

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

November 02, 2014

Volume 34, # 45

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

We are living in a complex world filled with a variety of difficulties. Sickness, death, broken homes, the threat of war, unpaid bills, etc., are a part of all our lives. How does one cope with these pressures? Many feel that suicide is the only way out, and that is why this crime-against-self has reached epidemic proportions. Others have sought escape from the hardships of daily living in different ways; they have endeavored to forget their difficulties by immersing themselves in alcohol, drugs, illicit sexual relationships, and such like. These poor souls have not as yet learned the lesson that one cannot, by such means, really escape life's hardships; rather, giving in to these weaknesses only leads one closer to the brink of destruction.

It is very unfortunate that we live in a society that has conditioned its people to think that they can deal with their problems in such a simplistic way. We are told, for example, that the use of alcohol can help us to relax and hence to cope with the grind of the daily struggle. We have pills for everything - to help us sleep, to help us stay awake, to give us energy, to calm us down, to help us

lose weight, etc. You name it, we have a pill for it! It's little wonder that we have an ADDICTED society!

Some are contending that a new sexual "relationship" can put meaning back into one's life and thus help him "cope." Accordingly, there are those unfortunate souls who slink from one bed to another - caught on a merry-go-round of perversion, and not knowing how to get off.

Many folks are painfully aware of the fact that their lives are literally a mess. They are distressed about it and want to correct the situation, but they do not know where to begin. You may be one of these; you should know that help is available!

OVERCOMING ADDICTION. Though the Bible clearly teaches that human beings have been created by God with WILL-POWER (by that we mean the freedom to choose between right and wrong -- see Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 1:16,17; 7:15), it is nonetheless true that when one continuously gives himself over to the unrestrained practice of that which is wrong, he can become addicted (enslaved) to that vice. Jesus taught this very truth in John 8:34 when he declared: "Every one that committeth sin is the slave of sin." The word "committeth" (Greek present tense) suggests the idea of a habitual practice with no attempt to check the evil. He who so lives becomes enslaved to his own evil and destructive pleasures.

The Scriptures teach, however, that the heavenly message concerning Christ and his love has the power to break sin's dominion over us. Paul observes that when one becomes "obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching" which Jesus Christ brought to this earth, he no longer has to be a slave to sin

(see Romans 6:1-18). The gospel is God's power to change lives! (Romans 1:16).

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CONDUCT. When one becomes a Christian, it is imperative that he realistically realizes his condition. Though he is now a forgiven person - all past wickedness is cleansed (Acts 22:16) - he is still **THE SAME PERSON WITH HIS SAME PERSONAL WEAKNESSES**: He is not miraculously delivered from his basic human inclinations. This is why it is so vital to immediately commit oneself to a program of personal spiritual growth from the point of conversion onward. Let me suggest several factors which will help you take control of your life to the glory of God.

First, have confidence in the love and power of your Creator. He has promised to be with you (Matt. 28:20) and to grant you spiritual strength (Eph. 3:16). If you fortify yourself with the armor that the Lord has provided (Eph. 6:10-ff), you can do all things in Him who strengthens you (Phil. 4:13).

Second, remember that God expects **YOU** to exert personal determination to improve your life. You must "press on" toward higher levels of spiritual maturity (Phil. 3:12ff; cf. 2:12).

Third, recognize the power that is inherent within the inspired Word of God to order your life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Treasuring the Scriptures into your heart is a powerful deterrent to sin (Psa. 119:11). Develop the habit of daily Bible study (cf. Acts 17:11).

Fourth, communicate with God each day in prayer. As Paul admonished, "Let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Many of the Psalms are great sources of spiritual strength.

Fifth, put yourself in the company of faithful Christians as frequently as possible. Remember, evil associations corrupt one's morality (I Cor. 15:33). This means you should be at the worship gatherings of God's people whenever you possibly can, for it is here that exhortation is to be found (Heb. 10:24-25). Your kinsmen in Christ will help you bear your burdens (Gal. 6:1-2). Be active in the Lord's work. An idle life is the devil's playground.

- Wayne Jackson, via Christian Courier, March, 1983.

The Psalmist's Soul-Winning Formula

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You." -- Psalms 51:12,13 (NKJV).

The Psalmist may be saying that if the Lord restores the joy of his salvation then he promises to teach transgressors. Or he may be saying that when the joy of salvation is restored teaching transgressors will naturally follow. In either case, sinners will be converted.

Answers to why we are not converting more to Christ are offered by the dozens. "How to" instructions abound. Several preachers specialize in "soul-winning techniques." "Specials" are held from time to time to consider the matter. Book stores stock books and kits that are supposed to tell us how to make virtually every Christian an effective soul-winner. Yet, all the above combined produce meager results. Even what appear to be spectacular

results often turn out to be nothing more than a mirage -- a flash in the pan.

All this somewhat reminds me of a story that I heard several years ago about a company trying to increase its sales. They hired an expensive sales expert to lecture their salesmen on sales organization and technique. Their experienced salesmen and new recruits were required to attend so they, too, could become experts. The expert unveiled his plan. He demonstrated his sure-fire technique. He organized the territories complete with a wall map with pins placed at strategic points to illustrate the salesmen, customers and potential customers. He had refined his program to a fine art. During his lecture he spotted an old salesmen sitting over in the corner who was reputed to have been the top salesman for the company over several years. After, proudly and with fan fare, presenting his technique he asked the old salesman if he had any words of encouragement or advice that he might add to what had been said. The old salesmen replied, "Yes, take all those pins out of that map and stick them into the salesmen!"

Could it be that our problem in teaching transgressors the Lord's way and thus converting them to Lord is not so much poor methods, materials, and facilities as it is poor motivation with no proper foundation? It may be that the joy of our own salvation is the missing element. Pep rallies and motivational hype on the subject of soul-winning may stir brethren into spurts of action, even producing some results. A sustained effort and lasting results will likely come from one who really knows both the plan and joy of salvation. Such a one understands what it means to be lost. He knows what it means to be saved. His knowledge is not based on fleeting feelings but on a knowledge of what God's word

teaches on damnation and salvation. His joy is not the superficial cart wheel turning, hand clapping, "praise the Lord" shouting variety, but a far deeper joy of thankfulness, knowing that he has been delivered from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. One with such joy understands what it means to no longer be a sinner alienated from God. He understands God's plan of salvation. He understands what the Bible teaches about being a Christian. His joy is produced by that understanding and his knowing that his life is now in harmony with that understanding. Thus, he wants others to know what he knows and do what he has done to be saved -- and is doing to stay saved. His genuine faith in the promises and blessings in Christ produces the joy of salvation that leads him to teach transgressors the Lord's ways so that they can enjoy what he enjoys.

Brethren filled with the knowledge and joy of salvation will find ways (or techniques) to teach others consistent with their own temperaments and abilities and of those they are trying to reach. Their methods may vary widely but their message and results will be the same - the gospel will be taught and sinners will be converted.

It may well be that the best personal work program that a church can develop is to set about to restore that genuine joy of salvation to its membership by building them up in the faith through teaching.

- Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

You Can – But You Can't

You can ignore God's warnings; you can refuse his blessings; you can reject all his wondrous love, but you can't go to heaven doing so.

You can believe any doctrine you choose; you can belong to the church of your choice; you can worship God as you please, but you can't please God doing so (2 John 9; Matt. 15:9,13; Rom. 10:1).

It seems that Satan has done a remarkable job of convincing the people that their religion is a matter of their choice, not God's; that it is a matter of their being pleased, not God!

- Grover Stevens

-
- › If it makes no difference what you believe, it makes no difference if you believe.
 - › If what you believe is not worth dying for, it probably is not worth living for either.
-

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Where Do the Gospels Belong?"* (Text: Mark 1:1, 14-15); Sunday evening: *"Are You a Winner?"* (Text: 1 Cor. 9:24-27).