

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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Why Can't We Be Friends?

With all of our young people returning to school this week, I thought it a good time to revisit the lesson with the above title from our "Guardrails on the Road of Life" series from last year. From the youngest elementary student to the college senior, who you choose as your close and intimate friends will profoundly impact your life.

Paul told the truth when he said, "None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself" (Rom. 14:7). We need friends -- good friends -- to provide a voice of reason and influence of strength. That's why "two are better than one ... If they fall, one will lift up his companion" (Eccl. 4).

Our key verse: Proverbs 13:20. It contains a promise, "Walk with the wise and become wise." And it contains a warning, "A companion of fools suffers harm." Notice carefully -- the warning is not, "A companion of fools will become a fool" but "a companion of fools will suffer harm." And so for all of us, young and old alike, I want to remind us of the guardrails in friendships that should warn of impending harm.

You hit a guardrail when you realize that your friend's core values are radically different than your own. When it dawns on you that your value system, what you want for your marriage, your finances, your spirituality is different than the direction your friends are traveling -- that's a warning sign not to be ignored.

You hit a guardrail when you find yourself trying to defend the wrong behavior of your friends. If you find yourself telling others, “You just don’t know them like I do” or “You just don’t understand them” -- that’s a warning not to be ignored.

You hit a guardrail when you feel pressure to compromise. When you feel pressure to accept as right what you’ve always known to be wrong, to behave in ways you’ve always considered to be off limits -- that’s a warning not to be ignored.

You hit a guardrail when you find yourself pretending to be someone other than who you know you are. If your parents or friends are saying to you, “When you’re with them you’re a different person” -- that’s a warning not to be ignored.

You hit a guardrail when you hope the people you love and care about the most don’t find out where you’ve been or who you’ve been with. If you are already formulating a defense of the person or place or situation in case someone does find out, someone does know -- that’s a warning not to be ignored.

A little self-honesty about these matters would go a long way in keeping us from “suffering harm” through the school year & the years to come.

- Don Truex

Facts about the New Testament Church: Membership in the Church

The church of the Bible is uniquely undenominational in nature. Is it possible, in this age of ecumenical emphasis, church mergers and denominational federations, to simply be a member of the New Testament church? It has been demonstrated repeatedly that by going back to the

Bible we can restore the First Century church in the Twentieth Century. In like manner if we determine from the Bible what First Century disciples did in becoming Christians and seek to imitate their action in our lives, we too, can be Christians only. What made people members of the church nineteen hundred years ago will make people members of it today. We can be members of the New Testament church today. The purpose of this writing is to determine what the Bible teaches about membership in the church.

Essentiality of the Church

The church of Christ is exclusive, the special and only realm of the saved on earth, and cannot be otherwise. The essentiality of the church is seen in the attitude of Christ toward it. He promised to build the church. He said, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). He did this by giving Himself for it. Hence, "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body." Again, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church . . ." (Eph. 5:23, 25-27). He purchased the church with His own blood. Regarding this, Paul told the Ephesian elders, "take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The church is therefore redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"(1 Pet. 1:18-19). Christ thought enough of the church to give Himself for it. It is essential that we be members of it, otherwise we are not redeemed by the blood of Christ. Those who argue that it makes no difference to what church one belongs show their lack of understanding of what the Bible teaches about the church. The church of the New Testament is exclusive and unique. We must be members of it if we are to be numbered among the saved of the earth.

The Process of Church Membership

The New Testament teaches that the process that puts one into Christ puts one in the church. Paul called the church the "house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon tells us that "house of God" is translated from the Greek expression, which means by metonymy "the inmates of a house . . . the family of God . . . church" (p. 441). Therefore, whatever makes one a child of God, makes one a member of the church. One becomes a child of God by faith and baptism. Look at it: "for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). Baptism puts one into Christ. To be in Christ is to be a child of God. To be a child of God is to be of the family of God, the church. So, the process that puts one into Christ puts one in the church. The baptism of the believer is the means of entering the church. The Baptist Manual tells us it is different now. It says, "it is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but one Lord, one faith and one baptism, and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, baptism was the door into the church. *Now it is different.*" (The Standard Manual For Baptist Churches, p. 22, italics mine, j.t.)

We ask the questions: why is it different today, and what makes it different? The thing that makes it different is denominational teaching. Were it not for this teaching things would not be different. The truth of the matter is that the statement admits that what made one a member of the church in New Testament times will make one a member now. It also admits that in becoming a member of the church by baptism one does not become a member of a denomination. If you want to become a member of the church, then believe and be baptized (Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:26-27). This simple process results in one being numbered among the elect.

Responsibilities of Membership

The greatest blessings and the highest and holiest privileges are bestowed upon the one who comes into the church. It also involves serious obligations and responsibilities.

(1) The Christian must identify himself with a local flock or congregation of Christians. Early Christians always sought to be identified with the brethren whenever they moved from one place to another. "And when Saul was

come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples" (Acts 9:26). On one occasion a letter accompanied the one going into another area (Acts 18:27). The importance of such action is seen in the fact that the local church is the only unit of function for the carrying out of the work of the church. One must be associated with the local church. There is no such thing as "floating membership."

(2) The Christian must subject himself to the elders of the congregation. Elders have the oversight of the flock over which they have been made bishops (Acts 20:28). As members of the flock, we are to know, honor and esteem them for their work's sake (1 Thess. 5:12-13). This is done with an attitude of submissiveness. The writer of Hebrews says, "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account" (Heb. 13:17).

(3) The Christian is to seek to bear fruit and be ready unto every good work. In his obedience to Christ the Christian is married to Him, that he "should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). Those branches that do not bear fruit will be cut off and burned (Jn. 15:2, 6). Furthermore, we are to be ready unto every good work. Paul told Titus, "put them in mind to be ready to every good work" (Tit. 3:1). As members of the church seek to do these things they demonstrate that the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth (Eph. 4:16). It is important therefore that "every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone" (Gal. 6:4-5).

Conclusion

Other matters could be mentioned such as seeking to preserve peace and unity, seeking to maintain purity within the church and our duty to the erring. But what has been said thus far demonstrates the importance of the church and the essentiality of our being members of it. It demonstrates that there are certain responsibilities imposed upon each member of the church. May God help us to seek the church. After having found it and having become a part of it, may we seek to fulfill our duty.

- Jimmy Tuten, Jr., via Truth Magazine, July 29, 1976

**Elders: Gregg Needham,
Gordon Percell & Gary Smalley**

Evangelist: Gary Smalley

Sunday AM: 9:30 & 10:30

Sunday PM: 5:00

Wednesday PM: 7:00



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)