

PART 1

# Ushers

## Your Church's Most Valuable Asset

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, HELPS, governments, diversities of tongues. **1 Corinthians 12:28**

# 1

## The Role of Ushering In the Local Church

### The Scriptural Foundation for Ushering

Ushering in your local church involves much more than shaking hands and shining your shoes. Some churches think that ushers are just bucket passers, so they grab anybody to pass the bucket. "Let's just grab ol' Larry when he comes walking in. Let's just get anybody." You don't want to get just *anybody*, because you don't want an *anybody* offering. You have been selected as an usher; you are in the ministry of helps, employed by Almighty God.

**And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, HELPS, governments, diversities of tongues.**

1 Corinthians 12:28

Many people have never noticed the ministry of helps in the Bible. They have noticed apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, tongues and interpretation. But when it comes to helps and governments, many people say, "I must have blinked and missed that one." They blinked because "helps" didn't sound very important.

But God has set the ministry of helps into the Church. You as an usher in your church, fall within the ministry of helps category.

This scripture reveals several important truths:

1. Your ministry is ordained and anointed by God Himself. You have been divinely set in the Church for a purpose.
2. Your ministry in helps is just as important as other leadership offices such as the apostle and prophet.
3. It is a supernatural ministry like miracles and healing.

The word helps comes from the Greek word *antilepsis* or *antilempsis* which means "a laying hold of, an exchange...lay hold of, so as to support."<sup>1</sup> Its literal meaning is "one who gives assistance." *Helps* describes, "One of the ministrations in the local church, by way of rendering assistance, perhaps especially of help ministered to the weak and needy."<sup>2</sup>

In other words, if you are helping anyone in the church or assisting the weak and needy, you are operating in the ministry of helps.

### Is Ushering Biblical?

Envisioning an usher usually conjures up an image of a white-shirted, gloved man wandering through a movie theater with a flashlight. Church people think of bucket-passers and hand shakers, but the Bible reveals ushers to be trusted men who handle the many details of ruling and serving God's people. The Great word *diakonos*<sup>3</sup> used in First Timothy 3:8 and throughout the New Testament describes the first deacons in the church.

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Their responsibilities included waiting on tables, feeding widows in the church and relieving the church leaders from the encumbering details of daily church operation. Today the office of deacon is most commonly filled by the usher.

Just like the first century deacons, today's deacons rarely hold policy-making power. Their commission entails faithfully carrying out the desires and instructions of the pastor through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Remember the biblical account in Acts regarding the disciples' search for men to serve tables:

**Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.**

**Acts 6:3-5**

This passage in Acts 6 sets the divine pattern for ushering in the Church. If Stephen was known and chosen because he *was full of faith and the Holy Ghost*, how much more should you strive for this status and reputation?

But Stephen didn't stop there:

**And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.**

**Acts 6:8**

In Acts 7, he boldly preached the Gospel to the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jewish people, that condemned Jesus and imprisoned Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:17-40.

### **Tasks Involved in Ushering**

Many churches seem to demoralize an usher's duties, thinking they are very limited and unimportant. However, the duties of an usher range far beyond passing buckets and shaking hands and encompass weighty and meaningful tasks. I specifically define these duties in four areas.

#### **Assist the Pastor**

First of all, an usher assists the pastor and helps him bring his vision for the local church to fulfillment. As an usher, your presence will build up and add to the well being of your church. The pastor stands up and says, "It's time for an offering." When an army of ushers stand and come forth, that impresses people. They think, "Wow, look at those people who are here to serve." Sadly, in some churches, when the pastor gets up to take an offering he has to say, "Could we have some help? Is there anybody here who wants to serve God? Somebody jump up, and give us a hand here! We need some help over here or over there." People are watching this thinking "Hmm, I wonder what's going on around here? Nobody wants to assist the pastor."

#### **Meet and Greet**

Secondly, an usher is God's public relations man and represents the church to every new visitor. Because the pastor of a large church cannot personally greet all the people before a service, it is the usher's responsibility to make visitors feel welcome and important.

Now, I will discuss this in more detail a little later, but keep something in mind. Sometimes if an usher greets someone and the person falls down, the usher thinks it's the anointing of God that knocks them down. But it isn't the anointing; it's his breath. We call it dragon's breath. No matter how friendly

the usher's "we just want to welcome you" is, his dragon's breath will knock them down and they will remember that!

I am covering some really personal things, but ushering is all about dealing with people. You would be amazed at the excuses people use for not coming to church. The next Sunday morning when they wake up, do you know why they think of first? Ol' dragon breath. And they pray that ol' dragon breath isn't at that door when they come in, because they already have their hair permed, and don't need another one!

Ushers should greet visitors with the same warmth and love as the pastor would himself. The usher has the unique privilege to make the first, and usually lasting, impression on a person. He can ease the visitor's transition from uneasy curiosity to security and enjoyment.

I have seen visitors track down a friendly usher before they leave the service and say, "We'll be back. You can count on us!" Why? They know they have a friend with a warm smile waiting when they return. You can make a difference in someone's life.

If you flow in your role, you will become the world's greatest salesman because you have what the public wants. In other words, you will be right there to help them what they need. Your love and efficiency will impact visitors because you have:

- • Warmly welcomed them with an outstretched hand and smile.
- • Seated them in comfortable, accessible seats.
- • Provided them with bulletins, songsheets and all necessary information on your church.
- • Even gone the extra mile and told them you enjoyed their presence in the service and how much you would like them to come to a service again.

### **Maintain Order**

The third task of the usher is to maintain order and orchestrate movement during the service and prayer ministry lines. First Corinthians 14:40 clearly reads, **Let all things be done decently and in order.** To achieve this harmony, you must know your spiritual authority and be a "watchman on the wall." After all, you are one of God's main safeguards against Satan's devices of confusion and distraction.

Consider yourself a guardian of God's anointed-the one who prevents needless human interruptions in the form of talkers and rovers. You are the first line of defense against the diversions that can separate people from God's word and the flow of the Holy Spirit.

Note the exhortations issued in First Thessalonians 5:14,15. They provide an excellent basis for maintaining order.

- • WARN them that are unruly,
- • COMFORT the feeble-minded,
- • SUPPORT the weak,
- • BE PATIENT toward all men.

Maintaining order also involves being alert for any suspicious movement toward the stage. Don't allow anyone to make an unauthorized movement toward the pastor's platform.

If they do, escort them out quickly and quietly.

Be especially alert during:

- • Times of crisis
- • Spiritual conflict in your community

- • Special meetings with well-known ministers

A pastor's stand for community righteousness, or a guest speaker's reputation for supernatural ministry can generate potentially violent actions.

We don't like to think about these things, but they have happened – violent things have gone on in churches. I was attacked at one time, in a service. Can you believe that? And I'm such a lovable guy! That experience inspired a new message I have called, "Where were the ushers when the preacher was being beat up?"

About twenty minutes into my message, I was emphasizing, "Ohhhh, the infinite value of the humble gospel helpers," when I heard someone say something on the other side of the sanctuary.

I'm the type of person that if you respond to me, I respond back to you. So I walked over, and there was a gentleman sitting on the second row who was saying something. He had even leaned over and said something to the person beside him. I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "You're too loud!" And I said, "Brother, I've got to be loud. There are some people in here with thick heads."

Now, I have to admit, maybe I shouldn't have said that! But this guy just erupted. And I mean *violently*.

He started throwing people around! I leaned out to the man causing the disturbance. I patted him on the shoulder, and said, "Brother, calm down." He reached up and "Waack!", slapped me across the face. And this is in the middle of Sunday morning service!

Then he grabbed my hand, shoved it into his mouth and started biting me! He was holding my hand in his mouth, and blood was running down my hand. I looked at that and I looked at him, and I thought, "I've got a devil here! Or the devil's got me!"

About this time, I thought, "*Where* are the ushers?" Everybody was backed up with a look on their faces that said, "Let's give him room. Let's see what's going to happen here!"

And then something did happen. Up to this point, I was very concerned about the service and all the people there. But then I literally felt like a coat was being taken off of me and another coat was put on me. The moment this coat or cloak touched me, I knew what it was. It was the anointing for the ministry of helps. My first thought was, "Neither give place to the devil." (Eph. 4:27).

One of our responsibilities as an usher is to make sure there are no disturbances in our services. We're here to cover all the bases.

And so when that cloak, that anointing touched me, I knew what I was supposed to do-get that person out of the service. I literally ripped my hand out of his mouth, grabbed him and said, "Sir come one, we need to get out of here."

Then the ushers showed up and helped me! We took this gentleman out of the service and tried to minister to him. We tried to explain to him that you just don't act like that, and tried to determine what the problem was. He just wouldn't receive anything. I thought, "I can't go back out into the sanctuary, I mean, this is really embarrassing, to get beat up on Sunday morning while I'm preaching, let alone, bitten." But I thought, "I can't hide from them."

So I went back out and preached one of the shortest sermons I've ever preached. I said, "People, I'm not going to ignore what happened this morning. You saw what the devil could do with a person. That was not God. You can see what happens when the devil grabs hold of your life. And this is my message today, 'Who has hold of your life?'"

“Does God have hold of your life? Or does the devil have hold of your life? It’s possible that if the devil has hold of your life, you might turn out like this and react this way someday.” Seven people rededicated their lives back to the Lord that day. Two whole families came forward and rededicated their lives. God received the glory in spite of the devil’s best efforts to disrupt. But the point is, had those ushers understood their authority; this situation could have been avoided.

### **Receive Offerings**

The fourth task of the usher is to receive offerings in a cheerful manner. I believe your attitude will affect the congregation’s willingness to give to the Lord. Offerings actually have increased in churches after ushers were taught how to receive them.

In other words, don’t wear a look on your face that indicates bankruptcy.

When it’s time for the offering, usually the minister will say, “Now God loves a cheerful giver. God loves a hilarious giver. Put a smile on your face! We have an opportunity to give!” In most churches, the minister who is taking the offering usually encourages the people to be cheerful.

Then the ushers come down the aisle looking like they are at a funeral. They look like they’re probably going to take the offering out back and bury it somewhere.

One person told me, “Brother Bell, that is so true. Last Sunday I was sitting in one of our services getting to write out my offering check, and I looked at one of our ushers. I said to myself, ‘Honey, if you don’t want it, I’ve got bills to pay.’” That usher was telling people, “I don’t want your offering.”

I’ve seen ushers tell congregations, “I don’t think it’s time for the offering,” and not say anything with their mouths. Eighty-five percent of communication is done through body expression.

How many times has someone walked up to you and said, “Hey, what’s wrong?” And you said, “Well, nothing’s wrong.” They said, “You need to tell your face, because your face is telling everybody there’s something wrong.”

It takes thirty-five fewer muscles to smile than it does to frown. Some people wonder why they are worn out at the end of the day. I tell them, “You’ve been frowning all day. I’ll make your day easier. I’ll make it so you’ll use thirty-five fewer muscles during the day—just practice smiling.”

In other words, don’t wear a look on your face that indicates bankruptcy! If the pastor announces a second unexpected offering, don’t groan or let your face express disappointment at the break in your routine. You are a leader in the Church, so be cautious that you do not reflect wrong attitudes to others.

When you serve people, you must leave your burdens at Jesus’ feet and let His love radiate from your face. Victorious ushers inspire supernatural giving by reinforcing everything the Holy Spirit has performed in the service.

Your preparedness affects the outcome of the offerings. If your unpreparedness forces and causes the pastor to fill time by ad-libbing, you are giving Satan an opportunity to remind the congregation of other ways they could spend their money.

Ushers who aren’t prepared when it’s time for the offering are like a covey of quail. If you have done any hunting, you know that when you come upon a covey of quail (about ten or fifteen quail bunched together) and you walk into them, they take off in all directions. Some ushers don’t know where the envelopes are; they don’t know where the buckets are; and they just take off in all directions. They run around the sanctuary trying to find the envelopes. They run out in the foyer saying, “Where are the buckets? I didn’t know he was going to take an offering now! We always take an offering at the end of service. What is he doing taking one at the beginning of the service?”

So they're running around, and now the pastor as to ad-lib. He should start making up something, because he sees the ushers are not prepared. While he's ad-libbing, people start to think, "Remember the water bill? Remember that new pair of shoes I saw? They won't be on sale forever."

Unprepared ushers give people time to remind themselves of all the other things they wanted to spend their money on. But we all want to operate in faith don't we? Well, faith is *now*.

The Holy Spirit told the pastor, "*Now* is the time for the offering." He wants everybody in faith-*now!*" The ushers should be up-*now!*" The ushers should have the buckets-*now!*" The people fill out the envelopes and the checks-*now!*" The buckets go by-*now!*" They drop their offering in the bucket-*now!*"

The buckets go about four people down the row and the people say, "What did I do? I just paid my tithe! This is the first time I ever did it!" Why? Because they did it right then, *now!* Faith is *now!* And they sit there and say, "The Windows of heaven are going to open up, going to pour out a blessing on me, which I cannot contain, according to Malachi 3:10. And Luke 6:38 says give and it will be given back to me. I can claim these promises *now*, because I did it!"

Why? Because you, the usher, did it *now!*" It was done in faith. People start getting blessed. Why? Because you are helping to serve them in faith-*now!*"

One final note-ushers must tithe and give offerings in their personal life before helping to gather offerings. Otherwise they are being hypocritical and setting a proper example. Acting, or pretending to believe in tithing if you don't, will eventually show.

### **Women Ushers**

I am often asked, "Can women be ushers?" We are all unique in the body of Christ. We all have a place and a purpose. Yes, a woman can function in the usher's ministry. There are many situations in ushering where a man's presence can create a negative reaction. For instance, in dealing with a woman trying to comfort a crying baby in the service, you would have to agree that a woman usher would be more sensitive and understanding than a man usher. I have seen at times that a wall goes up when a man usher tries to approach a woman in a situation like this. Also, during times of prayer ministry at the altar, the woman usher can assist women and children in a far greater way than any man usher.

Haven't you heard that when God created man, He was in a hurry and as a result, we still have a few rough edges. But when He created women, He took His time and did it right!

When a husband and wife serve together in an usher's ministry, it portrays to the congregation and to visitors that they are a part of a family church.

I am a firm believer there should be a distinction between men and women when it comes to physical matters. Let me give you an example. During offering time, I would have the ladies handing out the envelopes; the men would be passing the buckets. During communion (what a great time to display the family unit), I would have the ladies passing the bread and the men passing the juice. I believe within the usher's ministry, if there is coffee or any preparation for the guest speakers, this would be a great opportunity for the ladies to minister.

Finally, in Romans chapter 16, Paul asks the church to recognize those ladies who minister faithfully in the body of Christ. What a wonderful scriptural example for the church today.

### **Usher's Checklist**

1. Do I represent Jesus and His Church to the public to the degree that others enjoy and remember my relationship with them?
2. Do I represent Jesus to unsaved people with my God-like manner?
3. Everyone is special to God, so do I strive to make everyone feel special?





## 2 Lifestyle Ushering

### Leadership by Example

I am a firm believer that God places spiritual qualifications and priorities first. Ushering techniques only work after your heart is made right before God. You must set a visible, realistic standard of servanthood in the Church of Jesus Christ. Because your ministry is highly visible, you hold a greater responsibility to serve without any appearance of evil before saint or sinner. A supernatural usher is motivated by a servant's heart and is honored to be a servant to the Lord, the pastor, and to the members of the Church.

Your example of humility, love, diligence, faithfulness and pure-heartedness will bring praise to the Lord, honor to the Church, and the power to minister to needs at every level.

I have seen ushers operate supernaturally while greeting visitors before a service. Sensing a need by the Holy Spirit, they asked people if they needed prayer and subsequently brought about miraculous healings, salvation and deliverance in the lobby even before the church service started.

I have observed Spirit-sensitive ushers seat a couple with marriage problems next to a happily married couple, to help mend their marriage. One of my ushers told how he just sensed in his spirit that this husband and wife were having problems. So, he purposed to seat them behind a real lovey-dovey couple in the church, who were always nibbling on each other's ears.

He put them behind that couple so they could see that it is possible to have a good marriage. It *is* possible that you can love one another and have a good marriage. That is what is exciting. In the Spirit-realm you learn these things.

I knew an usher who stopped a man from searching through a pastor's desk after God spoke to him. You must expect God to use you in your capacity as an usher. Your ministry is just as important as anyone else's. This usher was patrolling our parking lot because we were in a part of town where, if we didn't patrol the parking lot, your car might not be there – or *parts* of your car might not be there when you got back. He was out in the parking lot, and he had a good attitude. He was praying over cars that needed prayer, and tires that needed tread.

He wasn't out there complaining, "I don't know why they stick me out here all the time. I wish I could be in there listening to the service. But oh no, we have to be out here. If these people locked their cars, we wouldn't have to stay out here. Look at that one over there, it's unlocked. I'm not going to lock it-it's their fault.

You can have an attitude like that, but don't expect God to speak to you.

This usher was out there serving the people. He was out there praying for the service. He was out there praying for the service. He was out there praying over the cars and praying over the tires praying for families that needed a new set of tires. As he started praying for them and interceding for them, God spoke to him. He heard those words in his spirit by the Holy Spirit.

"There's somebody in the pastor's office going through his desk right now." He walked in, walked down the hall and saw that the pastor's office door was cracked open about two or three inches. He walked up to the door, opened it up and saw a man going through the drawers in the pastor's desk. He asked him, "What are you doing?" The man, "I'm looking for the bathroom." The usher said, "Well, the bathroom's not in here."

What did the ushers do with that man? They brought him out and seated him in the sanctuary so that he could hear the Word of God. It was just his word against the usher's word. He said he was looking for the bathroom. But at that moment in time, the ushers were in control.

What was the best thing they could do? Put him in there where the Word of God was being taught. Let the conviction of the Holy Spirit get all over him. Oh, it's exciting to be an usher. It's more than just passing buckets. That young usher who learned to listen to the voice of God today is the president of Harrison House, the publisher of this book. Luke 16:10 tells us he who is faithful over the least will be faithful over much.

The lifestyle of an usher is outlined in First Timothy and Titus where the qualifications of deacons are defined. Since you are operating as a deacon, you should live by biblical standards.

You may feel I'm overemphasizing the importance of your role. No! Church is a life and death situation. You never know:

- • What type of need a person has,
- • What life-threatening illness a person is battling,
- • What homes are being destroyed, or
- • What husbands and wives are contemplating divorce.

People's souls are on the line; so, don't pretend to play church if you don't have the genuine needs of people in mind. Didn't Jesus consider Himself a servant of the father? That means that those in the ministry are servants regardless of the level of authority in which they serve.

You can only minister supernaturally by renewing your mind to God's Word and submitting yourself daily to the cross of Jesus Christ. So how do you prepare for such an awesome responsibility?

## **Part 1: Spiritual Preparation**

The first key to effectiveness is spiritual preparation in the form of prayer. Hopefully, the usher team will spend time in unified prayer before the service, so Satan won't gain a foothold during the service.

Prayer is the foundation of all anointed actions and deeds in the Church. It will bring you in tune with God's heart and thoughts, and remove the roadblocks that Satan tries to set up in your church. Prayer also prepares men's hearts to receive God's saving Word.

Pray before you usher in the church so you can tackle your task with spiritual strength and power. Only prayer will bring this. Also, by making praise and worship a vital part of your prayer time, an anointing will come upon your life. Never put your call to serve as an usher before your spiritual relationship and time with God. If you try to appear spiritual or servant-like without prayer, your hypocrisy will find you out.

First Corinthians 13:1-13 sets forth the standards you should live and serve by. Liberally season all you do and speak with love. Your commitment to pray for the unlovable in your congregation will bring the answer of how to reach them.

One man wouldn't shake my hand or acknowledge my presence on Sunday mornings. God gave me the creative idea to greet him cheerfully by name. He progressed over the weeks from taking my outstretched hand, to shaking my hand, to actually giving me a brotherly hug. Most importantly, he came to the point where he could receive love from another member of the Body of Christ.

### **Cultivate the Five "T's"**

Also, cultivate the five “T” qualities: teachability, thoughtfulness, tactfulness, timeliness and teamwork.

### **Teachability**

The teachable usher is willing to learn demanding functions and responsibilities over years of dedication, training and practice.

### **Thoughtfulness**

The thoughtful usher develops a good memory for names. By using concentration, association (connecting a name with a person you know or object that sparks your memory) and by practicing, you will grow in your ability to make people feel special by remembering names.

### **Tactfulness**

Tactfulness is your ability to do and say the right thing without offending a person, especially in awkward situations. You must be able to respond while keeping your flesh under control.

### **Timeliness**

Timeliness is knowing when, how and what to do in every situation. Cultivate your level of alertness and ability to take initiative. Trust your intuition, or human spirit, which should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s prompting. Listen to your spirit and flow with it, being ready for change when it comes. Also learn timing from seasoned ushers and, above all, learn from your past mistakes.

We had a head usher that I trained under who could smell a wrong spirit when it came into the church. I never saw anything like it. I remember one time we were walking around the church and he said, “There’s one in the building.” And I thought, “Where is it? I was a new usher and I didn’t know what he was talking about. He said, “We have trouble in the building.”

He picked that up in the spirit, because he was responsible for order in our church. So, we were walking around, and I was following him really close. He was just checking things, and he stopped, and said, “See that guy right there? There’s your problem. Put an usher with him.” We brought in an usher and sat him down behind this man.

How did that head usher know the man was going to do something? One thing he did know, if the man did try to cause a disturbance, that usher was right there. If you’re not sensitive, people can slip in like this and just stand up and start doing whatever they want to do.

I remember one time when there was a person who slipped into one of our services, one of the ushers picked up something in his spirit about him. He said, “Something’s not right about this person. I’ve never seen him here before, but I know something’s just not right. I have a real check in my spirit.”

He sat behind this person, and halfway through the service, this person stood up, pulled out a piece of paper and started reading something. Right in the middle of the message, he just stood up. As soon as the man stood up, the usher put his hand on the shoulder of that man and sat him right down. The problem was taken care of just that fast.

Everyone was calm and secure because they knew the ushers were taking care of the situation. I’ve heard people remark, “You can go to that church down there and hear the Word of God being taught without distraction. The ushers at that church serve you.”

I’ve heard people make remarks like that about ushers and about churches. I don’t know about you, but I want to go to a church where I can hear the Word of God.

## **Teamwork**

Ushers work better as a team. Even Jesus knew this when He told the disciples to seat five thousand men and their families before miraculously feeding them with five loaves and two fishes. (Luke 9:14). Jesus knew that twelve men could seat a crowd more efficiently than one. It is very important that you have regular meetings together. You should discuss how you could better yourselves in serving the people. Make this a time of recruiting new ushers. It is hard to serve as a team if you never meet the other team members and understands each other's responsibilities. A spirit of excellence is what Jesus expects from us.

## **Usher's Checklist**

1. 1. Am I willing to learn and lead with a servant's heart?
2. 2. Am I willing to be an example to God's flock:
  - • Even when people don't sit where I want them?
  - • Even when people are unfriendly and unloving?
3. 3. Am I willing to develop a helpful attitude and go the "second mile" with people?
4. 4. Am I dedicated to the task of ushering?
5. 5. Will I allow faithfulness and dedication to take precedence over my talents or outward qualifications?
6. 6. Can I keep a positive attitude? (Can I be an inspiration and not an inflammation?)
7. 7. Can I set a tone of calm reassurance in emergencies and move into action with composure?
8. 8. Am I willing to let God shape, mold and prepare me to be a better usher, or do I always feel like I can do the job better than others and refuse instruction?
9. 9. Do I have the resolve to serve my pastor even when it is inconvenient and difficult?

## **Part 2: Natural Preparation**

Your manners, physical appearance and personal hygiene are crucial as an usher. Don't cause others to avoid you because of correctable situations.

### **Manners**

Never embarrass another person. Learn to be sensitive to people's needs and limits so you can build lasting relationships. Also, guard against favoritism. The poorest church member deserves the same warm greeting as the richest member.

Use direct eye contact and a firm handshake (not limp or crushing) initiated by you. Such actions signify warm heartfelt greetings and make people feel like royalty. Don't be too familiar with people, especially with the opposite sex. Some people do not like hugs, so let the people set their boundaries.

### **Hair**

Always keep your hair clean, neat and free from dandruff. Also, meticulously trim your beard and mustache before services.

### **Clothing**

Pay careful attention to the condition of your suit or clothing. Clothes reflect attitudes like honesty, rebellion, poverty or "I don't care" attitudes. If your suit is dark, watch for dandruff or loose hair on the shoulders.

If you have handled babies or toddlers, check your clothing for milk or food stains. Make sure your pants, shirt and coat are pressed and your tie is straight.

### **Breath**

Overcome bad breath or coffee breath by brushing your teeth before the service. Keep mints in your pockets at all times.

Due to a strenuous workload, use an effective deodorant or antiperspirant, but don't overwhelm people with fragrant colognes, powders or aftershave lotions. You don't want to be responsible for handing out headaches to people sensitive to fragrances!

### **Shoes**

Cleaned and polished shoes are a must. If you don't have an appropriate pair, talk to your head usher. He might be able to make or arrange for the needed investment.

### **Sickness**

If you're feeling feverish or coughing, ask for prayer from the pastor and elders. Do not serve as an usher if you are not healed instantly. Protecting and honoring others means you will not purposely expose them to any type of health problems.

### **Usher's Checklist**

1. 1. Sensitivity
  - • Am I sensitive to each individual's limitations and allow them to set the boundaries when I greet them?
  - • Do I insist on hugging people regardless of their preferences?
  - • Do I extend my hand first in friendly greeting or do I wait for others to respond to me first?
2. 2. Greeting the opposite sex.
  - • Do I guard my reputation as an usher when I greet the opposite sex?
  - • Do both my hand and eyes signify purity and respect for others?
3. 3. Attitude toward the unlovable
  - • Do I take the time to be warm and caring toward the unlovable?
  - • Do I heed Jesus' command that sick people (weak and needy) need a physician, thus allowing my church to be a refuge for the infirm, hungry and wounded?
  - • Do I tend to prefer the well-established, upper-class individuals and shun those individuals who don't fit into my standards of acceptability?

## 3 Down to Basics

### Pre-service Preparation

#### **Punctuality**

Try to arrive thirty to forty-five minutes before the service to prepare yourself. Also, check to be sure if everything is in order in the sanctuary.

#### **Assignment**

Report to the usher in charge and learn your duty assignment. If you are not familiar with your area, refresh yourself by glancing through manuals and walking through the area. Know which aisle you are expected to walk down during your assignment. Know the location of the nursery, telephone and Sunday school classrooms. Also read the church bulletin for the latest information.

A person may come up to you after the service and say, "What were they talking about, about singles doing what? I'm a single," The usher should not say, "Well, I don't know-read your bulletin. I'm not a single. I've be married for years, even though I would like to be single."

Such an attitude tells the person question that even though you're a worker really not very interested in what goes on in your church. So why should they be interested? Ushers, read your bulletins. Make sure you have an understanding of what's going on.

#### **Pocket Supplies**

Always keep extra pens, pencils, breath mints or hard candy in your coat pocket to loan or distribute to those in need. Anticipate the needs before they arise.

#### **Church Supplies**

Check for the proper location of offering plates or buckets, offering envelopes, visitors' cards and other applicable forms that are passed out during a service. Mid-week service ushers can often perform re-supply duties.

#### **Mid-service Duties**

Preventing distractions during a service may be one of your greatest challenges. People are easily distracted and often the unsaved are looking for any excuse to escape the wooing of God's Spirit. The enemy often uses innocent children and unruly, disobedient or noisy adults to distract the lost and grieve the Holy Spirit. Disturbances create unhappy listeners who are unable to receive anything from God.

Distractions amount to double mindedness. James 1:7,8 says a double minded man is unstable in all ways and will receive nothing from God. Your job as an usher is to eliminate distractions so people do receive from God. Christians should not have to leave a service with their spiritual cup half-full.

If a person causing distractions is not seated at the end of a pew, use an index card to relay a message instead of trying to whisper. Don't allow disturbances to get out of hand before you address them.

## **Children**

Learn how to present the availability of all nursery and children's activities that coincide with regular services. Try to meet incoming parents before they enter the sanctuary. Encourage parents to take their babies to the nursery, especially if the pastor doesn't want children or babies in the sanctuary. If the parent insists on keeping the child (which is often necessary with a newborn), seat them in the back of the sanctuary and explain how important is that they exit if the baby makes noise or becomes restless.

## **Vagrants**

Alcoholics, panhandlers and various types of street people will drift into your church, expecting to reap benefits of Christian charity-usually on their terms. Whenever possible, take them to a private place without involving the pastor and assign two seasoned soul-winners to them.

## **Hallway/Restroom Roamers**

Always have an usher assigned to these two areas. Use spiritual discernment and common sense. If adults refuse to cooperate, ask them to leave the church building before you call the police. Often, the troubled person will allow you to pray for them. Handle children by escorting them to their parents or an assigned Sunday school classroom.

## **Distraught Individuals**

Mentally distraught or demonically controlled people are often characterized by rhythmic rocking, rolling eyes, irrational movements and constant mumbling or talking themselves. Whether dealing with mental or spiritual problems, such people are extremely unstable and should be handled immediately. Contact the head usher and agree in prayer immediately for God's power to manifest itself. Then ask the person to leave. If the person refuses, ask the head usher to notify the platform.

Your pastor must make the decision whether he wants to handle the problem from the pulpit or have the usher team bodily carry out the person. Such removal can be done so smoothly that only the people near a disturbance need to know.

For example, one pastor noticed demonic activity during a Sunday service and paused during his sermon to ask the congregation to stand for a time of greeting and fellowship. When the congregation stood, the ushers removed the problem person to a counseling room so quickly that no one was aware of the situation.

## **Elderly**

Offer your arm to assist elderly people to their seat. If they prefer to walk on their own, walk slowly to the accessible seat you've chosen for them. Don't show any impatience or irritation. If they take your arm, tell them how far you are going as you walk slowly. Ask them if they have any special needs or might need assistance to the restroom. Above all, always treat the elderly with respect.

At my home church, Church on the Move, Tulsa, Oklahoma, we have valet parking for our senior citizens. We park their cars for them. We have a special room for them, a reception room where they come in and have coffee and donuts. Pastor Willie George told the senior citizens that we were not doing this because they felt sorry for them, but out of respect for the elders and to honor them. The valet parking became so popular that senior citizens lined up for blocks, especially on a day with bad weather.

When the program first started, there was one gentleman who insisted, "There's no way you're going to park my car, young man. You'll have to carry me on a stretcher before I'll let you park my car." Then it was raining one Sunday and he was the first one there with his car, wanting the church to park it.

The word got around town. "They have valet parking over at that church for senior citizens. You just pull up, and they take your car."

Next, the church went down to a quick lube place and obtained the forms used to check oil, water and tires. Then on Sunday, when the people came for valet parking, the ministry parked the car, then went through the service checklist for the whole car. When the people came out of service, they told them what they had found.

"You're a little low on transmission fluid. You've got a tire that's a little low on air that you need to get checked. You need to get your oil checked-you might want to change it."

One Sunday the church cleaned all their windows. Teenage boys were helping. When the people pulled up, the kids just jumped in and cleaned all their windows and the inside of the car. The church did that for their senior citizens, to honor them. I think that's a great idea. Church should be a great place-an enjoyable place. We're here to serve and to minister to people.

### **Handicapped**

Ask the handicapped person if they need assistance to their seat. Never try to grab the arm of a person on a cane or walker since they may be concentrating on keeping their balance. Also, be aware that stroke victims may lack feeling on one side or may have hearing, visual or communication impairments.

If the person is in a wheelchair, introduce yourself and ask him or her if they need assistance. Don't be overeager in your attempt to help. Assure them you have sufficient space by the end of a pew and give them a preference as to how close they want to be wheeled near the front of the sanctuary.

Always be aware of the person's comfort and safety when transporting an individual in a wheelchair. Know the mechanics of a wheelchair-adjustable footrests, restraining straps, how to lock and unlock brakes and how to move it safely. Make sure the person's arms are resting inside of the armrests (not hanging down) and secure the feet. Avoid jolting or jerking steps that would throw a person forward. Stay alert!

Never give a handicapped person the impression that he or she is burdensome, frightful or that you are unable to accommodate them. Disabilities are not contagious diseases.

Talk directly to the disabled individual. Try not to focus completely on the person's disability, yet don't ignore it as if it doesn't exist. Sensitivity and common sense instead of pity will help you establish a relationship. If the person doesn't need assistance, then just offer your encouraging presence.

Also, tell the person to please signal you or another usher during the service if a special need arises. And try to make provision by the side or rear of the wheelchair for the person's assistant or relative.

### **Be Sensitive**

I once heard of an usher who said to people arriving in wheelchairs, "Wheelchairs on the left!" Some of the guests wanted to run around and say, "Lady I'm not a wheelchair, I'm a person." We need to realize that *people* are sitting in those wheelchairs. Most people who use crutches and wheelchairs have some kind of pain and are hurting. If they're not hurting physically, they're usually hurting emotionally. Jesus is in you and the most important thing is to extend the love of Jesus.

You are a minister and have in you the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. I look for the day we will see the headline in the newspaper, "Man with muscular dystrophy healed by an usher's prayer."



## **Ushers Are the First Ones to Talk to People**

When people come in on crutches they usually don't talk to anybody. The usher is often the first person they talk to. You represent the church, and you have the opportunity to extend love and grace to those in wheelchairs.

It is important to be sensitive and careful in the way you approach and talk to people, especially those in wheelchairs. Some in wheelchairs cannot get out and would be offended if you asked them to. Others, however, can get out of the chair and sit in a regular chair next to their spouse. Let the person in the wheelchair indicate if they prefer to stay in the chair or sit in a regular seat with friends or family.

Your job as an usher is to accommodate the people coming to the meeting as much as possible. There may be times you have to tell someone they can't sit in a certain place, but do it in a way that will not cause anger and strife. Many times ushers deny requests for their own convenience and not because of church policy or orders from the pastor. Remember, Jesus came to minister to others, and not to be ministered to. As ushers, you are called to do all that is possible to assist those you are serving.

## **Use the Correct Words**

"Handicapped" is a generally accepted word. We use the term *handicapped parking*. There are some people who don't like that word-they don't want to even be thought of as handicapped. But I personally don't know of another word.

Do not use the term *invalid*. Handicapped people are not invalids. There are many people who are physically whole, and they are invalids.

The word *assistance* is better than *help*, and ushers should make an effort to be aware of that. You are here to serve the people-*all* the people. Some people would be insulted if you suggested they need help, but most would be happy to be offered assistance.

Some of the people are going to come in half mad anyway, and they don't like being in a wheelchair. They are half mad at the world and they will take it out on the ushers. Some people think the church owes them. In such cases you have to be patient, just like with anyone else.

Many in wheelchairs will want to sit in their wheelchairs on the floor in the front, and ushers should realize that option is available. The reason they might prefer sitting down front is that for thirty minutes when the service starts, everyone is standing up praising the Lord and those in wheelchairs cannot see. We should have special consideration for those persons who are in wheelchairs, because they can't stand up and they can't see what's going on when everyone else is standing up.

## **The Handicapped in Prayer Lines**

Handicapped persons should be assisted into the prayer line in the same way any other person is assisted. Ushers sometimes are concerned they are hindering the faith of one in a wheelchair coming to the prayer line.

The person in a wheelchair should be allowed to come on their own, and directed or assisted to the place in the line, to keep everything orderly and allow the minister to get to them. It is an individual judgment call as to how much assistance to give in a prayer line.

## **Usher's Checklist**

1. Am I conscious of the needs of different individuals and do I try to meet them at the point of their need?
2. Is punctuality and dependability a top priority in my ushering commitment?
3. Do I have the ability to deal tactfully, kindly and swiftly when distractions occur?



## 4 Special Duties

### Seating

God is a God of order. Order will be reflected in the church when His servants are well-trained and listen to His voice. Don't the miraculous feedings of the crowds illustrate His desire for order during His supernatural provision of human need?

It is your responsibility to help people safely and reverently enter and exit the sanctuary. Don't permit your church to have people who fight for seats. One 600 member church was known for the uproar that followed as worshipers entered the Sunday School area at the same time through the same doors that other worshipers were exiting. The free-for-all actually drove people from the fellowship because the searching souls were hurt and dismayed over the display.

Your mission is clear: *Preserve godly order and protect the weak, needy and infirm. Be sensitive, but don't be intimidated.*

Develop a seating system between ushers. For example, when the head usher (who is standing at the entry way to the sanctuary) sees a party of four enter, he catches the eye of the lead usher in the center aisle and holds up four fingers. The lead usher in turn will find four seats. After locating the seats, the lead usher will nod yes, and the head usher will then release the people to go to the lead usher.

The lead usher then greets the party quietly as he leads them to their seats.

### Practical Seating Tips

- • Your assignment should be centered around a certain area of the sanctuary.
- • If seating people before service, ask them for their seating preference. After the service begins, don't ask for preferences. Seat them where it doesn't cause disturbances.
- • Reserve the back seats for early departures, latecomers and special-need people. Don't outrun the people you are seating-walk only a few steps ahead.
- • If your party stays with you, place your hand on the row or pew in front of the one you've selected and face them. Then the guest knows which row to enter.
- • Watch for vacant seats as you walk back the aisles. Know your area so you don't escort people toward the front only to find the seats filled. Don't reprimand people who slip by you. Stay positive.
- • Your responsibility doesn't end after seating takes place. Be alert for discomfort or physical distress among elderly people under a doctor's care.
- • During the seating process, try to fill up the front section first while keeping the back section roped off. It is proper to always escort the ladies, but don't disturb a service or embarrass a person being seated by forcing them to sit in the front after the service starts.
- • Don't seat people during prayer time or if the gifts of the Spirit are in operation. It is irreverent.
- • Don't get so personally involved during the service that you are distracted from your responsibilities. You are to maintain surveillance.

### Visitor's Welcome

Although each church has its own method, most churches greet and welcome visitors with a visitor's packet. Be prepared with these so when guests raise their hands, you can offer them the appropriate materials. Carry extra pens and pencils for filling out visitor's cards.

After the service, seek out the visitors in your section and personally greet them. Thank them for their attendance and invite them to the next service. And try to remember their name after meeting them!

### **Offerings**

Techniques for receiving offerings are as varied as church buildings, but most churches station ushers at the front of the church and work toward the back. Larger churches station additional ushers along the aisles. Pass the collection plate to one side of the aisle while receiving the plate from the other side, then reverse the pattern at the next row.

### **Communion**

Since communion was specifically given to the Church by Jesus, it is important the believer's attention is devoted to Christ and not the ushers. Always serve with dignity and revere the presence of the Lord. The congregation will often copy your behavior.

Double the servers since you must distribute both bread and wine. The wives of married ushers make excellent backup ushers. They also display the importance of a family church. Backups do the same work as the regular ushers during communion. You also may need to assign an aisle supplier. This person ensures that the trays of bread and wine are continuously filled. A tray should be considered empty when there are not enough cups or elements to serve a complete row. The aisle supplier should be summoned when a tray is dropped or spilled. Never serve a spilled tray.

Many churches begin communion with the ushers lined up before the podium. They face the pastor while he prays over the two elements. Other churches leave the elements in the back of the sanctuary and have the ushers walk to the front to serve after corporate prayer. Follow your pastor's preference.

Always serve the bread before the juice. Didn't Jesus give the disciples bread first? Some churches assign one set of ushers to serve the bread and another set to serve the juice. I suggest using the women to serve the bread and using the men to serve the juice. Always serve the individuals in the podium area as well as audio/video workers and musicians. You should stand at your assigned position until everyone receives the elements. Then you may sit down unless you have to gather glass communion cups. Glass communion cups be gathered efficiently by passing empty trays down each row while having the aisle supplier pick up the full trays.

### **Emergencies**

Clear emergency procedures and quick action can make the difference between life and death. Your church should establish guidelines for medical emergencies, power failures, fire evacuation and severe weather. Prominently display emergency phone numbers by every telephone.

- • Always assign one person call 911.
- • Station one or more persons outside the building to direct paramedics to the patient's location.
- • Keep one usher with the afflicted person at all times. Pray for the person's recovery in faith, and don't allow a crowd to cluster around the person.
- • Assign one person to stay with the family or friends.
- • Don't leave your usher station, unless called upon by the head usher.
- • Help any person in the midst of a medical emergency (heart attack, stroke, seizure, onset of childbirth, exhaustion, fainting or any peculiar symptom) to a private room. Talk to the person about how they feel and what they think the problem is. Relay their answers to health care professionals by telephone or when they arrive. Immediately dial 911 if you have access to this emergency medical response system. Otherwise call the operator. Follow these simple guidelines in order to prevent any trauma or complications.

## **Heart Attacks**

If the person complains of a squeezing chest pain, indigestion, arm pain, nausea, sweating, weakness, lightheadedness or feeling of "impending doom," have the person sit or lie down. Loosen any restrictive clothing and administer oxygen if available. Calmly reassure the patient. If the person's heart stops, administer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). I advise all ushers to take this invaluable Red Cross course offered in every community. This simple procedure saves thousands of lives per year.

## **Seizures**

Seizures are caused by high fever, infections, brain injury, stroke, epilepsy and, in rare cases, by demonic oppression. Call for professional help immediately, but take measures to keep the person from hurting himself during convulsions. Don't be alarmed, and at all cost, keep the person's airway clear until they gain full consciousness.

Gently lay the person on the floor on his side in case he vomits or salivates. Loosen restrictive clothing around the neck and chest and place a padded bit stick or piece of leather between the person's teeth only if there seems to be a danger of the individual biting his tongue. Don't use force – you might break teeth or be bitten. Convulsions usually last 1-5 minutes. Hold the arms and legs tight enough to prevent injury, but don't try to hold the person completely still. Some movement allows muscles to move. The person might be drowsy or confused afterwards and won't remember what happened.

## **Bleeding**

Always apply pressure directly over the wound with a clean cloth or your hand. Try to raise the injured part above the level of the heart whenever possible.

## **Breathing Difficulties**

Open the victim's airway and tilt the head back. If an adult stops breathing, pinch the nostrils and cover the mouth with your own. Begin with four rapid breaths and then use one breath every three seconds. If an infant stops breathing, cover both the nose and mouth with your mouth. Use four quick breaths and one breath every three seconds.

## **Broken Bones**

Never move the victim because you must immobilize (keep still) the broken bone. Apply a splint carefully only if help will be delayed, but don't attempt to reset the bone.

## **Burns**

Relieve the pain of minor burns with cold water and protect from contamination. Serious burns need medical help but in the interim apply large sterile dressings to protect the area from contamination. Also treat for shock.

## **Heat Exhaustion**

Hot summer days and cold winter days may cause people to feel unusually weak or faint. If they are faint, don't administer food or drink. Have them sit or lie down and apply cool compresses to the back of the neck and forehead until medical personnel arrive.

## **Childbirth**

Assist a woman with labor pains to a private place. Encourage her husband to stay with her and reassure and calm her. Call her doctor immediately and summon an ambulance if the woman desires. Don't try to delay or restrain the delivery. Remember that nearly every baby before 1900 was born at

