

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Truth Sometimes Hurts

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging, and uplifting. However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (Mark 10:17-22). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (Prov. 27:6)?

Some of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose repentance and baptism (Acts 2:36-40). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-60). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:14-16). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (John 17:17). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (Rom. 2:8).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

- Jonathan Perz

You Are Important!

When Jesus taught his disciples not to worry about life, food or raiment, he constantly reaffirmed such truths on the basis that God can provide for their needs (Mt. 6:24-33). But there is an underlying implication in each point he makes which silently cries out — YOU ARE IMPORTANT! Notice: If God cares for each of the birds of the heavens; if he feeds them and one does not fall to the ground without His notice, are you not MORE IMPORTANT than the birds? Again: Are you not MORE IMPORTANT than the lilies of the field which, though transitory, are clothed in such beauty and splendor that they surpass Solomon's glory?

However, people have problems of feeling unimportant. For instance, a boy who is jilted by his girlfriend can reach such a low that he feels completely valueless. He decides life is not worth living, takes a knife and slashes his wrists. He, then, makes a desperate telephone call and his girlfriend rushes him to the hospital. You see, he really did not want to die — he wanted to feel important. But there is no need to take such a drastic chance — the line could be busy.

On some occasions children do some things which are socially unacceptable in order to be noticed by other human beings. This reinstates their feelings of importance. Consider the little boy who, because he was not allowed to interrupt adults, stood in the background until he got to feeling desperate, so he walked up and kicked the preacher in the shins. He got plenty of attention then. Others will use gutter expletives or join a radical group because they are recognized and made to feel like somebody. And someone else might compensate for incompetence by bragging about his prowess.

YOU ARE IMPORTANT! I am fearfully and wonderfully made... the Psalmist said (Psa. 139:14). When God formed the first man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, man was God's special creation in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7), but so are you — each of you. Elihu said to Job, I also am formed out of the clay, (Job 33:6). Each of you is an individual made in the image of God. You are of great value to your maker.

Because you are made in God's image, you are also important to yourself. Jesus said, For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? (Matt. 16:25-26). There is nothing so valuable as your soul, hence, the utmost effort should be given to its eternal salvation.

But you are also important to me, For I seek not yours, but you... (2 Cor. 12:14). I will, therefore, gladly spend and be spent to help you. Do not ever believe that no one cares what happens to you or that you are worthless and life is not worth living. You are a unique individual — there is no one else just like you — and you are priceless to God, to yourself and to me.

- Jim R. Everett, via Plain Talk, March, 1975

Is Your Bulb Out?

A man came into a garage the other day and requested that a mechanic check a noise in the engine of his car. Sure enough, a bearing was burned out due to a clogged oil line. "But," the frustrated man exclaimed "the light on the dash never indicated anything to be wrong." So they checked the warning light and found that the bulb was burned out. The bulb cost 55 cents, the bearing would be 90 dollars.

Conscience is somewhat like the warning light in your car. Yet there are certain circumstances under which the conscience will not work. Paul speaks of those who have their conscience "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). The idea here is that which we have of branding or cauterizing. It is the placing of a red-hot iron against the flesh which burns or sears it over and seals it up. The area affected becomes dry, hard and insensitive. It describes a conscience which will allow a person to indulge in evil and error without any concern, or a conscience which fails to dictate in matters of right and wrong.

If our conscience does not dictate any moral restraint or judge our thoughts and motives, then we ought to become very much concerned. If you can deliberately miss the worship service without any pangs of conscience you ought to check your conscience. If your conscience fails to warn you when it comes to practicing that which is known to be wrong, then something is wrong with your conscience. And unless the matter is corrected, you are heading toward disaster.

Some people seem to enjoy boasting about how their conscience never bothers them or interferes with anything they want to do. If this is the case with you, let me suggest that you have a spiritual checkup. Your bulb might be burned out.

- unknown

"I prayed about it ..."

Prayer is such a great blessing for Christians! "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (Jas. 5:16b). When the trials of living press sorely upon us, there is no greater comfort than to seek nearness to our Father in prayer. Yes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (Jas. 4:8a).

Now, people who regard themselves as praying Christians must be careful to exercise the great blessing of prayer with modesty and holy fear. Self-examination in the face of God's word is always necessary, lest we mistake our own feelings for an answer to prayer, and persuade ourselves that God is directing us, when we are following only the imaginations of our own hearts.

People have done many things in becoming "unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). It doesn't necessarily mean that they stop attending the worship services. Sometimes people forget to maintain a proper-ordered love (Mark 12:30-31). God always comes first! And we will not see God without a love for our brethren (1 John 3:10). Righteousness involves more than self-approval – we can have it only as we submit our own wills to God's will in all things. Failing in this, it can never be made right by continuing the sin, while at the same time self-justifying it by saying: "I prayed about it."

Let us, on all occasions, take the word of God for our guide; and, in all doubtful circumstances, wait the issue, before we presume that what we have already decided to do is an expression of God's will in answer to our prayers.

- Gary Smalley

- > "Can't sleep? Don't count sheep - talk to the shepherd!"
 - > "If you must publish someone's faults, then why not publish your own?"
 - > "Put your will in neutral so the Lord can shift you!"
 - > "The real measure of a person's worth is: How much would they be worth if they lost everything?"
 - > "When Christ entered our world he didn't come to brighten our Decembers, but to transform our lives!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Release The Captives!*" (Text: Luke 4:18-19); Sunday evening: "*The Testimony of John!*" (Text: John 1:19-34).