

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Those Who Ask

I heard a comment from the president of Coca-Cola the other day that has stuck with me. He was asked the question, "What separates those who achieve from those who do not?"

Typically, we would imagine that the president of a major, multi-million-dollar corporation would give answers like "goals, never giving up, brains, organization, or good investments." What he said shocked me. His answer was, "What separates those who achieve from those who do not is in direct proportion to one's ability to ask others for help."

I thought that to be such a strange statement. I think most people are taught that asking for help with something is a sign of weakness, so we should therefore be independent in all that we do. But, I think Mr. Keough has touched on an important facet of our lives that we often fail to acknowledge.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7).

Are we exposing our weaknesses when we ask God for help? I believe the answer is yes and no. Yes, we are admitting that we cannot bear and do all things without the help of God, but, no, we are not weak in doing so. In asking God for help we have strengthened our chances of overcoming whatever difficulty is before us and we should

fear no more! Don't forget that you have a heavenly Father that cares about you and listens to all of your requests. Prayer is not a weakness; it is a blessing!

- Unknown

How Would You Define “Faithful”?

This sometimes gives me a problem. I know members who have been more or less insulted because I do not consider them faithful Christians, even though they attend many or most of the assemblies, and, in some cases, take part in leading in prayer, serving the Lord's Supper, and mowing the grass.

Somehow we have grown to have the notion that as long as one attends regularly he is to be counted a faithful member: faithfulness is defined as “coming to the assembly.” But into what category of faithfulness do we place the brother or sister who comes regularly, but never participates in any congregational activities? Is he/she faithful or unfaithful to that work? And what about these:

- He that habitually misses the Bible classes on Sunday morning: is he faithful or unfaithful to his obligation to grow and mature as he submits to the elders and to their providing for our spiritual nourishment?
- He that feels at liberty to let secular things keep him away from the assembly: is he faithful or unfaithful to his duty to edify the rest of us, to praise God, and to show the sinful world where his first love is?
- She that never shows saints the hospitality of her home – or rarely shows it – is she faithful or unfaithful to her duty to do that work?
- The man that negligently lets his family drift apart from each other and from the truth of Jesus: is he faithful or unfaithful as a husband, father, and representative of Christ in the home?
- The sister that works at a secular job, unnecessarily, and lets her children miss out on that divinely expected constant love and watchfulness over her children's activities and associates is she faithful or unfaithful as a mother and wife?
- The saint who never helps in visiting the erring, the weak, the new prospect for baptism; who neglects his part in the work of visitation the elders have designed to fill these needs; is he faithful or unfaithful to that work?

What about the member who meets every one of the failings but still attends most of the assemblies?

Faithful or Unfaithful?

Just how do you define the term, “faithful Christian”? Personally, I do not believe the above persons are counted as faithful by God who commands every one of us to grow to maturity, to be complete to accomplish all things expected of each of us. To the degree that I slack off and remain an undeveloped neglecter and excuse maker, to that same degree I am an erring, unfaithful saint.

- Royce Chandler

The “Prosperity Gospel”

If it were to be judged merely by popularity, Joel Osteen’s “ministry” would be a success. The television broadcast of Lakewood Church’s services reaches 100 million homes, and Osteen’s book *Your Best Life Now* was a *New York Times* Best Seller. However, an interview on *Larry King Live* a couple of years ago provided a glimpse into the heart of Joel Osteen’s message. While there is no doubt that Mr. Osteen earnestly desires to provide some type of guidance to those who hear him, there is just as little doubt that his message - and that of many others like him - falls short of Biblical demands in several key ways.

First, one cannot help but be taken aback by Osteen’s aversion - not just avoidance but aversion - to anything remotely related to doctrine. Notice Osteen’s noncommittal attitude after being asked, “But don’t you think if people don’t believe as you believe, they’re somehow condemned?”

“You know, I think that happens in our society. But I try not to do that. I tell people all the time, - preached a couple of Sundays about it. I’m for everybody. You may not agree with me, but to me it’s not my job to try to straighten everybody out. The Gospel is called the good news. My message is a message of hope, that’s God for you. You can live a good life no matter what’s happened to you. And so I don’t know. I know there is condemnation but I don’t feel that’s my place.”

It seems that Joel Osteen is not even willing to stand up for the fundamental ideals of the denominational world, let alone true Biblical doctrine. Larry King followed a question regarding belief with the following:

KING: “What if you’re Jewish or Muslim, you don’t accept Christ at all?”

OSTEEN: “You know, I’m very careful about saying who would and wouldn’t go to heaven. I don’t know.”

KING: “If you believe you have to believe in Christ, they’re wrong, aren’t they?”

OSTEEN: "Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus."

Osteen gives no solid Biblical answers. His answer to the all-important problem of human suffering is "I don't know, Larry. I don't know it all." (while true to an extent, his knowledge seems horribly limited). Osteen's favorite filler statement in this interview is "I don't know..." and truly he doesn't appear to know much of anything concerning the word of truth. However, Jesus taught, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Paul commanded Timothy to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2).

Just as disturbing as Osteen's lack of knowledge and concern for the basic truths of the Gospel is his focus on material success. Consider this exchange between King and Osteen:

KING: "What is the prosperity gospel?"

OSTEEN: "I think the prosperity gospel in general is -- well I don't know. I hear it too. I don't know. I think what sometimes you see is it's just all about money. That's not what I believe. It's the attitude of your heart, and so you know, we believe -- but I do believe this, that God wants us to be blessed. He wants us to be able to send our kids to college, excel in our careers. But prosperity to me, Larry, is not just money, it's having health. What good is money if you don't have health?"

KING: "Also many in the Christian belief are wary of too much material, aren't they?"

OSTEEN: "Yeah, I think some of them are. But to me, you know, I hope people get blessed if they can handle it right. Because it takes money to do good. You know to do things for people. To spread the good news. So I think it's all a matter of your heart."

Those who listen in ignorance to Osteen's messages cannot help but get the impression that righteousness equals wealth, which is merely an echo of Job's friends: "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off." (Job 4:7). However, such a materialistic view of God's blessings is full of serious holes in light of the nature of the world. How many who have bought into such philosophies end up echoing the sentiments of the Psalmist: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalm 73:3)? Joel Osteen might have trouble gaining support for his prosperity gospel from the literally millions of New Testament Christians here and in foreign lands who labor to get by from day to day yet remain faithful to God.

To be sure, God has promised the faithful Christian the necessities of life (Matthew 6:25-33), and those who abide by godly principles will fare better than those in similar circumstances who do not, but the focus of the Gospel message is not salvation of the bank account (Matthew 6:19-21).

Joel Osteen and others of his mold provide what the masses want to hear. With “itching ears” (II Timothy 4:3) people in general want someone “preaching” to them who will do no more than stroke their fragile egos and reinforce their beliefs that if they work hard and are more or less good people, they will be blessed materially. However, may those of us who wear the name Gospel preacher “not shun to declare all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

- Chris Perry

Proverbs 3:27 -- Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do *it*.

- > “A man who is afraid of the light is more foolish than a child who is afraid of the dark!”
 - > “To allow error to go unchallenged is to be dishonest with truth!”
 - > “It often shows a good command of language to say nothing!”
 - > “If more saints would heed the admonition to ‘go,’ more sinners would heed the admonition to ‘come!’”
 - > “A half-hearted follower of Christ can never render whole-hearted service!”
 - > “Some people’s minds are like concrete: all mixed up and thoroughly set!”
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THIS WEEK’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*Home & Family!*” #4 (*The Bible Directs Wives!*) (Text: Eph. 5:22-24); Sunday evening: “*The Bible Directs Wives!*” (Part 2) [Text: Titus 2:4].