

Why Handclapping Is Inappropriate At Baptisms and/or In Worship

Here are at least some of the reasons why handclapping is inappropriate In worship and at baptisms whether they are during a worship period or not.

First of all, handclapping is performed to applaud a performance or a performer. This is totally out of character as to the nature of true worship, and is equally out of character in relation to the immersing of a soul into Jesus Christ. The worship of God, including those who lead in it, is focused on praising and offering homage to God, and not man. For example, the man who is leading the prayer is going before the throne of God in behalf of the entire congregation. In prayer, Jesus taught the principle of reverence and adoration toward God. In the model prayer of Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus said these words which indicate worship and praise of God: "...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (v.9). Then at the end, He said: "...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (v. 13). Therefore, in prayer, as in any other act of worship, the Christian's homage is to be directed toward God in heaven. Far from a performance, when Christians assemble for worship, they are to do so for the purpose of pleasing and worshipping God, and not entertainment or putting on some kind of performance.

Another example would be in regard to preaching, which is very much a part of the worship of the New Testament (cf. Acts 2:42; 20:7). The preacher is not a performer on a stage to be applauded for putting on a good performance, but he is to be God's man proclaiming the message of heaven to men. So far from receiving praise and applauds, his purpose is to exalt Jesus Christ and declare the saving message of the gospel of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16). In fact, he is under a Divine charge before God and Christ to "preach the word" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2). Therefore, he is not to preach himself or any other man, or any doctrine of men, but only Christ and his words, as Paul declared in 2 Cor. 4:5: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

The same principle would apply to the song service. The song leader is not a performer, nor is he a choir director with the congregation as his choir. He is simply one who has been selected to lead the congregation in praises to God, and to teach and admonish one another. Neither his ability to sing, nor that of the congregation, is to be the focal point, but the worship of the true and living God in song (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

In regard to Christ, Hebrews 13:15 states: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Now, turning to the act of baptism. When a soul is baptized into Jesus Christ, it is indeed a glorious and joyful event. No doubt the emotions overflow as a soul is saved and added to the church as a new brother or sister in Christ. It is a time when we want to express our love and appreciation to the new convert, and as well, thank God for salvation in Christ because of His wonderful love and grace. It is a time of great joy for those who are being saved, as the New Testament emphasizes (cf. Acts 8:35-39; 16:31-34). All this being said, God has given us a way to praise Him for all that He has done for us. This is through the acts of worship designated in the New Testament. For example, as mentioned earlier, we have the avenue of singing praise to God and offering

thanksgiving with the fruit of our lips (cf. Heb. 13:15). There is also prayer. We are to express thanksgiving to God through the avenue of prayer (cf. Phil. 4:6; Acts 4:24-30). Also, one may stand after a baptism and present a message from the word of God to exalt God and His only begotten Son for the wonderful salvation offered to us through Jesus Christ. Paul certainly proclaimed the “unsearchable riches of Christ” in his preaching (cf. Eph. 3:8).

However, someone may argue: “We know that God has given us the means to thank and praise God through worship, but we want to offer our congratulations and commendation to the soul who has decided to follow Jesus, by applauding.” Well, has God given us a means whereby we may do this? Yes. It is called exhortation. When a person is obedient to God, or is doing a good work, we should exhort and encourage that individual. We can let him know that we are thankful for him, and that we appreciate his dedication to Christ. We can inform him that we will be praying for him, and that we are there for him. We can drop him a line through the mail, and make an effort to visit with him and talk to him. All of these things are encouraging to the new Christian. Of course, all of these things we can do after the worship has ended, in addition to any praying or singing which may take place at the time of the baptism, which should also encourage him.

We are commanded to exhort and edify (build up) one another (cf. I Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13).

But, there is never a place among God’s people in worship unto Him, or during the time when the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanses a precious soul, when we should direct our efforts toward the praise of men, or be involved in the applauding of men. This indicates that we look at sacred matters as a performance, or that we are making an effort to praise men, or that we are making an effort to praise God in a manner unauthorized by the Scriptures.

Secondly, there is never an example, command, or necessary inference in the Scripture where handclapping was practiced during worship or at baptisms in the New Testament. The silence of the Scriptures would demand that we refuse to do that for which we have no authority. I Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2.

We have prescribed by the word of God that which is permitted in order to praise God and express our thanksgiving unto Him. For example, we read of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail: “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them” (Acts 16:25; see also Heb. 13:15). Here we have an example of how to express thanksgiving unto God through singing. Also, in prayer we express our praise and thanksgiving to Him. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). We have examples where Jesus and Paul gave thanks unto God in prayer (cf. Matt. 11:25-26; John 6:23; 11:41-42; Acts 27:35; Eph. 1:16). Paul expresses how that we may praise

God in Ephesians 5:19-20, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (see also Col. 3:16-17). Why should we not be satisfied with the way which the New Testament exemplified and commanded? Do we know a better way to express praise and thanksgiving than God

does? His way is always the right way, the good way, and the best way. “For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth” (Psa. 33:4).

Talk about the difference between aids, which we do not read about in the New Testament, and bringing in things that are not Scriptural. Show how that standing against these things does not make one divisive, but bringing them in does, etc. Also, singing Happy Birthday at a baptism. do you want to sing Amazing Grace to the Coke jingle at the Lord’s table. Somethings are just not proper in worship. John 4:23-24.