I: The Earthly Years 1834-1859* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962 [first published in four volumes, 1897-1900]) pp. 126-127.)

2. I have again to confess my lukewarmness; I fear I am losing my first love. Coldness and deadness seem to be natural to me; I have no inward warmth, it all comes from the Sun of righteousness, by rich, free, and sovereign grace. What a mercy that I have not been altogether frozen to death, and left to perish in my sinful distance from God! Lord, help me to follow Thee, and may Thy right hand uphold me! Strength, O Lord, I need! I would not fear but trust in Thine omnipotence. (Ibid. pp. 132-133)

3. How feeble I am! I am not able to keep myself near to God. I am compelled to acknowledge my own deadness. I confess how greatly I have strayed from Thee, Thou great Fountain of living waters. (Ibid p. 134)

(c) Remind yourself that worship is giving to the Lord the glory due His name (Psalm 96:8); it is not getting but giving to God the praise and thanks He deserves.

(d) Recognize and confess that even your best, most fervent attempts at worship are no where near what God deserves (see Job 4:18-19, 15:15-16). Therefore your worship will need God's mercy, forgiveness, and justification. But at the same time, rejoice that God has provided for these needs in Christ.

(e) Exhort yourself that sloppy, ill-prepared worship is an insult to God, showing disrespect, lack of love, concern and esteem for him. But at the same time remember that God graciously invites sinners who rely on Christ's righteousness alone to come boldly into His presence to worship and to be refreshed (Romans 5:1-11; 8:1; Hebrews 4:14-16).

B. Prepare your mind and heart through prayer.

(1) Take time to pray (with your family or housemates) asking God to give you a spirit of worship, praise, thanksgiving, proper fear and a whole-hearted focus on giving worship to the Lord (Psalm 96:8). See the following Scriptures for this attitude: Psalm 9:1; 28:7; 34:1-3; 86:11; 103:1-5; 111:1; Jeremiah 9:23-24; 17:5; 24:7; Zephaniah 3:14-17; Matthew 15:8; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 12:28-29; 13-15.

(2) Pray for others in the body as they prepare to worship God, asking the Lord to prepare their heart for praise and the hearing of the preached Word. Pray through portions of the church address list or the whole list. This will enable you to pray specifically for members of the body.

(3) Pray for the preaching to be anointed by God, and for your ears to be ready to hear and obey God's Word.

(4) Pray for the worship leaders and for the Praise Team that the planning, music selections, Scripture and Westminster Confession readings and the choir rehearsals will all contribute to the actual worship service being used to promote vibrant worship and to bring glory and praise to God as well as joy to God's people.

(5) Thank God for the body and for the individual members and their gifts. Thank God for the privilege you have of worship and fellowship together. Thank Him for the fact that the body is an inter-dependent organism, that 'we need each other' (1 Corinthians 12). Ask Him to make us a harmonious 'orchestra' to bring Him praise and adoration.

- (6) Ask God to give you (and your family) a spirit of love, care, service, encouragement, affection, tender heartedness and humility toward others in the body, so that you might contribute to building an atmosphere of love, welcoming, greeting and encouragement. (See 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Galatians 5:13; Romans 12:10; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; Philippians 4:21; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 10:24-25.) Ask for a sensitivity to the needs of the members of the body (1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 6:2).
- (7) Confess any sins of attitude or action that you might have against another brother or sister in the church e.g. anger, bitterness, jealousy, coveting, a judgmental or critical spirit. Confess to God, and if necessary the person, and ask for forgiveness.
- (8) Pray for visitors and guests and those coming who do not know the Lord that God will use our worship and His Word to bring people into His Kingdom.
- (9) Pray for the preacher to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading and to peoples' needs as he proclaims the gospel, teaches the Word and invites people to come to Christ.
- (10) Ask God to give our whole church a spirit of love for new people that we might have hospitable attitudes and welcome them to our fellowship and to the Lord.
- (11) Pray for the children's programs and staff which enhance our worship experience and minister the Word to our younger children (nursery and Kids Club.)

C. Prepare your mind and heart through music and singing.

- (1) Listen to psalms, hymns and spiritual songs after Saturday dinner or during Sunday breakfast and while dressing on Sunday morning and while driving

to the church's meeting place, e.g. Maranatha Praise tapes, Hymns Triumphant, The Messiah, Christian radio station etc.

(2) Sing with your family or companions around the breakfast table, and while traveling in the car to worship.

2. PHYSICAL PREPARATIONS

- A. Get a good night's sleep on Saturday night so that you can be sharp and energetic for worship on Sunday morning.
- B. Prepare ahead for the Sunday morning pressures and the rush to get ready. Use Saturday afternoon and/or evening to get things organized.
- C. Plan to arrive at the church meeting place five minutes early, not five minutes late. This will require planning ahead.
- D. Plan a special Lord's Day Eve meal, with time for Scripture reading, prayer and family worship.

3. SPIRITUAL ANTICIPATION

Come to the worship service asking:

- A. How might the Lord Jesus speak to me this morning (through songs, hymns, call to worship, Scripture and Confession readings, sermon, a word of encouragement or testimony from others, etc.)?
- B. How might the Lord speak through me or reach out through me to others this morning (e.g. a word of encouragement, affirmation or admonishment, a listening ear, a brief time of prayer or sharing from the Word, an act of service, etc.)?

4. WORSHIPFUL PARTICIPATION

- A. Greet one another warmly.
- B. Pray with a friend as you greet and sit down.

- C. Pray for the worship service silently before it begins.
- D. Sing with enthusiasm and joy. Think about the words and apply them to your life as prayers of praise or request. Sing to the Lord and to the members of the body (Ephesians 5:18-20). Enthusiasm and a smile are encouraging and contagious to others and they indicate a delight in the Lord (Psalm 37:4; Isaiah 58:14; 61:10).
- E. Listen to the Scripture and Confession readings with care. Silently respond with confession of sin, praise and prayer.
- F. Pray silently during the worship service for worship, preaching, the preacher, and for people around you, that God would use His Word to convict, convert and build up (both non-believers and believers).
- G. Listen carefully to and pray with the audible prayer leaders. Respond in your heart with 'Yes, Lord I agree with this prayer and pray it too' which is the meaning of 'Amen'.
- H. At the sermon time, remember that you are not here to worship or criticize the preacher. Seek only to listen to God in His Word and you will be correctly instructed by the Spirit.

Our Westminster Confession Larger Catechism (Question 160) provides a very helpful answer to the question: *What is required of those who hear the Word preached?*

It is required of those that hear the Word preached that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation and prayer; examine what they hear by the scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.

- I. Listening to the sermon in the way spoken of by the Larger Catechism will be a great encouragement to your preacher and can contribute to increasing the quality of his preaching.

- (1) How to encourage your preacher by your careful listening and sincere application of the Word
 - a. Eye contact
 - b. Concentration
 - c. Positive responses (smiles, laughter, head nods, positive body language, note taking etc.)
 - d. Verbal encouragements after the sermon. Tell a specific point that helped you, and you wish to obey.
 - e. Apply and then report back on your spiritual progress and how the preached Word is impacting you.

- (2) How to discourage a preacher
 - a. Poor eye contact
 - b. Wandering mind or negative responses expressed in negative body language (bored, dead pan face, negative face, drowsiness, sleeping, etc.)
 - c. No verbal encouragements after the sermon
 - d. No verbal encouragements over a long period of time as to how the preached Word is changing you and bearing fruit in your life.

5. AFTER THE WORSHIP SERVICE

A. On the Lord's Day

Fathers (and Mothers) bring your family together for a Lord's Day Family Huddle (e.g. around the lunch table at home after church or after lunch).

1. Do a 'Sunday Search' with parents asking
 - a. How did the Lord speak to you today?
 - b. How did the Lord speak to others or serve others through you today?

2. Discuss the Sermon—Fathers/Mothers ask key questions

a. Use the 'Family Huddle Questions' in the 'Sunday Sermon Helps For Parents'.

b. Additional General Questions

1. What was the main point?
2. The subpoints?
3. What was the purpose of the sermon?
4. Was there something you did not understand in the sermon? If so, what? (Parents can fill in the gaps of understanding for their children.)

c. Additional Specific Questions

1. Any sin reproved that you ought to flee?
2. Any judgments threatened that should make you tremble?
3. Any duties commanded that call for you to yield to obedience?
4. Any comforts or promises that you ought to embrace?
5. How was your faith encouraged to receive and rest on Christ alone for your needs in this life (justification/sanctification) and for the life to come?

(These questions are adapted from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and the Westminster Confession 14:2.)

3. Lead Your Family in a Time of Prayer

- a. For forgiveness of sins;
- b. For grace to repent, to believe and to live righteously, serving God with joy and delight;
- c. For the church, the elders and the other leaders;

- d. For lost people you know, and for the success of the gospel in your community and around the world.

B. During the Week

1. Fathers (and Mothers)

Encourage yourself and your children to be diligent in daily private worship (Scripture reading, meditation, prayer, singing)

2. Fathers (and Mothers)

Hold daily family worship in your home i.e. a brief time of gathering the whole family together for singing praise songs and hymns, scripture reading, catechism reading and prayer.