

Student Support Program

THE CHURCH OF
Jesus
Christ



But First, Let Me Focus in Church

If you're not getting anything out of the Sunday sermon, this one's for you

I'M SO BROKE
I CAN'T EVEN
PAY ATTENTION



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By Brother Chuck Maddox, Jr.

It is 8:00 on a Sunday morning, and your alarm goes off. Time to get up for church! Do you spring out of bed like a child on Christmas morning, or do you slowly slide onto the floor while wearily working towards your feet?

The weekend only consists of two days, and we spend the majority of one of those days in church. Sometimes, we do not want to wake up early on a Sunday morning. Sometimes, we feel like going to church is not worth our time or energy. Why is that? Where do those thoughts come from? Perhaps we are not getting the most out of church.

When you sit in your seat/pew/row on a Sunday morning,

what are you doing? Are you whispering? Texting? Snap Chatting? Vine-ing? (Do you even Vine?)

Or are you focused on the speaker? Are you making eye contact? Do you nod occasionally?

If you are in high school or college, you know it can be difficult to focus on a speaker for an extended period of time; however, there are strategies you can employ to get the most out of the sermon.

Do the Write Thing

Do you take notes in class? No? You just take a picture of the whiteboard with your phone? Oh...well, indulge me for a little "if you give a mouse a cookie."

If you take notes in class, you will

be able to pay attention for an extended period of time. If you pay attention for an extended period of time, you will listen to the speaker's message. If you listen to the speaker's message, you will internalize it, and it will positively impact your life.

Journaling about the Sunday morning sermon is one way to focus your mind during preaching, and it also gives you a spiritual journal to reflect on throughout the week.

Be Screen Savvy

Keep your phone "screen down." When I use phones with my students in my classroom, I have two phrases: "screens up" and "screens down." When I say

"screens down," students place their phones on their desks with the screen down. This prevents the inanimate phone from tempting them to look at it.

The same concept can be applied in church. On Sunday mornings, keep your screen down so you are not distracted by the Instagram alert that someone just liked the #selfie you took in the bathroom mirror before church.

Open Those Holy Books

When someone is speaking, and they say something you want to remember, what do you do? You write it down. During most sermons, the speaker shares where the text can be found. When you hear the scripture at the beginning of the sermon, find it in your book and follow along. Remember to bring a highlighter and pen to annotate while you read. Not only does this keep you focused, but the next time you open your scriptures, that verse you just highlighted pops and reminds you why you highlighted it in the first place.

I hope you are encouraged by these three strategies to help you get the most out of church. The Holy Spirit always meets us when we gather to worship the Lord, but sometimes we do not always meet the Holy Spirit with a refreshed, rested mind ready to focus on the message. When you find church boring, ask yourself if it is boring because you are not truly focused on the sermon.

Beyond the Sermon

Church is so much more than the sermon. We sing praise. We fellowship. We give testimonies of thanksgiving. We pray for one another's needs. Most importantly, we remember Christ's sacrifice with communion. When we're not in the right mindset, we go through the motions, and these activities don't have an impact. Check out the wrong-headed mindsets below and the strategies for getting out of the rut.



IN-N-OUT. You walk through the doors five minutes after opening prayer, and you race to your car before the last amen. Church is so loooong. You put in your time, and the rest of the day is yours.

- Make an effort to attend Sunday school. It's great. You can ask questions, and there are no final exams.
- Treat yourself to your favorite breakfast or coffee drink (coffee-flavored sugar milk?) to motivate your tush out of bed.
- Tell yourself, "God asked me for one full day a week. I can give Him more than *one hour*."

The logo for "fakebook", with the word "fakebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

FAKE. At church, you pretend like everything is fine because you don't want to bother anyone with your problems. It's none of their biz, anyway. Slap on a pound of makeup and a smile and don't let the real you show.

- When someone at church asks, "How are you?" Don't say, "Fine." Give a truthful answer.
- Identify one person at church who you trust. Make an effort to connect with that person.
- Ask for the ministry to pray for you, either during the service or privately before/after.



SELFIE. Church is all about you. You have *your* favorite seat, *your* favorite song, and *your* favorite speaker. You want church on *your* terms. If you don't get anything out of it, what's the point?

- Pick one person in your branch who has a serious prayer need, and make it a priority to talk with that person about how they're doing and what they need.
- Sit down next to an elderly saint and hold the heavy songbooks for them and cover their knees with a blanket.
- Open the door for everyone as they walk into the building and give out free hugs.