

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

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oldhickorycofc.com

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Do You Love God More Than Your Family?

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."
(Matthew 10:37-38)

This is a familiar passage, often cited to show that our love for God must be greater than our love for anything else, even our own families. If asked, most Christians are aware that their answer should be: "I love God most of all - more than my own family!" But how does that claim stand up against the evidence? Here's a test to see if possibly you have the problem of loving your family more than God:

1. Do you neglect your spiritual duties to God in order to be with your family? For instance, have there been instances when you missed a Bible study or worship service in order to be with your kinfolk? Has a family reunion, a birthday party, a holiday celebration, or other such gathering kept you from assembling with the saints? If so, can you truly say, "I love God more than my family?"

2. Do you "push yourself" in order to do things for and with your family, but you don't exercise the same diligence for God? Do you

go, do, help, sacrifice, and work for your family even when you are stressed, don't feel well, are covered up with others duties, etc. -- yet you allow the same things to keep you from your appointments for God? Do you really love Him more than your family?

3. Are you unwilling to see your family members rebuked or disciplined for ungodly behavior? Does it make you angry if someone points out sinful actions in your relatives and suggests that repentance is needed? Does a Bible lesson or sermon that hits "close to home" make you simmer with resentment? Do these things indicate more love for family than for God?

We know that we must love God more than even our own mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons or daughters - but knowing this is one thing while putting it into practice is another. Think!

- Greg Gwin

“Time to address root causes of crime in our city?”

Newspaper editorial writers across this country have bewailed the criminal habits of our countrymen for years, while appealing for solutions to spiraling crime rates. [cf. *“Time to address root causes of crime in our city,”* by Tom Bohs in The Jackson Sun, Sunday, Jan. 6, 2013.] No practical, effective solutions have been implemented because the causes are ignored, and even encouraged and taught by misguided men.

1. Presently, **criminals go unpunished**. (Let us not equate a term in our modern jails with punishment.) *“Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.”* (Eccl. 8:11). When punishment is not immediate, criminals think they have eluded the appropriate consequences of an evil lifestyle and will not have to pay their due. They will not personally restrain themselves from evil under those conditions. They are fully given to do it.

Let’s take a cue from the King who asked God for *“discernment to understand justice”* and was given *“a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.”* (1 Kings 3:11-12). Wise King Solomon lived under a Law that was given by God to govern His people so that the nation would flourish in righteousness and blessings (Prov. 14:34; Psalm 33:12a). Murder was punished by death (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12). That is the **only** way to minimize the occurrence of such a heinous crime. Society can do without their murderous influence on others and their repeated crimes. [Note the recent case of William Spengler, in Webster, NY, who in 1981 admitted to killing his grandmother with a hammer and served only a 17-year sentence, only to set fire to his home and attempt to murder all the responders. Two were killed and two were critically injured.] Murderers will not thrive where their crimes are not tolerated.

Thieves in Solomon’s kingdom had to make adequate restitution to their victims with an added punitive amount. Never did they serve a short term in a climate-controlled cell while the victim suffered the financial loss and paid higher insurance premiums.

2. There is **little regard for human life**. Our children are taught that human beings are a sort of high-grade animals with no souls, that all we are is some sort of improved ape. We live in a society

that fails to regard and uphold the sacredness of human life. Prime-time news anchors get all bent out of shape when two dozen children are murdered at an elementary school, but there is not one extended edition of the nightly news in response to the thousands that are murdered every day in this country by abortions. “*God created man in His own image*” (Gen. 1:27), and taught men to respect that. To the first recorded murderer God said, “*The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.*” (Gen. 4:10). Until we reverse this ungodly philosophy which devalues the estimation of human life, we will not succeed in minimizing crime.

3. God's word is ignored. The Bible is even ridiculed and jeered at by people in positions of powerful influence, such as educators and news commentators. God has been dethroned and laughed out of his own world. The Apostle Paul provided an eye-opening list of specific sins (and crimes) that would characterize any people who “*suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*” Of them, he said that they “*did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools,*” (Rom. 1:18-22). Among the sins of those who “*did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer*” were “*unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, ... murder, strife, deceit, malice, ... haters of God, insolent, ... inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ... untrustworthy,*” etc. (Rom. 1:28-31). Whenever men reject the high and holy way of righteousness, horrible consequences are the result, and men become dark-hearted fools. “*Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.*” (Hosea 4:6b-7; cf. Deut. 32:18-20).

It is foolish to expect anything but an increase in crime so long as these conditions prevail. Three things will decrease crime rates:

(1) quick and sure punishment of the criminal, (2) a higher regard for human life, and (3) a deeper reverence of God and his word. God is the rightful Ruler of men's lives, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is the remedy for sins [crimes] (Rom. 1:16-17).

- GFS

Obeying God In One's Youth

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Eccl. 12:2). It is sad to see young people choose the world over the Lord. The Bible offers some compelling reasons for one to obey God in their youth.

1. Habits are formed in our youth. (Proverbs 22:6) The older we get, the harder it is to break out of our routine. If we make serving God a way of life in our youth it will stick with us through life.

2. Avoiding the regret of a wasted life. Peter tells us, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3). Regardless of what age we are when we obey the gospel, the life we have lived up to that point is enough time spent in sin. Even if we live to an old age we've still really only had a few years to make a difference in this world (Eph. 5:15-17). Many people have to live with the consequences of the sins they committed in their youth. We do reap what we sow - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8).

3. We are not to test God's patience. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). The acceptable time to be saved is when we hear the gospel. "For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2; see also Acts 22:16). The devil will make sure that we never have a convenient time to become a Christian (Acts 24:25; Luke 8:12).

4. We aren't promised tomorrow. "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away... Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:14, 17). On any given day, the obituary page contains the names of people who didn't even make it out of their teens! Are you willing to take that chance?

- Heath Rogers

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- > "May we never let the things we can't have, or don't have, or shouldn't have, spoil our enjoyment of the things we do have and can have."
 - > "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."
 - > "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it."

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*How Great It Is To Be A Christian!*" (text: Acts 8:5-8); Sunday evening: "*JOB: The Most Patient and Impatient Man in the Bible!*"