

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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## IF I WERE A FALSE TEACHER

What would I do if I were preaching doctrines and supporting practices in religion not taught in the Bible? What would I do to keep the confidence and support of the people?

**1. I would do lots of praying where I would be seen of men.** I would visit hospitals often, stop in the rooms even of strangers, and ask to pray. Of course, I would first introduce myself and tell where I preached. Jesus referred to the hypocrites who for a pretence made long prayers. (Mark 12:40.) An elderly preacher in a large city had a custom of praying where others would see. It was reported that a young woman was about to cross a street when the traffic light changed to red. She stepped back and uttered a profanity. The elderly preacher happened to be near and heard her profanity. He took her by the arm and said, "Daughter, let us pray." Then he prayed.

The fact that he preached for a denomination established by men without Bible authority, and that he would sprinkle a person desiring to be baptized was completely ignored, and the man was almost deified throughout the city. The people erected a monument in the center of a street downtown; this monument was made in his likeness and depicted him in a kneeling position.

Suppose some preacher had written a letter to the newspaper and quoted many passages showing that baptism is immersion and then named the elderly preacher as one whose practice was contrary to the Scriptures. Would the people have read the passages and realized the old preacher's error? No, a thousand time no! They would have almost mobbed the letter

writer. The newspaper pages that publish letters to the editor would have been filled with bitter criticism of him; in the eyes of the vast majority his letter would have been regarded as sacrilegious.

This gentleman found a warm place in the hearts of the people, not by chapter and verse preaching, but by his apparent piety and benevolence. Any preacher with a good personality could feign great piety and carry the crowd with him against all his critics, regardless of his false teachings and practices.

I do not wish to imply that it is wrong to pray. It is not wrong to pray for the sick, especially if the prayer is desired. But such is wrong if done to cover up a bad life or blind people to one's false teaching.

**2. If my false doctrines were being exposed I would forbear controversy.** I would realize that controversy with a good Bible student would be disastrous to my influence; people who respect the Bible would see my error and turn away from me. So I would decry controversy as being contrary to the Spirit of Christ. I would talk much about the meekness and gentleness of Jesus, and, of course, as I talked my voice would drip with piety. I would certainly be careful never to mention the lengthy controversies Jesus had with the Jews, recorded in John, chapters 7-10. I would treat with utter silence His effective responses to the Pharisees and Sadducees until they had enough, and his scathing denunciations of the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers, recorded in Matthew, chapters 22 and 23. I would let the ignorant multitudes stay ignorant of these encounters. I would never call attention to Paul's controversies with the Judaizers. No, I would just magnify the sweetness, humility and compassion of Jesus and insist that we must always be Christ-like.

**3. If I should begin to be concerned about faithful Bible preaching being done in the area and felt the need of making some response, my efforts would consist of little jabs, mere assertions, denials of truth, and putting faithful preachers in a false light.** One preacher issued a challenge like this: "I challenge any man to find one Scripture that teaches one is saved by works before he believes on Christ." Some of his sympathizers, hearing that, no doubt thought: "Isn't that a horrible doctrine those Church of Christ preachers preach?" Well, of course, I would issue the same challenge. Again I hear, "It's not your baptism; it's not your church membership; it's your faith in Christ that saves." Again, I hear this: "I challenge anybody to show that baptism saves short of the cross of Christ."

Yes, if I were a false teacher I would follow the same tactics. If someone answered my little thrusts I would ignore the answers; I would just continue my false implications and keep muddying the water. I would hope that many who listened to my digs would turn the other preacher off when he answered.

**4. If someone should hear my doctrines answered and come to me about it, I would advise him not to listen to my opponents; they garble the Scriptures, I would say, and they will confuse you.** If you need information, just come to me. A large church in Texas distributed a four-page paper in which they attempted to prove their church was Scriptural. They tried to prove infant baptism, sprinkling, and the Episcopal form of church government by the Bible. I wrote a reply and we gave it a fairly wide circulation. A copy of my reply fell into the pastor's hands and he announced to his congregation that they were being attacked, assumed the role of a martyr and aroused all the prejudice he could. That is exactly what I would do if I had no Bible for my doctrines and practices. That is more effective with most people than chapter and verse.

In a recent radio talk I read statements from Baptist preachers in which they declare that the way the child of God lives has nothing to do with his eternal salvation. As a sample I give a statement by John R. Rice. "He did not say, 'They will never perish if they do right and hold out faithful' He did not say, 'If they do not get drunk they shall never perish,' and this, that and the other." A woman called me and said she is a Baptist and that her preacher does not teach or believe such. I suggested that she ask him. His answer by radio was, "It has come to my attention that we are being attacked. Just come to us for any information you need." Friends, I believe I have Bible support for everything I teach and for every practice of the church where I preach. If any preachers think I do not, I will be glad to talk with them. If any reader thinks I do not, I will not ask that you hear me alone; I will welcome your preacher if you bring him, and we will discuss the Bible together for your benefit and that of any others you may want to be present. But if I know my teaching would not bear investigation, I would do just as the radio preacher did. I would say, "Let me handle it alone; keep others out of it."

- Gardner S. Hall

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# Believing a Lie

Doesn't it seem like some people are more willing to believe a lie than they are to believe the truth? Whether it's stories about Big Foot, alien abductions, Hollywood gossip, or the latest urban legend going around the Internet, the more bizarre the story the more ready some folks are to believe it.

Often those same people view the Bible with the eye of a skeptic. The mere mention of Noah's flood or the miracles of Jesus will move them to be sarcastic and suspicious, and they'll scornfully dismiss anything the Bible has to say.

The Bible does contain some hard to believe stories, and makes amazing claims about creation and the future of our existence. However, careful, honest investigation proves the Bible to be true in every case. The Bible even encourages us to examine its claims. 1 Timothy 4:7 says, "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness." That training involves studying and examining God's Word.

God has granted you the right to believe a lie or the truth. The choice is yours, but you know, believing a lie never saved anyone.

- Simon Harris

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## Changing the Standard

Conductor to orchestra at the beginning of a rehearsal: "Please get your pencils out . . . we have some marking to do on this score: The first two bars are in 3/4, not 4/4 as written. Next, in the 5th bar, change it to 7/8 and this remains to the end. Now, in bar 7 we lower the pitch 1/2 step. In bar 13, lower the pitch one whole step and this will remain to the end. Thank you. Now, let us begin."

Soprano soloist: "Excuse me, Maestro. What would you like for me to change?"

Conductor: "Nothing, madam. Just sing it exactly as you did yesterday."

When we vary from the standard, there are two things we can do. We can alter our lives to meet the standard, or (as in the story above) we can alter the standard and expect everyone else to meet this new flawed standard.

The spiritual application should be readily apparent. What should we do when someone is teaching that which is not according to the Word of God, our spiritual standard? Do we hold to the standard and require them to comply, or do we attempt to change the standard?

There can be no choice -- the standard cannot change. Breaking the scale won't fix our weight problem, and changing (or ignoring) God's Word won't make our sinful behavior acceptable.

- Alan Smith

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- > "Wealth is in the heart, not in the hand!"
  - > "People who sing their own praises, do it without accompaniment!"
  - > "Too many people are praying for mountains of difficulty to be removed, when what they really need is courage to climb them!"
  - > "You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you do not try to succeed!"

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Dinner With Jesus!*" (Text: Luke 14:12-14); Sunday evening: "*Elitism!*" (Rom. 12:3).