

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

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oldhickorycofc.com

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Polite To Sinners?

One aspect of "fellowship" and "disfellowship," that seems to cause great disturbance, is its relation to **association**. Do I "have fellowship" with a person by doing business with him; or, if he is "disfellowshipped" may I speak to him on the street? Jesus "received" sinners and ate with them. Did he "fellowship" them? Paul went into Jewish synagogues and discussed scripture with Jews there. Did he "fellowship" Judaism?

Fellowship with God (who is Light) is contingent upon my walking in the light, whereupon my sins are forgiven and my sharing relationship with God is confirmed. But in addition to this common walk before God, where judgment is in His hands; I must decide whether or not to have a sharing relationship with other imperfect folk like myself. This sharing involved in Christian fellowship suggests common faith and goals, working to the same end. Condoning, encouraging, or entering a partnership to promote sinful activity would be fellowshipping sin. We believe neither Christ nor Paul did that, although they associated with sinful people. A subtle distinction may be seen in Paul's instructions regarding meats. If one sees you sitting at

meat in an idol's temple, he may think you honor the idol. He is led to do likewise, and you have harmed him (1 Cor. 8:7-f). Paul says he had rather not have meat than do that. But later he shows it is not the meat, per se, nor even the association that is wrong. He could eat meat at an unbeliever's feast if there was no "test case" made (10:25f). We must make such judgments with God's glory in mind (v.31).

When a former brother is "disfellowshipped," he is to be unto us "as the Gentile and publican" — i.e., as he was prior to conversion (Matt. 18:17). Christians do not snub, insult, or gossip about outsiders — do they??

We would have to leave the world to avoid association with all fornicators (1 Cor. 5:9-f), and Paul does not ask that. But he forbids eating (or other relations) with an ungodly "brother" that would seem to approve such life styles for Christians. Fair and courteous treatment for all men is not the same as fellowshipping all.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, Nov., 1983

Jesus Marveled!

In the eight chapter of Matthew we find a centurion coming to Jesus, imploring Him to simply say the word that would heal his servant. This man displayed a phenomenal faith in the authority of the Lord, which evoked the response from the lips of Jesus which we read in verse 10: "And when Jesus heard it, he marveled, and

said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

Upon another occasion, in Mark 6, Jesus came to His own country of Nazareth. There the kin and countrymen rejected both His works and His teachings; and because of this, we find in Mark 6:6, "And he marveled because of their unbelief."

These are the only two places in the Scriptures where it is stated that Jesus marveled. It is significant, therefore, to notice that in the one case, the astonishment and wonder on the part of our Lord was caused by the great measure of faith; in the other example, His amazement came because of the complete and utter lack of faith.

I wonder which of these dispositions characterizes the life of most Christians today. Would Jesus marvel at your life because of your great belief or unbelief?

-Brent Lewis

What do you bring to your Bible?

You remembered something. You heard someone say something. You saw something that reminded you. Your decision is made – you will open your Bible and see what it says. Some will need to bring a dust rag. Others will bring some knowledge of where to find it. You have opened your Bible and now you are looking. Bring something with you.

Bring a determination to know and understand what God has said. Go beyond mere reading to study it (see Acts 17:11). Is curiosity your only motivation? Search with the confidence that you can understand what it says. Don't sell yourself short. The Bible claims to be the revelation from God to man. Would He have provided it to man in a form that cannot be understood? The importance of the message and the nature of the Originator demand effective communication resulting in clear understanding. We are clearly directed to "understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Personal determination will help us accomplish that goal (see Deut. 6:6-7; Josh. 1:8). Realize also that no everyone will applaud and support you in your search. A strong determination will help you overcome discouragements.

Bring your clear reading glasses, not those discolored by prejudice. Nothing spoils solid investigation like a drive to see what I want to see and ignore what I don't. Dismiss personal likes and dislikes. Eliminate what you have always heard that can spoil your conclusions. Don't be a fault-finder. If you bring your personal preferences looking for them to be supported by the Bible, that is exactly what you will find. Don't attempt to find support for what you already believe. Bring the attitude that says, "I have no personal preference. I only want what God wants for me." Personal likes and dislikes have lead many people to present the Bible to people as if it were a bag of trail mix and man is free to pick out the pieces he likes, discarding those he doesn't. This is not the way to handle the word of God.

Bring a searchlight for truth. Truth is narrow. Falsehood is vast. Get your answers directly from God's book. Bring a love for

truth and a hatred for every false way: “From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.” (Psa. 119:104). Those who love truth will accept truth, no matter how much it differs from what they believe or what others believe. Truth is what must be believed (2 Thess. 2:13). God’s word is right. Jesus declared to His Father, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). I must not allow my own desire to live a life of unrighteousness to spoil my emergence from darkness to light (see John 3:19-21). Search for truth and embrace it (Prov. 23:23). How very important it is to love truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

Bring a willingness to be improved by what God has said.

“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ... But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” (Jas. 1:21-22, 25). After searching every available avenue on this earth for lasting good in life, the wise man’s conclusion was this: “fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to every person.*” (Eccl. 12:13). God’s word has power to improve my life now (John 10:10), and power to save me eternally (Rom. 1:16). Paul wrote, “godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Tim. 4:8). In keeping God’s word “there is great reward” (Psa. 19:11). “The law of Your mouth is better to me Than

thousands of gold and silver pieces.” (Psa. 119:72). Make it your will to do God’s will (see John 7:17).

Bring a desire for God’s greatest blessing: salvation from the guilt and consequences of sin. Man’s Creator has the only reliable answers to the greatest questions of life. They are found in His book. God is the only one who has the answer to the question of what happens to me after death. “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3). God has a plan, a purpose for man that “now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Paul reminded Timothy “that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:15). “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32). Friend, may we help you to open your Bible?

- GFS

THIS WEEK’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*In His Presence!*” (text: Psalm 100:1-5); Sunday evening: “*Habakkuk’s Progress!*” (text: Hab. 2:1).