

What to Expect When You Visit the Church of Christ

by Calvin Barber of www.scripturessay.com

Perhaps you have heard of the Church of Christ through advertisement or by special invitation from its members. Maybe there is a building in your community where the Church of Christ meets, and you considered attending one of their worship services. But you have put it off simply because of the dread of going to a strange place, not knowing what to expect. May we briefly introduce ourselves and let you know what to expect when you visit us.

FRIENDLINESS

You can expect a warm, friendly welcome. Friendliness is a natural response of a Christian. We believe that one of the basic foundation principles of Christianity is love and friendship toward our fellowman. (Mt.22:36-40) True Christianity recognizes no sex, social or racial differences. (Gal.3:28) Neither does it permit respect of persons on the basis of poverty or wealth. (Jas.2:1-9) Jesus is our superb example in friendliness, in that he was compassionate toward all humanity, regardless of their status in life. We believe you will find that same spirit among Christians today. Therefore, when you visit us, you will be considered an honored guest. You will be greeted with kindness and courtesy. Why not give us the opportunity to become your friend? (cf Prov.18:24)

ORDER

You can expect our service to be with reverence and order. We strive to engage in all worship and service with decency and order. (I Cor.14:40) Each item of worship is usually announced and often briefly explained by the men who lead us in our worship. This enables each of us to know what is going on and helps us to better prepare our minds for worship. We try to avoid all extremism in worship. Neither ritualism nor emotionalism is characteristic of our worship. You can expect our worship to be spiritual, reverent and orderly.

SIMPLICITY

You can expect our worship to be simple. Its simple because it is based entirely on the worship authorized in the New Testament. Jesus taught that our worship was to be spiritual and according to truth. (Jn.4:24) Our worship to God includes the Lord's supper, giving, singing, prayer and teaching the gospel. Each of these blooms with the beauty of simplicity. We do not try to improve on God's divine plan and beauty with pageantry or innovations of men. We believe you will be impressed with the simplicity of our worship.

SINGING

You can expect congregational singing. Singing is a vital part of our worship. All members of our congregation will blend their voices together in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The purpose of our songs is to praise God, to teach and admonish one another through our singing. (Eph.5:19; Col.3:16) Since the command to sing is specific and addressed to the individual, we do not add a mechanical instrument of music in our worship in songs. For the same reason we do not have choirs to sing for us or any type of mood music to entertain us. Many who have visited us have been highly impressed with the beauty and spirituality involved in congregational singing. Why not come and see for yourself?

GIVING

You can expect us to give a free-will offering. As the Bible teaches, we give liberally as God has prospered us, on the first day of the week. (I Cor.16:1-2) Our liberality is an evidence of our devotion to God. (II Cor.8:1-8) There are many factors that determine the amount of our offerings, but above all they must be free-will offerings. (II Cor.9:6-7) When the offering is taken, it is entirely the choice of our guest whether they give an offering or not. We will not embarrass you by personally asking for an offering. Neither do we want you to feel embarrassed if you choose not to or cannot afford to give.

PRAYER

You can expect our public prayers to be led by men. (I Tim.2:8-13) Prayer is a vital source of strength in a Christian's life. We pray often in private and with one another. When we come together in an assembly, prayer is a very important part of our worship. Prayers are offered frequently when we assemble together for worship. In keeping with an orderly fashion of worship, it is usually announced that we will be led in

prayer by a certain brother. Everyone does not pray his own prayer out loud. We are led in prayer by a brother who speaks his prayer publicly, and the rest of us follow him silently as we pray together. This allows us to worship reverently and orderly. It also avoids noise and confusion. You will not be embarrassed by our calling on you to lead a public prayer.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

You can expect us to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week. (Sunday) Jesus instituted this supper as a simple memorial of his death on the cross. (Mt.26:26-29; I Cor.11:23-26) As we partake of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, our minds are to be centered on the events of the cross. In this act we have communion or fellowship with Christ. (I Cor.10:16) It was the practice of the early church to eat the Lord's supper every first day of the week. (Acts 20:7) We do not practice closed communion. As the communion is passed to each individual in the assembly, we each examine ourselves that we may partake of it in a worthy manner. (I Cor.11:27-29) We do not examine, encourage or forbid any guest concerning his participation in the Lord's Supper. It is the choice of our guest. However, we would hasten to point out that there can be no communion or fellowship with Christ unless we are faithful children of God. (I Jn.1:5-7; Gal.3:26-27)

TEACHING

You can expect Christ-centered, Bible teaching in our classrooms and pulpits. We believe the Bible to be an inspired, authoritative book. (II Tim.3:16-17) We believe that if a man speaks it should be from the Word of God. (I Pet.4:11) Our Bible class teachers usually teach directly from the Bible. The sermons you will hear from our pulpits can be supported by the Bible. In most sermons scripture references are given to enable the listener to check the Bible for himself to see if we are speaking the truth. We encourage you to check what we say by searching the scripture. (Acts17:11; Jn.5:39)

At the close of each sermon you can expect an invitation to become a Christian. You will be given an opportunity to express your faith in Jesus Christ by repenting of your sins, confessing Christ before men and being buried with the Lord in baptism. (Cf. Jn.8:24; Lk.13:3; Mt.10:32; Mk.16:16; Acts2:38; Gal.3:26-27) We will not embarrass you by approaching you personally. We will make our appeal to you to become a Christian from the pulpit. Then an invitation song will be sung for your encouragement. If you choose to obey the Lord, you may come to the front and let your choice be known. May we point out that the church does not have to be assembled for

you to obey the gospel. You can obey at any hour of the day or night by simply letting your request be known. (Cf. Acts16:30-33)

Since you now know much of what to expect when you visit the Churches of Christ, why not accept our special invitation to visit us. We would consider it an honor to have you as our guest.