

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

November 30, 2014

Volume 34, # 49

Beware of Normal

According to a humorous television commercial, one of the first signs of termite infection in your home is that "everything looks perfectly normal." It is their way of convincing us that a lot of damage can be done before you even notice it. The ad might serve to remind us of problems that can occur in our spiritual house if we do not take protective measures. The very foundation can be destroyed while everything on the outside seems to be normal by the standards of our day. When our lives are comfortably blended into the society we live in, when there is nothing unusual about our moral or religious principles, when our priorities are the same as the great majority of our neighbors, then things are dangerously "normal." The problem is that "normal" is a term that is determined by man's standards, and though measuring up to it may provide a degree of comfort here, it falls far short when it comes to laying up treasures in heaven.

Paul warned the Corinthians of some who "measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding." (2 Cor. 10:12). It is God's yardstick that matters, not that of the "main-stream of society." God has always required His people to be separate (Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17 - 7:1) not physically withdrawn, but distinct in conversation and conduct, not fashioned according to the world. (Rom. 12:1-2). It is a sobering Biblical truth that few will be saved; the majority will enter the broad way that leads to destruction. (Matt. 7: 13-14). It is strange,

then, that we should be satisfied with attaining a status accepted by society. What value is it, if we lose our souls?

Friend, if your life seems "normal" enough by man's standards, it may be that your spiritual house is caving in. It will not be shored up by man's money or man's tools, but by the Word which framed the worlds. (Heb. 11:3). The answer is some honest, objective study of it, for it is the standard which will judge us. (John 12:48).

- Larry Walker

Should the church provide basketball courts?

Paul said that Christians are to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). The faith we are to walk by comes from "hearing...the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). We are to abide in the teaching of Christ (2 John 9), and "walk after his commandments" (2 John 6). We walk by faith when we limit our beliefs and practices with the limits established by the Scriptures:

“Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Whatever the Lord defines as a “good work” for his people when acting as a collective (the church), will be found in the inspired Scriptures that completely furnish believers to do it. To imagine that something is a good work for the church to do, while unable to find it in the Scriptures, is to walk by sight and not by faith. We may agree to call recreational activities such as basketball, softball, tennis and bowling “good” things for the benefit of people, but the book of God says nothing about churches providing facilities for playing.

If the Lord thought these would be good works for the church to engage in why did He not put them in the Book of good works?

How does Ephesians 4:7-16 read in your Bible? About the gifts that Christ gave to men and the purpose of such gifts, does it say, "And he gave some to be basketball players; and some softball players; and some tennis players; and some, good cooks and refreshment preparers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of athletics, unto the building up of the physical body"??? This is NOT the "manifold wisdom of God" or the "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11)! God's power to draw souls unto Him is the gospel of Christ (John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16), NOT loaves and fishes (John 6:26-27). The Lord's work is not drawing the world to Him through the lure of carnal enticements, but rather drawing those of the world who come to appreciate SPIRITUAL things which appeal to the INNER MAN through the GOSPEL.

Have we lost sight of the Lord's mission? The Lord did not commission His Apostles to: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all **the rules of basketball.**" (Matt 28:19-20). What will keep our children off the streets and prevent criminal activity in their lives are hearts that are taught to be devoted to God in everything, not trophies won in "church league" softball tournaments. The Lord did not die on the cross so that we could build gymnasiums and cafeterias in the name of Christianity.

- GFS

Sin Brings Sorrow

As the world well knows, we are living in a time when the laws of marriage are being violated with little or no thought of living in rebellion to God. Many men and women are living together as husband and wife when actually they are living in adultery.

Some try to justify this by saying they did not know any better when they formed this union. Now it would be too cruel to cease living together and leave children without a father or mother. We admit that this is a heart rending thing. But is there ever anything pleasant about the consequences of sin?

When Ezra was laboring to restore the law to Judah he was faced with a similar problem. Men had married women of other nations in violation of God's law. Many of them did not know any better when they formed these relationships. And in these relationships they had children. How could Ezra hope to bring about a reformation in the lives of the people without getting them to break these unlawful ties? And how could they break these ties without hurting innocent children? How was the problem to be settled?

"And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice. As thou hast said, so must we do... All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children" (Ezra 10:10-12, 44).

SIN BRINGS SORROW!

- Mason Harris

The Secret of Their Success

In an assembly of preachers not long ago, a man who preaches for a large congregation was asked to share what the large church was doing to promote such growth. Each preacher there got his pen ready to take notes of each fantastic program and idea that made the large church tick.

However, an unexpected answer was to be given. The speaker said, "We have no organized programs, no promotions, no drives, no advertising and no buses."

In stunned amazement someone suggested that the preacher surely must do a lot of personal evangelism. Again they were surprised when the preacher said that he did not do an excessive amount of visiting. He indicated that most of his time was spent in studying for his classes and sermons. Of the last 50 people who had been baptized, the preacher had only worked with two of them.

The secret of their success was very simple and in keeping with Biblical examples. They believe in the priesthood of all believers and leave them free to develop their own work and ministry. They work on the principle that each one has a gift from God and that he ought to develop a work around that gift involving those of like interest. Of course, considerable encouragement is given for each member to develop his talents and use them in the work and ministry of the Lord.

Indeed, this large church did have a lot of work going on, but it was developed in a spontaneous way by members themselves. Most of the growth has come through neighborhood Bible studies where the church members invite a few members and several non-Christians into their homes for Bible study. They select a book of the Bible and then study through it. Many such groups are now in progress.

This concept gets back behind a strong tradition of how "church work" is to be done. It gets back to a Biblical model, and most important, it works practically.

No one has to wait around for someone to start a project and put a deacon or elder or preacher in charge. Each member allows the Lord to use him, and the church grows.

I believe this system has a great merit and should demand our attention. Most of us know our gifts and abilities. Those of us who do not know should study hard, beginning with Romans 12:4-8. Allow the Lord to use YOU, and the church will grow!

- unknown, via Words of Life, 5/7/1981

- An upright man can never be a downright failure.
 - It is ours to obey His commands, not to direct His counsels.
 - The wishbone will never take the place of the backbone.
 - The man who is not strong against anything is usually not strong for anything.
 - Dignity is one thing that cannot be preserved in alcohol.
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