

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL!

Over the years I've heard the reasoning behind why there's so much sin around us today. It is as if it's something that has grown more severe as the years roll by. That statement goes something like this, "why this is a fallen world." As true as that remark is, some of us seem to believe that prior to our generation, everything had to be a lot better, we usually call it, "those good old days!" The truth be known, the world started its collapse way back in the Garden of Eden. This began when mankind fell from God's graces, and it has occurred over and over again with the human race. It will not stop until we're convinced God is right, and the only way of escape from a falling world is to turn and reach out for God.

The father and mother of us all began this slow but steady demise in Gen. 3. Life changed on that day, and it will end on that "Great and Wonderful Day," when Christ will return to claim His own, (2Thess. 1:7, 10). This very fact of a way of escape from a world spinning off into oblivion should cause us to think of the old saying, "stop the world I want to get off!" The question at this juncture is just how should I get off this out of control globe?

I can remember as a little child, my father pushing as fast as he could my brothers and I on small merry go round. We knew if we attempted to jump off as it was spinning the chances were we would fall off and be injured. There just was no one who could catch us! Well now, let's put a spiritual "spin" to this story. It's true, it isn't safe for a child to just jump without being hurt. This spinning world of sin and sorrow will finally, one day, be STOPPED! The only souls that will be found safe, are those who are, "Safe In The Arms of Jesus."

One day Jehovah, "...who's fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:17)

It's a crazy spinning world, isn't it? Why ride dizzily on the merry go round of life. It is God's good pleasure, His will, that if we seek Him, He will never allow a single one to be harmed in such a sinful world. He promises eternal life, raising us up in the last day (John 6:39, 40), and to live with Him in eternity!

- Larry Clarke Sr.

The Oversight of Elders

There are those who teach that all preachers, regardless of where they labor, must be under an eldership. That raises the question, "What is the limit of the oversight of elders?" What sayeth the Scriptures?

First of all, let it be firmly established by the Scriptures that elders do have oversight. Hear the apostle Paul's admonition to the Ephesian elders: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

Elders are spiritual rulers. "Obey those that have the rule over you and be submissive, for they watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17). The question arises: "What is the limit of their oversight?" Let the Scriptures answer: "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am a fellow elder ... shepherd the flock which is *among you* serving as overseers" (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They are to oversee the flock "*among them*," that is within the local congregation where they worship. Language could not be plainer. The oversight of elders is limited to the local church. This means that beyond the limit of that congregation, they had no oversight. "*Among them*" means within the local church.

Now, let us see how this is applied in local churches in the realm of benevolence: "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ... Neither were there any *among them* who lacked, for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet and they distributed to each as anyone had need." (Acts 4:32-35) Notice none *among them* lacked, that is among the church. Distribution was to those *among them*, the church.

Now, let us look at the expression "*among them*" with reference to church discipline. "It is commonly reported there is fornication *among you* and ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that has done this deed might be taken away from *among you*

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together and my spirit, deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ... Therefore put away from *among yourselves* that wicked person." (1 Cor. 5:1, 5, 13) It is clear that discipline was to be administered within the local church, "*among you*." Elders could not administer discipline in another congregation.

Finally, let us look at one Bible example of *among you*. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them of the house of Chloe that there are contentions *among you*." These contentions were in the Corinthian church, not in some other church.

These Scriptures show plainly that *among you*, *among them*, etc. apply specifically and directly to the local group. In these examples, it refers to the local body of Christ or the church. These passages of scripture also show explicitly that the oversight of elders is confined to the local church where the elders worship. There is not the slightest intimation that the authority and oversight of elders extends beyond the local church.

Many churches support gospel preachers throughout the U.S. and the entire world, but the preachers are not under the oversight of those churches. Those preachers are *among* the congregations where they labor. That means, of course, they may be laboring in places where there are no elders. Such men are under the ever-watchful eye of the Good Shepherd, who will reward their labor. (1 Pet. 5:4) They are also under the watchful eye of the local congregation, which will take care of any wrongdoing, and under elders if they are there. Churches that have elders with preachers in the field may visit them to encourage them and see first-hand the work being done. This is well and good. Those who labor in distant places will be encouraged by the coming of those who support them. However, let it be remembered that elders have no oversight beyond the local church. Some preachers laboring in distant places have spoken of overseeing elders. This expression makes a distinction where there is none. All elders are overseers. Of course, now and then there will be a "bad egg" among preachers. There will be a few who are materially minded and will line their pockets at the expense of the church. But the majority of gospel preachers are sincere and dedicated to the Lord and His work. The Lord will take care of all dishonest preachers at the final judgment. All must give an account to Him. In closing, where is the Scripture that gives elders oversight beyond the local church?

- Lindsay Allen (1907-1999) [edited]

Bible Translation Reading Levels

We know that "Reading Is Fundamental" -- and there is no more important reading than God's Word! However, many people struggle with the ability to read, and this often discourages them from pursuing the truths found in the Bible. It may be helpful to know that some translations of the Bible are easier (some considerably so!) to read than others!

Susan and I discovered a number of years ago, when our boys were learning to read, that the translation made a big difference in their ability to read easily and comprehend what they were reading in the Bible. As beautiful as the language of the King James Version, our young boys had a hard time reading and understanding what it said. I have long felt that the KN was among the most difficult to read of all the Bible translations, especially for children, and for adults to whom reading does not come easily. The chart below seems to bear out this conclusion. It also shows that, for ease of reading, the NKJV is one of the best.

Sometimes, when considering a Bible translation, it helps to know what the approximate reading level is for a given translation. Here's a quick and easy guide for the most popular translations, based on a study done recently by the Lockman Foundation:

TRANSLATION READING GRADE LEVEL

American Standard Version (ASV) 12th +
King James Version (KJV) 12th
Revised Standard Version (RSV) 12th
New American Standard (NASB) 11th
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 11th
English Standard Version (ESV) 10th
New International Version (NIV) 7th-8th
New King James Version (NKJV) 7th
New Century Version (NCV) 3rd
International Children's Bible (ICB) 3rd

- Gary C. Kerr, Old Hickory Bulletin, 07/23/05 (edited)

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- > "The devil likes to work in the dark, and no better cover does he ask than the fog-bank of unbelief!"
 - > "Some self-made men show poor architectural skill!"

- > "When in a 'fix,' sweating will get you further than swearing!"
 - > "If 'love' can be bought, it is not worth taking home!"
 - > "If we alter our lives to conform to God's Word, others will be altered by our influence!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Suicide!*" (Text: 1 Sam. 31:4-5); Sunday evening: "*Living Water!*" (John 4:1-15).