

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

*Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## ***"Heavenly Power in Human Relations"***

*"Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them." (Luke 6:31)*

Jesus' dictum of human relationships is the "golden rule" of all ethics. Imagine what a wonderful world it would be if this was actually practiced!

In the debate between the militant atheist Christopher Hitchens and the apologist Dr. William Lane Craig, Mr. Hitchens said that Christianity's ethics are no better than other world religions. He attempted to show that what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:31; Matthew 7:12) about treating others is essentially no different than other major religious teachings.

Well, let's see...

*Confucius:* "Do nothing to your neighbor which afterward you would not have your neighbor do to you." (Analects 15:23)

*Hinduism:* "This is the sum of duty: do nothing unto others which would cause you pain if done to you." (Mahabharata 5.5157)

*Buddhism:* "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." (Udana-Varqi 5:18)

*Taoism:* "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." (T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien)

*Islam:* "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." (Sunnah)

*Judaism:* Jewish Rabbi Hillel, asked to teach the meaning of the Law standing on one foot, said: "What you hate yourself, do not to your neighbor. This is the whole Law. The rest is commentary." (Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

Notice something profoundly different in Jesus' teaching versus these other religious teaching? Other religions emphasized simply avoiding harming someone, or at best, wishing for them what you would like for yourself.

Beyond polite ethics, Jesus Christ taught us to actively treat others, in all interactions, as you would want to be treated yourself, if the situation was reversed. This is sacrificial goodwill. This is another way of saying, "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12:31). Loving God, which empowers love for others, is the highest goal of the New Testament (Mark 12:30).

Love is active, outgoing goodwill to seek the highest good of another. Love is undefeatable benevolence of doing

them only good and not harm. This selfless altruistic goodwill of love can only be learned and empowered from the God of perfect love and grace (Eph. 5:1-2, 1 John 4:19). We must be converted from selfish sinners to selfless saints of God. Jesus showed this love by dying on the cross for sinners (1 John 3:16).

Agape love was a new concept revealed by the New Testament of Jesus Christ, who taught us to love our neighbors and also our enemies (Matt. 5:44). This is not to overlook or empower bad behavior in others but it is always being guided by acting in what is in their ultimate best interest. This empowerment of love comes only from the gospel of Christ. Christianity is truly a heavenly religion.

- W. Frank Walton

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## **"Make Not Provision For The Flesh"**

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."  
(Romans 13:14)

How can we maintain our purity and give no provision to the flesh when its appeals are so prevalent in almost every aspect of our lives?

**How to Give No Provision to the Flesh**

**1. Hate it!** Contemplate the broken homes, pain, lost confidence and hopelessness suffered by those who succumb to the flesh. Consider the wrecked lives of loved ones and once strong Christians who have fallen and are therefore spiritually crippled, if not dead. By looking beyond the glamorous front the flesh tries to present and coming face to face with its harsh reality, we will be injected with a healthy dose of hatred towards it that will render us unmoved by its shallow enticements. We won't naively associate the flesh with glamour, partying, or Hollywood, but with anguish, selfishness, greed and other fruits of the flesh - and thus won't have any difficulty obeying the Lord's admonition in Psalm 97:10: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

**2. Flee it!** People who love life do not play with barrels of nuclear waste, bottles of nerve gas, or test tubes of the AIDS virus. Pure Christians who love God and their souls learn not to play with suggestive movies, excessive flattery, alcohol, scanty clothing (on beach or street), compromising situations, get rich quick selling schemes or any other activities that involve one in flirting with the lusts of the flesh. Weak Christians who insist on practicing or defending such activities are frankly naive about their dangers and are the first to see their children swept away into the world or be swept away themselves. Flee fornication and youthful lusts, avoiding every appearance of evil! (I Corinthians 6:19; II Timothy 2:22; I Thessalonians 5:22).

**3. Be optimistic about victory over it!** "Nobody's perfect." "Everyone is wrong about something." "I'm just

so weak and temptations are so strong." These statements, though true in certain contexts, are often made in an effort to build the flesh up as some kind of invincible monster so that we won't look or feel so bad when we join the world in giving in to it. Such a defeatist attitude reveals a lack of confidence in God who has given us a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (II Timothy 1:7). Ultimate victory can be won by anyone who truly wants it, in spite of our stumbling, because God gives adequate armor to overcome the flesh. Consider yourself to be more powerful by God 's grace than any shallow lust Satan might use to defeat you and refuse to make excuses for giving in to it or treating it as unconquerable.

Christians who make no provision for the flesh by hating sins, fleeing them and being confident of victory over them will win the victory. And, after 10,000 years in heaven, we won 't have much difficulty in seeing such lusts as the shallow and empty bait that they really are.

-- Gardner Hall

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- > "Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."
  - > "Repentance is never too soon, but it may be too late."
  - > "When it seems hard to pray, we should pray the hardest."

> "Do a little more each day than you think you possibly can."

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Why me, Lord?*" (text: Exodus 3:7-11); Sunday evening: "*A Charge to Keep I Have!*" (1 Tim. 1:18-19a).