

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Family Together

Family. There's something warm and inviting about the word. It floods the mind with thoughts of home and hearth, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, grandma and grandpa. It conjures memories — memories of togetherness, of commonality, of all being in one place at the same time. It calls to mind picnics, ball games, holidays spent with loved ones. Family. It just says something special. And the thing it most especially says is "together."

Together. There is no such thing as family without together. No matter how the word is used — whether in regard to biology, or mathematics, linguistics, or physics — family always suggests something held together by a common bond.

The church is the family of God (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19). God is the Father, saints are His children. We are referred to as "sons of God" (Galatians 5:5-7).

There are things that bind families together — things like common goals, common interests, and even common struggles. The church is the same. All these things are both recommended and common in the family of God. Worship brings the family of God closer to the Father. Worship is filial (fatherly) devotion, an attitude of reverential respect, of love and high regard for the one who has given us life. When we direct our love toward our common Father, we become stronger in both our devotion to Him and our devotion to one another. We are told to "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). While this may refer to the attitude we are to have when we worship Him, I believe there is more to it than that. I believe He means we should reach down to the very depth of who we are and accord to Him the most reverent feelings of that inner being. In the ultimate reality, worship is the adoring reverence of the creature for the Creator, and that means our most fundamental feelings of love and devotion must be extended to Him. When that is the case, it is axiomatic that we also come closer to one another.

Being together as a family brings us closer to the Father. He is the focal point of our assembling. When we sing together, we bring honor to His name. "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15) carries the same responsibility as the worship to which we earlier alluded — there must be a reaching down to the essence of who we are when we sing praises to Him. Colossians 3:16-17 begins with "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," a sure indication of the need for the deepest respect we can muster before we even begin to sing praises to Him. Also, as we are told to teach and admonish "one another" in songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, the command closes with the enjoinder that we sing "with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Worshipful prayers brings us closer to God. As we each come closer to Him in our personal prayers and supplication, we come to be closer to one another, praying to the same Father, seeking the same blessings, extolling the same Savior. The Lord's Supper, served in the assembly of the saints, brings us together so that we can "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:23-25). Worshiping together promotes an intimate relationship with the family.

Family love is never better or more to be desired than in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Love is the divine mucilage, it binds us all together in Him (Colossians 3:14). That love originated in Him, and is radiated to us; we ought therefore to radiate it to one another. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7). There's togetherness in that. Nothing brings us closer to Him than love for one another, born of love for Him. It makes peace possible. It solidifies unity. It emboldens hope. It gives security to a proper direction. It makes motive high and noble. Furthermore, to love the brethren is to be like the Father. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). We are brethren. We each belong to God our Father. Brethren love brethren.

The family together is a beautiful sight. Think about the pictures you have seen of families together — paintings, portraits, photographs — they all speak to togetherness, to a common love, and to a common devotion to a common father. The family together is what the church of our Lord is all about. Let us be careful that we don't diminish its beauty by being derelict and neglecting the family together. I love my family, don't you?

- Dee Bowman

Fellowship

I receive a number of church bulletins each week from several sections of the country. I appreciate them being sent to me; for the most part I have profited from reading them.

One of the things I have particularly noticed has been the frequent use of the word "fellowship." Not only have I noticed the use, I have observed both the overuse and abuse of this word. To illustrate what I mean: An article in a church bulletin received last fall stated in part, "periods of fellowship are a source of strength to this congregation." But in the very next sentence we were told what this "fellowship" was - it was a "Halloween party in the fellowship hall of the church building." Also a recent bulletin to cross my desk announced - "members are reminded to bring sandwiches and drinks to the fellowship hall and stay for an hour of fellowship following the services on Sunday evening."

The word "fellowship" is a good word; it is a Bible word; however, I know of no passage that uses the word to describe social meals or recreational activities. I do realize that the word is used in a modern sense to identify social and recreational activities, but it is apparent to the Bible student that there is a vast amount of difference between the modern, secular use and the Bible use of the word.

The Bible definition of the word is, "communion, partnership, sharing in common, or participation with." But what did the early Christians share? They were together; they "shared" in prayers, the Lord's Supper, and the teaching of God's word (Acts 2:42). The Christians at Corinth were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). Paul wrote about the help of the Corinthian Christians to needy saints and called it "the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4). The Philippian Christians were praised for their "fellowship (with Paul) in the furtherance of the gospel" (by their contribution to him) (Phil. 1:5). Our fellowship is with one another by "walking in the light" (1 John 1:7), and this is the fellowship the Christian should be interested in. These are but a few of the more than twenty New Testament passages that allude to the fellowship, partnership, or joint participation in religious matters by early Christians. And by a careful study of these references, it is evident that they all refer to spiritual matters and never to recreational, social, or secular activities such as Halloween parties, church suppers, or ball games.

Incidentally, in reference to the church that met in the "fellowship hall of the church" (building) for an hour of fellowship following the services on Sunday evening; I wonder if there was any "fellowship" in the service itself? Was not the fellowship with God by the church as it met together to sing, pray, study, etc.? Was there no sharing nor joint participation in religious matters then - rather than in some social activity following the period of worship to God? My friends, the error all begins when the word "fellowship" is taken out of its scriptural context and made to apply to social, recreational, or entertainment activities, which is not the Biblical use of the word. And a second grave spiritual blunder that often ensues is to build and maintain a fellowship hall to carry out this unscriptural practice.

I do encourage the fellowship of Christians in public worship to God, in evangelism, and in benevolence to the needy. I also encourage social and recreational activities among Christians; that these activities be carried out by the individual and be a part of the activities of the home, the center of such activities for the Christian.

I, however, stand opposed to social and recreational activities and/or facilities for these activities being financed with the Lord's money, called "Bible fellowship," and labeled "a good work of the church."

Brethren, let us call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways.

- Bob Walton

MEN: ARE YOU PREGNANT?

Women aren't the only ones who can get pregnant.

"Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies" (Psalm 7:14). [NASB – "Behold, he travails with wickedness, And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood."]

Whomever you are, ask yourself: am I pregnant? And if you are pregnant in the Psalm 7 sense, understand that it's not a blessing.

"[The wicked man] makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends" (Psalm 7:15- 16).

Take the time for some self-evaluation today. What has been conceived and allowed to take up residence within your heart?

Evil? Mischief? Bitterness? Anger? Rivalry? Jealousy? Selfish ambition? Resentment? Lies?

Bottom line: the longer you allow your heart to be used as a womb for such things, the more likely it is that they will slowly eat you alive from within.

- Jason Hardin

- > "If people knew as little about how to handle fire as they do about to handle the Bible, every town in the world would burn to the ground tonight!"
 - > "When God said, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, I will wash them white as snow,' He did not mean for us to have a coloring contest!"
 - > "With many people, sin is not merely missing the mark, its missing the whole target!"
 - > "If everyone's nose grew like Pinocchio's, the amount of dishonesty in this country might be as plain as the nose on your face!"
 - > "Show me a Christian who no longer appreciates sermons on "first principles," and I'll show you a Christian who no longer believes them!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Call to Discipleship!*" (Text: Luke 5:1-11); Sunday evening: Sunday night sessions will be used to complete the second quarter study of Authority, then we will resume the study of John. Tonight: Lesson #25, Authority and Benevolence (part 1), pp. 84-85.