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# Platform Duty

CARL COFFMAN

UNFORTUNATELY some church elders consider platform duty as their chief responsibility. It is a primary objective of this series to clarify and amplify the opportunities for true leadership and the soul-winning responsibilities that are the elder's. Of course, platform duties are important. Let us consider how this Sabbath duty can be performed at its best.

Everything done by the platform participants either contributes to, or detracts from, the church audience's appreciation and understanding of the objectives of worship at the eleven o'clock service on Sabbath morning. Unfortunately, many elders have not had the opportunity to study what true worship is, or how it can best be achieved. It would be very much worth your time to read a basic book on the subject, such as *The Fine Art of Public Worship*, by A. W. Blackwood (New York: Abingdon Press, 1939), or *And Worship Him*, by Norval F. Pease (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1967).

In defining *worship*, most authors include two basic elements. First, a revelation of God must take place, through the reading of Scripture, through the prayers, in the act of giving, in the sacred music of the hymn, the organ, the choir—the instrument, the voice—as well as through the message of the sermon. Second, the worshiper must be led to develop an attitude of dedication, a determination to hear and know, a reverential fear—all of which will enable him to realize God's revelation and presence and, as the Holy Spirit moves him, to profit from this very important hour *with God*.

It is not only important what and how the preacher preaches, but it is also vitally important how the elder reads the Scripture lesson or leads in the responsive

reading, how he offers the prayer or benediction, how he calls for the offering and prays in relation to it, how he announces the hymn, how he sits, how he thinks, how he reverently seeks his own worship experience. Those sixty minutes are truly important, both to those on the platform and to the audience.

One note should be added here. Ellen G. White adds a third element in true worship. In *The Desire of Ages*, page 189, she states that the true worshiper will leave the sanctuary determined to give "a willing obedience" to all of God's requirements. In other words, true contact with God will so affect the individual that he will joyfully do what pleases his Lord after His will has been revealed. This underscores once more how vitally important it really is for the pastor and elders to team up in making every worship service truly worship in this high sense.

How can our platform duties be accomplished so as to contribute the most to an effective worship service? I see two primary objectives in relation to the elders' work on the platform. First, the elders should work through the service so flawlessly that the "mechanics" of the conduct of the hour are unnoticeable. The audience is distracted when the elders bobble. This careful platform operation must be under the direction of the head elder so that it will be carried out smoothly, irrespective of the presence or absence of the pastor.

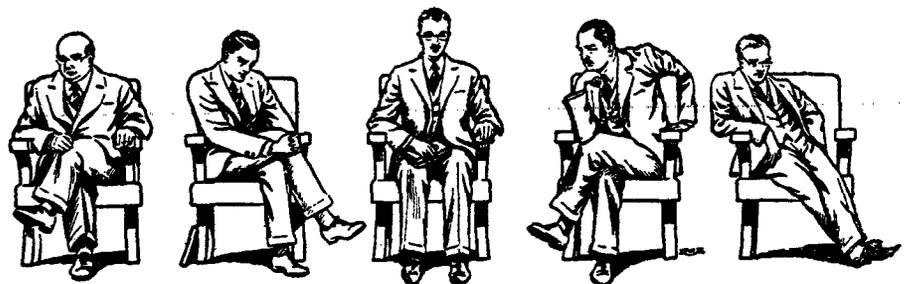
Second, the elders need to understand true worship clearly so that their parts in the service fully contribute to such an atmosphere. If the pastor will supply the elder who will offer the pastoral prayer with the central idea of his sermon by Wednesday of that week, the elder can give prayerful thought

to what he will pray about and how the audience can be brought closer to God through his prayer. The same can be accomplished in the benediction as the result of advanced meditation by the elder. All parts of the service are affected for good to the degree that the elders are united to build a service that offers maximum worship experience. Such unity, however, requires prayerful effort and meaningful participation on the part of each elder.

A word about platform organization. The head elder, in counsel with the pastor, should organize the platform duties for a quarter in advance. Assign the various parts of the service for each Sabbath of the quarter to specific elders, and with fair distribution of responsibilities. Also, indicate an alternate elder for each Sabbath in case of an unforeseen absence by an elder on duty.

Urge the elders to make needed trips on weekends when they are not on duty. With weekly assignments, indicate where each serving elder will go at the close of the service to greet the departing congregation. Make it a rule that the head elder, whether serving that day or not, the other participating elders, and the alternate, all meet in the assigned room *immediately* after Sabbath school. This in itself allows the pastor and elders time for proper review of the service details, and a season of prayer for the help of God in truly carrying out a beautiful hour of worship.

God still desires to speak to His people in the worship service. And He still is the Author of order, not confusion. Thus, careful and meaningful planning and conduct of the service are His will, and will be blessed by Him to the greater spirituality of the eleven o'clock hour.



Which platform posture is correct?