

A Little Boy's Prayer... "Dear God, please take care of my daddy and my mommy and my sister and my brother and my doggy and me. Oh, and please take care of yourself, God. If anything happens to you, we're gonna be in a big mess."

Mr. Goldblatt," announced little Joey, "there's somethin' I can't figger out." "What's that Joey?" asked Goldblatt. "Well accordin' to the Bible, the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, right?" "Right." "An' the Children of Israel beat up the Phillistines, right?" "Er--right." "An' the Children of Israel built the Temple, right?" "Again you're right." "An' the Children of Israel fought the 'gyptians, an' the Children of Israel fought the Romans, an' the Children of Israel wuz always doin' somethin' important, right?" "All that is right, too," agreed Goldblatt. "So what's your question?" "What I wanna know is this," demanded Joey. "What wuz all the grown-ups doin'?"

☞ How to get the most out of church 2

Review:

☞ **Come to church expecting to hear from God**

You will find what you're looking for

Listen for God in every aspect of Celebration

Come to church to exalt Christ wholeheartedly

Get your hearts and minds focused heavenward

Come to church to encourage others

When you refresh others, you will be refreshed

Only speak encouraging, helpful words

Go from church to employ what you received

Put your faith into action throughout the week

Last time I shared 10 ways to guarantee unhappiness. They were a bit tongue-in-cheek, but still contained a lot of truth. For today, I found 6 *Quick Happiness Tips* that can apply in every arena of life, including church.

1. *Don't listen to gossip.*
2. *Ignore what people say about you.*
3. *Look for good in every situation.*
4. *Develop an attitude of gratitude.*
5. *Laugh more.*
6. *Once it's past, let it go.*

Nearly all the blogs I found said that getting the most out of church is really not about getting, but about giving. We were never meant to just be attenders who show up for an hour on Sunday, sing some songs, listen to a sermon, and then head out to lunch. We were made for God's good pleasure and for a relationship with him and others. It's in giving that we experience God the

most. As we give ourselves to the Lord, to others, and to the church meeting, the Lord gives us what we need!

🔥 Hebrews 10:19-25

v. 19-21 We have access to God

The Most Holy Place – this refers to the OT tabernacle.

A new and living way – we no longer need to bring an animal sacrifice. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that purchased this for us.

He's our great priest – he is always interceding for us.

1. 🔥 Press in to God's Presence

v.22 *Draw near to God* - I don't want us to just gather and sing some songs and hear a nice talk. I want us to put our hearts into it and really express our love for the Lord. I want each and every one to experience a personal connection with God.

--Matthew West, *The Motions*

I don't wanna go through the motions

I don't wanna go one more day

Without Your all consuming passion inside of me

I don't wanna spend my whole life asking,

What if I had given everything,

Instead of going through the motions?

--The Booth Brothers, *Why aren't we waiting*

Too often we come with preconceived notions

We stick with our programs; We go through the motions

Everything works out just fine; We get out on time

But I wonder if it makes heaven cry

When we say we love the One we deny

Do we need You enough; Do we want You enough

Let's not just go through the motions. Let's genuinely go after God! One way to do this is to be engaged and teachable. During the music and during the sermon how engaged are you? How engaged can you be? Challenge yourself to sing along wholeheartedly and then take notes during 🔥 the sermon. Bring your bible and read along. **Be a participant, not just a spectator.**

Draw near with full assurance - Come expecting. God is definitely here, but are you listening? Are you looking for him?

☞ **Prepare.** What if rather just showing up, you showed up ready? Instead of waiting for a couple of songs to warm you up, what if your heart was already in a position of worship?

Have your *heart, conscience, and body washed*. Before you arrive confess your sins to God ☞ and ask for his forgiveness. **Pray for his presence** in the house. Pray for your heart to be receptive to him. To get the most out of church, Press in to God's presence.

2. ☞ **Praise him for the Promises**

v. 23 *Hold on to hope that we profess* – we have much to look forward to.
God is faithful – if he promised it, we can count on it.

List of promises

- Joshua 1:9 The Lord my God will be with me, wherever I go.
- Isaiah 26:3 God will keep me in perfect peace if my mind is 'stayed' on Him.
- Hebrews 13:5 The Lord will never leave me or forsake me."
- Philippians 4:7 The peace of God will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus.
- John 16:3 The Holy Spirit will guide me into all truth.
- Mark 13:11 The Holy Spirit will give me the right words when I need them.
- Romans 5:2 I have access into grace.
- Romans 8:28 All things work together for my good.
- Romans 8:35 Nothing will separate me from the love of Christ.
- Ephesians 2:10 God has created good works for me to walk in, today.
- 2 Corinthians 3:17 I am being transformed into His likeness.
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 God won't let me be tried or tempted beyond what I can endure.
- Philippians 4:19 God will supply all my needs.
- Ephesians 1:14 I have an inheritance.
- Ephesians 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
- Colossians 1:27 Christ now is in me!
- 2 Timothy 1:7 God has given me a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind.
- James 1:5 If I ask for wisdom from God, He will give it to me.
- James 5:16 Prayer is effective.
- 1 John 1:9 He forgives and cleanses me as I confess my sins to Him.
- 1 John 3:2 When Jesus re-appears, I'll be made like Him.

☞ **Be a participant** and praise him for the promises... Sometimes we sit on the sidelines and squawk about secondary issues instead. Refuse to be critical. **Punctuate on the positives, not the negatives.** One blogger said, "I've become a consumer and a critic of worship services; shame on me."

--Accentuate the Positive, Johnny Mercer/Harold Arlen

*You've got to accentuate the positive; Eliminate the negative; Latch on to the affirmative
You've got to spread joy up to the maximum; Bring gloom down to the minimum*

Psalms 103:1-5

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. **2** Praise the Lord, O my  soul, and forget not all his benefits — **3** who **forgives** all your sins and **heals** all your diseases, **4** who **redeems** your life from the pit and **crowns** you with love and compassion, **5** who **satisfies** your desires with good things so that your youth is **renewed** like the eagle's.

Praise him. When the worship begins, sing. I know it can be awkward, but just get over yourself. Even if you're not a singer, there's something about lifting your voice and singing that connects you to God in a special way.

 **Push yourself.** Yes, there's a worship leader on the stage, but you can lead yourself. Make up your mind beforehand that you are going to worship. Don't wait for your favorite song or epic keyboard riff or perfect lighting. Lead yourself. Cry out to God. Praise him for the Promises.

3. **Prompt each other to Please God**

v.24 Consider how we may spur one another on - Come to be a blessing, not to get one.
Sometimes people say they are not getting fed at church. But the greater problem is many people never learn to feed themselves or anyone else. Make it your mission to encourage and edify others. As you do, you will find a special blessing of your own.

Toward love and good deeds - Is your talk and action leading others toward love and good deeds? Remember, love is patient and kind and much more. Is that what you're promoting?

 Encourage each other and **promote love and good deeds.**

Afterwards, reflect on the church service. Talk with others about what the Lord did in your heart. Speak a good word even before you leave the building. Talk to your family on the way home about the sermon and the work of God. Share the truth you received with others throughout the week. God will flow more freely through an open tributary than into a dead sea.

*Keep meeting together - Make a commitment to church. Don't allow yourself to just be an  attendee, but **be a participant**; someone deeply involved in church. And when the going gets tough, stick it out and stand by your church family.*

One Sunday morning, a wife went in to wake her husband and tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replied, "I'm not going." "Why not?" she asked. "I'll give you two good reasons," he said. "One, they don't like me, and two, I don't like them." His wife replied, "I'll give

YOU two good reasons why you SHOULD go to church. One, you're 54 years old, and two, you're the pastor!"

☞ **Encourage each other - Pray for each other.** This can even occur during the Celebration. One blogger said, "When I feel distracted, I'll pray for others in the congregation. True worship will always be marked with a sense of reaching out – moving beyond your personal experience to crying out for others. Try it."

Prompt each other to Please God. Get out of your group of immediate friends and speak to others. Speak to a new visitor. Sit by someone who needs encouragement. Shake hands with a person you don't normally speak to. God will use you. Prompt each other to Please God.

Remember, church is not about us. It's first and foremost about our relationship with Christ as we strive daily to become more like the Savior. It's secondly about how we can love one another in many different capacities.

I believe we have one of the best churches in the area. We stick to the Bible and work to live by the truth. We welcome the Spirit of God to move in us. We have a great multipurpose building, great music, great small groups, great kids and youth programs, and on and on. We have a lot of good people who help make this church great. Will you join me in working to make this church even greater?

Did you notice that each main point today included participation? There's an old ad for Heinz Ketchup with a song that says, "Anticipation... it's making me wait." I think there should be a ☞ new song that says, "**Participation... it's making things great.**" To get the most out of church, get involved and participate.

v. 25 *And all the more as you see the Day approaching.* Jesus is coming soon!

There is a trend to be less and less committed to church, but the Bible says we should be more and more committed as the end draws near. As things get worse in the world, we will need his presence even more; we will need to hold on to the promises even more; we will need each other even more, so...

☞ **Press in to God's presence; Praise him for the promises; Prompt each other to please God,** and you will get a lot out of church.