

## Reverence in God's House

Sermon Notes by P. Gerard Damsteegt

### 1. God's Command:

Leviticus 19:1, 2, 30: : "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 'Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy. . . . Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and **reverence my sanctuary**: I am the Lord.'" (Repeated Lev. 26:2)

### 2. We Can Learn from a Terrible Incident Involving Irreverence in the Sanctuary:

Leviticus 10:1-3: And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

### 3. How can we glorify God, and show reverence to God?

Psalm 89:7: God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

### 4. Great Need to Learn How to Behave in Church

**Nearly all** need to be taught how to conduct themselves in the house of God. (Child Guidance 540)

Parents should **not only teach, but comma nd**, their children to enter the sanctuary with sobriety and reverence. (Child Guidance 540)

True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of **His infinite greatness** and a **realization of His presence**. With this sense of the Unseen the heart of every child should be deeply impressed. (Child Guidance 538)

The hour and place of prayer and the services of public worship the child should be taught to regard as **sacred because God is there**. (Child Guidance 538)

### 5. Jesus Cleansed the Temple Twice. Full of Moneychangers and Sellers of Cattle, Noise and Bedlam.

Matthew 21:13: And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. See also John 2:16.

### 6. Just as in Jesus' Time, He Still Desires a Holy Stillness, Perfect Order, Neatness, and Humility in His Church.

The house of God is often desecrated, and the Sabbath violated by Sabbath-believers' children. In some cases they are even allowed to run about the house, play, talk, and manifest their evil tempers in the very meetings where the saints should worship God in the beauty of holiness. And the place that should be holy, and where a **holy stillness should reign**, and where there should be perfect order, neatness, and humility, is made to be a **perfect Babylon, "confusion."** This is enough to bring God's displeasure and **shut His presence from our assemblies**. (Child Guidance 540, 541)

### 7. Don't talk during the sermon

**Do not have so little reverence for the house and worship of God as to communicate with one another during the sermon.** If those who commit this fault could see the angels of God looking upon them and marking their doings, they would be filled with shame and abhorrence of themselves. God wants attentive hearers. (Child Guidance 542)

### 8. Don't Read, Whisper, and Laugh

Reverence is greatly needed in the youth of this age. I am alarmed as I see children and youth of religious parents so heedless of the order and propriety that should be observed in the house of God. While God's servants are presenting the words of life to the people, **some will be reading, others whispering and laughing. Their eyes are sinning by diverting the attention of those around them.** This habit, if allowed to remain unchecked, will grow and influence others. (Child Guidance 546)

**Common talking, whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the**

**service.** Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers. (My Life Today 286)

### **9. Maintain a True Spirit of Devotion and Have Intercessory Prayer for Conversion of Others Before the Service**

(When we were in Korea many years ago (might be different now), members were very reverent in church. Every person came in quietly with their Bible and upon sitting down in their seats they bowed their head. Very impressive. Very quiet. Very reverent.)

Another example from Ellen White's time in Scandinavia: The Scandinavians, and in fact nearly all European worshipers, manifest much more reverence [in the 19th century] than is seen among Americans. As soon as they enter the place of worship, they bow their heads and offer silent prayer. (*Historical Sketches*, 188)

Ellen White recommends, "When the worshipers enter the place of meeting, they should do so with decorum, **passing quietly to their seats.** . . . (My Life Today 286)

"If some have to wait a few minutes before the meeting begins, let them maintain a true spirit of devotion by **silent meditation, keeping the heart uplifted to God in prayer** that the service may be of special benefit to their own hearts and lead to the conviction and conversion of other souls. They should remember that heavenly messengers are in the house. We all lose much sweet communion with God by our restlessness, by not encouraging moments of **reflection and prayer.**" (My Life Today 286)

### **10. Practice Reverence Until It Is a Habit**

Children and youth should never feel that it is something to be proud of to be indifferent and careless in meetings where God is worshiped. God sees every irreverent thought or action, and **it is registered in the books of heaven.** He says, "I know thy works." Nothing is hid from His all-searching eye. If you have formed in any degree the habit of inattention and indifference in the house of God, exercise the powers you have to correct it, and show that you have self-respect. **Practice reverence until it becomes a part of yourself.** (Child Guidance 546, 547) (Messages Young People 266)

### **11. Special Help for Parents of Children**

Parents, elevate the standard of Christianity in the minds of your children; help them to weave Jesus into their experience; teach them

to have the highest reverence for the house of God and to understand that when they enter the Lord's house, it should be with hearts that are softened and subdued by such thoughts as these:

"God is here; this is His house. I must have pure thoughts and the holiest motives. I must have no pride, envy, jealousy, evil surmising, hatred, or deception in my heart; for I am coming into the presence of the holy God. This is the place where God meets with and blesses His people.." (Child Guidance 541, 542)

### **12. All need a special Sabbath suit**

**Many need instruction** as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have a special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending service in God's house. (Testimonies, 6, p. 355)

### **13. How to deal with children who disturb the service**

Your child should be taught to obey as the children of God obey Him. If this standard is maintained, a word from you will have some weight when your child is restless in the house of God. But if the children cannot be restrained, **if the parents feel that the restraint is too much of an exaction, the child should be removed from the church at once;** it should not be left to divert the minds of the hearers by talking or running about. God is dishonored by the loose way in which parents manage their children while at church (Child Guidance 544)

### **14. The church is the Very Gate of Heaven**

When Jacob was asleep on a rock and saw the angels ascending and descending on a ladder between earth and heaven.

Genesis 28:16-17 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. [17] And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

He called the place Bethel, the very gate of heaven. Every Sabbath we can have a Bethel experience as angels ascend and descend with precious blessings for our congregation.

A realization that the place for worship is as the gate of heaven God is high and holy; and to the humble, believing soul, His house on earth, the place where His people meet for worship, is as the gate of heaven. My Life Today 286)