

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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**December 04, 2016**

**Volume 36, # 49**

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## **Dumbing Down of Christianity**

Did you know that 10% of church goers in America believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife? That really should not surprise us, since less than 20% of "church goers" will attend Sunday school this week. A lack of biblical knowledge in churches seems to be a sign of the times.

Popular Christian researcher George Barna claims people are soft when it comes to committing to God. "Americans are willing to expend some energy in religious activities such as attending church and reading the Bible, and they are willing to throw some money in the offering basket. Because of such activities, they convince themselves that they are people of genuine faith. But when it comes time for truly establishing their priorities and making a tangible commitment to knowing and loving God, and to allowing Him to change their character and lifestyle, most people stop short. We want to be 'spiritual' and we want to have God's favor, but we're not sure we want Him taking control of our lives and messing with the image and outcomes we've worked so hard to produce" ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) - April 18, 2006).

As frustrating as this may be for church leaders, we need to ask ourselves, "Are we seeking ways to reverse this trend or are we contributing to the problem?" It seems churches have resorted to entertaining the masses instead of educating. You may be more likely to get a drama or extravaganza when you "go to church" than a Bible class or a sermon. In fact, a local news station recently ran a story on a church that had replaced all preaching with plays.

Jesus was faced with a similar dilemma during His ministry. He knew people were not following Him for the right reasons. So, He refused to feed them. "Most assuredly I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for food which perishes, but for food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you" (John 6:26-27).

Instead of seeking to emulate theaters and concert halls, maybe churches would have better attendance and more commitment if they looked and acted like a church. In its infancy, Christianity was grounded in teaching and preaching the gospel of Christ. Young evangelists were admonished to "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (1 Timothy 4:2). Why was there such an emphasis on education? Because the gospel, and only the gospel, "is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

In conclusion, this may be the most disturbing statistic. About one-third of Americans who describe themselves as "born again" believe that if a person is good enough they can earn a place in heaven. That is scary! Many in churches do not understand the most fundamental biblical doctrine — grace. No one will ever be "good enough" to go to heaven (Ephesians 2:4-9). The gospel is "good news" for this very reason. Jesus died in our place and then was raised from the dead (2 Timothy 2:8). We are saved by His blood, not our own goodness (Romans 6:3-10).

However, if we do not preach it, people will not learn it. Biblical faith begins with the word of God (Romans 10:17). That is why the apostle Peter said, "Beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:17-18).

- Phil Robertson

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## The Road To Higher Education

We have several young people who are soon going away to college. Some have been home for the summer and are about to return for a new semester. We love you all and we're very proud of you. We miss you when you're gone.

The road you're about to travel is at once an exciting and dangerous one. The road to higher education is laced with great possibilities, while at the same time offering pitfalls you will want to avoid at all costs. I just want a few minutes of your time to suggest some things to help you as you travel this new road and are immersed in this new environment. Is that OK?

My admonitions are based on the Psalm 119:9-16. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" it asks.

**Stay close to God's word (vs. 9).** "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" That is the question. And the answer is forthcoming. "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." No matter what you do this year, don't stray far from the word of God. Keep it close. It's your protection against evil inclinations and cultural temptations.

**Seek the Lord whole-heartedly (vs. 10).** "With my whole heart have I sought thee." Some changes are inevitable, but that doesn't mean everything needs to change. Some things need to stay as they are. You don't want to change what you are. You're a Christian. You decide what you're going to do—and that's well and good—but plan to seek God with your whole heart, no matter your plans. Keep your faith above all keeping. No change is needed there.

**Take the word with you (vs. 11).** "Thy word have I hid in my heart." You'll be going some places that are new to you; and some of those new places are dangerous. Hide His word in your heart so that you are armed against the invasions of evil you no doubt will face. What a good way to begin this new time in your life—with His word in your heart.

**Invite divine instruction (vs. 12).** "Teach me thy statutes," he says. You will be getting considerable new information about how to live life in your new educational career, but you should not forget to invite some new instruction concerning your eternal career. Being a good Christian is more important than being a good engineer, or a good nurse, or a good anything else. Learn about Him and you get the best of all educations.

**Don't be ashamed of who you are (vs. 13).** It's easy to get caught up in this new life. And it's easy to just follow along with others, some of whom don't share your convictions. Don't let that happen. It's important that you make it known early on that you are different. Don't be ashamed. Be glad about who you are and let others know. Declare it with joy and without timidity.

**Don't be dismayed at the discipline of God's word (vs. 14).** It's easy, when you've just been loosed from the rules of home and you're in charge of your life, to be a little loose about the discipline of God's word. Instead of treating the word of God with rejoicing, you may feel somewhat hemmed in by it. Remember, God's word never requires anything or restricts anything that is not for your good. "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies," says that you understand its discipline to be for your good.

**Keep in mind the really important things in your life (vs. 15).** No matter how good the education you get, it's not as important, nor is it as functional, as is knowing and loving God and His word. "I will meditate on thy precepts," the psalm says. Don't get so busy with your new life that you don't take time to contemplate the eternal, to muse about the

spiritual, to remember what has true value and lasting consequences. Meditation takes time. Take the time.

**Delight in His word and don't forget its influence in your life (vs. 16).** Of all the books you can study, none should delight your mind more than the word of the Lord. It's the first thing you need to live a happy life, first before any other book. When it's coupled with the good education you will no doubt achieve, it can bring you a totally satisfying life. Without it, you can never be truly happy. "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy ways."

We love you, gang. We're proud of you— every one of you. You continue to be a joy to all of us. As you leave, please remember who you are, from whence you are come, and where you're going. And come home again soon.

- Dee Bowman

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## The Bible

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

- Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.
- It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.
- It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter.
- Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the ways of Hell are disclosed.
- Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the redemption of man its end.

- Author Unknown

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- > "An admission (and correction) of error is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength!"
  - > "Genuine happiness and joy thrives best in the soil of thankfulness!"
  - > "If we have "shabby" principles, they should be Scripturally repaired!"
  - > "The Devil accomplishes much evil through some who claim to love the Lord. Beware!"
  - > "It matters where we stand and in what direction we are moving!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"The Lord's Kingdom: Unique!"* (Text: John 18:33-36); Sunday evening: *"Three Great Faults of the Ancient Jews!"* (Rom. 2:17-29).