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Trends and resources may change over the years, but the insights of this article are still useful for us today.

“Hurry, we’ll be late for church!” --Getting Ready for Worship

by Bryan Gerlach

My grandparents used to arrive at church a full twenty minutes before the worship service began. They lived in New Ulm, Minnesota. Sometimes I arrived that early too — because I was visiting them. Back then I thought their custom rather odd. Why come so early to pray or read the Bible or hymns? Now that I’m not a child anymore I don’t think coming early is odd at all. Too easily a church service can begin with our minds wrapped up in things other than worship: the pressures of getting the child ready or other worthwhile activities before heading for church. We need a cushion of time to prepare ourselves for our most important activity of the week: worshipping Jesus Christ.

Such preparation isn’t the style of our day. We live in the age of fast food. Some want fast spirituality, too. Yet wolfing down a hamburger isn’t nearly as satisfying as a special family meal. Neither will worship be meaningful and reverent if we’re in the wrong mental gear when the service begins.

Sometimes it’s a matter of getting enough sleep the night before. If Saturday night’s enjoyment has made sleeping until 9:00 AM necessary, I won’t be in an ideal frame of mind for worshipping God. Think of a parallel: if you faced an important job interview or school test in the morning, you’d probably want your mind to be as alert as possible. Does God deserve any less in our worship of him?

You may not need twenty minutes, but I suspect two minutes isn’t ideal either. Come early. Meditate on the words of one of the lessons or hymns so that they can have greater impact. Help your children to grow into such habits. Pray about things you neglected during the week. And be flexible enough that you can allow the organ to fulfill its worship role. At times it gently comments on some aspect of our faith; at other times it assertively leads us into our praise of God.

I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” Psalm 122:1

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