

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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How to See Eye to Eye Religiously

Why do some people not see religious things the way we see them? Why is there so much difference between what we teach and what the denominations profess? Do we not all have the same Bible? Are we not all trying to serve the same God? Do we not all believe in the same Savior? These are perplexing questions, and they are not easily answered to everyone's satisfaction.

Basically, our understanding of the Scriptures differs from the majority of the religious world because we operate on a different principle of interpretation. To most religious people "truth" is relative, adjusting freely to different times and circumstances. For us, however, truth is truth. It is unalterable, unchangeable, and everlasting. But did "we" just arbitrarily decide this would be our regard for truth? Not at all. God's own word boldly claims "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth." (Psalm 33:4) While there are scoffers at the idea of absolute truth, we accept Bible teaching that such does exist, and we are determined to know it. Pilate's piercing question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) was prompted by these words from Jesus: "I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

This then, is the basis upon which we may come to see religious matters alike. There must be a commitment to the same standard of truth. No one would ever attempt to use differing standards of measurement if building a house, marking off a football field, or sewing a garment. This would guarantee error and disaster. Twelve inches must equal one foot on all our rulers if we desire uniformity. There must be a healthy regard and respect for the Bible on the part of every religious person in order for understanding to occur. Without this common devotion to God's word, all efforts to see things the same will fail. In order to come to agreement on matters essential to salvation, we must begin where we agree. From this point we must study the Scriptures, resolving differences as we go along. Major problems of difference are solved in small steps, and then we can be united in Christ. But we will never see things the same if we cannot agree on the existence, necessity, and location of the truth.

No Bible discussion is profitable unless every participant is a truth seeker. If everyone concerned really wants the truth, then coming to an agreement and an understanding of truth will be achievable. Believe it or not, it is possible to discuss religious differences without becoming rude or creating hurt feelings. People who love the truth are not concerned with who is right, but with what is right. Every truth seeker is willing to surrender any position if it is false. There is no other honorable course for an honest man. An honest man will seek the truth, and when he finds it he will believe it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23).

- Mark White

How to keep people faithful:

“The way to keep people faithful is to develop within them a genuine love for the Lord. When people love the Lord, they will be faithful, and it won't take some kind of “special” project to keep them faithful. They will also be involved: in worship, in study, in godly living, in sharing the gospel with a

friend, in helping the needy. I have known literally hundreds of Christians who have never in their lives been appointed to any special work, but whose love for the Lord alone keeps them faithful. There is no superficial faithfulness on the part of these; theirs is a faithfulness that is real.”

- Bill Hall

Letting Ourselves be Reminded

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Paul’s thorn in the flesh was to serve a quiet utilitarian purpose. It was to be a simple reminder. Every time he thought about the privileges he had been granted as an apostle, the pain of his “thorn” was to remind him to remain humble. But Paul’s thorn in the flesh would not have served its purpose if he had not let himself be reminded. When he felt the pain or difficulty, Paul had to THINK about the purpose it was meant to serve. Otherwise, the meaning — and value — of his thorn would have been lost on him.

A similar thing may be said of the manna given to Israel in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses said, “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” The manna was given to everybody, but the learning of its lesson was not automatic. Only those “got it” who thought about it.

In the New Testament, we hear Jesus speaking of those who have “eyes to see” and “ears to hear” (Matthew 13:10-17). The point is not simply that some can see and hear while others cannot; it’s that some are too preoccupied with themselves to see and hear the truth about God. There is

no such thing as a reminder so powerful that it reminds those who aren't paying attention.

In truth, our lives are full of reminders every day. Both in our personal circumstances and in the wider world around us, there are numerous objects and events that should point us to greater things. Even with regard to the world of nature, Paul said that God “did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). But we have to pay attention and get the point. And if we don't, we are the losers. If we fail to make the connection between the “story” and the “moral” of the story, then we will find it hard to keep in touch with God.

“Nothing happens that is not significant if you can only see the significance” (Christopher Isherwood).

- Gary Henry

Is It Right to Criticize Another Person's Religion?

It's not only right to criticize false religion, no matter whose religion it is; it's the faithful Christian's responsibility. Jesus criticized the Pharisees for “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:7-9). Paul criticized those who tried to bind the shadows of the Mosaic law on New Testament Christians (Colossians 2:16-23). Peter warned that false teachers would “secretly bring in destructive heresies” (II Peter 2:1-3). Elders and preachers are to rebuke sin and false doctrine (II Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:10-14). Christians are to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), while having no fellowship with sin and error (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Today many people have the mistaken idea that if someone believes in God and worships Him sincerely from the heart, it's unkind, unloving, and unchristian to criticize his religious practices. But false doctrine (Ephesians

4:14), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), and vain religion (James 1:27) do exist, and all the sincerity, zeal, sacrifice, and devotion in the world will not make wrong things right (Acts 26:9-11). Many sincere, zealous, religious people are going to be very surprised on Judgment Day when they are rejected by the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23).

Actually the sincere religious person who is unknowingly following the commandments of men is in greater spiritual danger than the irreligious reprobate in the gutter, because at least the reprobate knows that he's lost. To save those who are in religious error, someone must speak the truth. Obviously, he must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but speak the truth he must.

- Kevin Kay

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Give Thyself Wholly!"* (Text: 1 Tim. 4:12-16); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing*.