

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Preparing for Worship

I am a firm believer that the worship of God is one of these "important moments in life." It won't just happen. True worship, the kind the Lord desires (cp. Jn. 4:23-24), is a planned affair. When was the last time you read Ex. 19:9-17? I think it provides a good pattern for how God wants His people to get themselves ready to worship Him. Yes, it is always important that we are careful to worship God in the prescribed way. But it is equally vital that we get ourselves ready to engage in such important activities.

Notice God instructed Moses to have the people "consecrate themselves" to "be ready the third day" when He would come down upon the mount (vv. 10-11). Also observe that when it came time, Moses "brought the people out of the camp to meet God" (v. 17). Meeting God is important activity, one that requires preparation. It is never a "happenstance meeting."

Now, let's make application ... Do we make adequate preparations to "meet God in worship?" We know He will be present (cp. Mt. 18:20). We also know what is going to take place: we'll sing, pray, listen to the gospel, break bread together, and contribute to the treasury. These are not mundane, rote activities. (If we see them as such, that is indeed the problem). The question remains...how much preparation do you or I make to come to worship? Have we gotten our minds ready for what we will be doing? Have we "consecrated" ourselves so that nothing (either mental or physical) interferes with what we will be doing? Something as simple as

being on time certainly would be involved in preparing for worship of the God of the universe.

Since the "Father seeks such to be His worshipers," we are obligated to do our part to be such a people. Prepare for worship...starting today.

- Jeff Smith

How to See "Eye to Eye" Religiously

Basically, our understanding of the Scriptures differs from the majority of the religious world because we operate on a different principle of interpretation. To most religious people "truth" is relative, adjusting freely to different times and circumstances. For us, however, truth is truth. It is unalterable, unchangeable, and everlasting. But did "we" just arbitrarily decide this would be our regard for truth? Not at all. God's own word boldly claims "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth." (Psalm 33:4) While there are scoffers at the idea of absolute truth, we accept Bible teaching that such does exist, and we are determined to know it. Pilate's piercing question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) was prompted by these words from Jesus: "I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

This then, is the basis upon which we may come to see religious matters alike. There must be a commitment to the same standard of truth. No one would ever attempt to use differing standards of measurement if building a house, marking off a football field, or sewing a garment. This would guarantee error and disaster. Twelve inches must equal one foot on all our rulers if we desire uniformity. There must be a healthy regard and respect for the Bible on the part of every religious person in order for understanding to occur. Without this common devotion to God's word, all efforts to see things the same will fail. In order to come to agreement on matters essential to salvation, we must begin where we agree. From this point we must study the Scriptures, resolving differences as we go along.

Major problems of difference are solved in small steps, and then we can be united in Christ. But we will never see things the same if we cannot agree on the existence, necessity, and location of the truth.

No Bible discussion is profitable unless every participant is a truth seeker. If everyone concerned really wants the truth, then coming to an agreement and an understanding of truth will be achievable. Believe it or not, it is possible to discuss religious differences without becoming rude or creating hurt feelings. People who love the truth are not concerned with who is right, but with what is right. Every truth seeker is willing to surrender any position if it is false. There is no other honorable course for an honest man. An honest man will seek the truth, and when he finds it he will believe it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding." (Proverbs 23:23).

- Mark W. White

How God in His Providence Helps His People

God is on our side when we are on His! The message to His church is that "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, But when you are tempted, He also will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1st Corinthians 10:13 NIV). **What sort of help does the Lord give us to make escape from temptation possible?** The Scripture points to everyday spiritual blessings that we must never take for granted. Here are just a few...

His word guides us and teaches us how to live. "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2nd Timothy 3:16-17).

The way of prayer brings our requests before Him. He was "tempted in every way, just as we are --- yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

The willpower we have is strengthened in Him. "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:12-13).

We walk with other Christians to encourage us. "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another --- and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

His work gives our lives certainty and purpose. "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1st Corinthians 15:57-58).

- Robert Hines