

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Finding the Right Kind of Romance

Turning twenty-six was the toughest birthday I ever had. It was the birthday when I could no longer say I was in my “early twenties,” and that hit me hard. I was facing a quarter-life crisis, and one of the biggest struggles of my life at the time was that I was unmarried, and had no prospects to get married. And after having seen my fair share of broken marriages among my peers, and having been in disappointing relationships myself, I had come to the conclusion that it would be better to remain unmarried for my entire life than to marry the wrong person.

Though I had no prospects, I still wished to prepare myself to be able to recognize the right person if she ever came along. And more importantly I wanted to prepare myself spiritually for this woman so that I would be the right kind of man for her. I began scouring the Bible for verses that would help me, and I found several that I wrote down on a sheet of paper. And every day for nearly a year I would unfold my paper and read through them and think on them. I want to share four of them with you, and some of what I discovered meditating on them for over a year.

Song of Solomon 3:5 – “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem ... that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.”

In the middle of this book primarily concerned with romantic love between a husband and wife, the Bride tells this chorus of other women to not be impatient when it comes to love. Love is likened to a sleeping entity. It will awaken when it decides to, and to try to hurry it along or push it to move faster is not wise. Or as it’s put in the 1978 Toto song: “Hold the line. Love isn’t always on time.”

This was especially important for me to meditate on. I think I had a tendency to try to push relationships too fast. To fall into infatuation and convince myself it was love. And the desire to awaken love before it is ready becomes even more of a temptation as you grow older and watch your peers (and even people much younger than you) get married, while love seems to pass you by.

But the Bride adjures you. It is important to be patient, to let love work in its own time, and to not rush things.

Genesis 29:20 – “So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.”

This may be the most romantic verse in the entire Bible. I just mentioned it to my wife Erin earlier this week, and she involuntarily sighed. Women love this idea of being so valued and loved in the eyes of their man, that he would do anything for her, and not just that, but that his love for her would propel him effortlessly through all difficulties to be with her.

The woman worthy of this kind of love is one that has to be worked for. The truly great and lasting relationships are built through work and time. And the right woman is worth seven years and more. If you want that, you have to be willing to work for it. But also, you need to find (and wait for) the person who makes that work all worth it.

Ruth 3:7-8ff – “And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then Ruth came softly and uncovered his feet and lay down. At midnight the man was startled and turned over, and behold, a woman lay at his feet! ...”

Boaz doesn't pursue Ruth as a romantic interest at all. It does not even seem to be in Boaz's mind until Ruth proposes to him. But what made Boaz the kind of man a woman would propose to? First you find that Boaz treated Ruth kindly and righteously, not because he wanted to impress her, but because he was genuinely kind and righteous. And in Ruth 3:7, notice that Boaz finds full satisfaction in his life as it currently is. Boaz isn't overly concerned with finding a wife and “completing himself.” Boaz worked, enjoyed the fruits of his labor, and was merry. Boaz's life was already complete before Ruth.

If you have not found satisfaction in yourself and your life, a spouse will not fix that. Live the fullest life you can live right now. Find happiness and merriment right now. And when you are living that life, you will not only find it easier to be patient when it comes to love, but it will attract the people most compatible with your fulfilling life now.

Proverbs 18:22 – “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.”

This verse and the one in Genesis 2:18 when God says, “It is not good that man should be alone...” and then he creates Eve, distressed me greatly in my teenage years and early twenties. If finding a wife is a good thing, and being alone is bad, then why does

God allow me to continue to be single? It felt like a deeply unfair punishment God had placed on me.

But looking back now, I realize that in waiting for my wife, even though at the time it seemed to take longer than I wanted, I would not change the timing of it now. In all of the waiting, I discovered just how much of a good thing I found. If it did not take time, and work, and patience, and searching, then I do not know if I would have understood just how precious this other person is, how much of a good thing a wife can truly be.

I hope that these verses may be able to help you no matter where you are on your journey through life.

- Eric Hamilton

When 900 Million People Are Watching

Ninety-percent of all people deal with some level of stage fright. How do you feel when all eyes are on you? Do your palms get cold and clammy? Do you become nervous and anxious? Do you blush, tremble, shake, or feel nauseated?

There is at least one stage where the vast majority of people feel no fright at all. This stage is Facebook. Facebook recently exceeded 900 million active users. Potentially, then, depending on your privacy settings, up to 900 million people are watching what you say and do. Many who would be very careful in front of a crowd may post on Facebook with reckless abandon.

God has called His people to be different (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Timothy 2:21). God has called us to be a light in the darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). The question for us is, do our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest accounts reflect this? Here are several categories to consider:

- What Do We Say and Post? Could someone look at our profiles and see bad language, gossip, slander, or crude and crass speech? (2 Corinthians 12:20; James 3).
- What People and Activities Do We "Like" (Support)? Do we "Like" celebrities, athletes, artists, or others with trashy reputations? Do we support movies, music, TV shows, video games, or other things that are not Christlike? (Romans 12:2).
- What Pictures Are on Our Profiles? Do any pictures show us engaging in sin or less than godly behaviors? (Romans 13: 13-14). Do any show us hanging with people or in places a Christians should not be? (1 Corinthians 15:33). Do any

pictures on our profiles display immodesty or promote lust? (1 Timothy 2:9-10; Romans 13:13; Matthew 5:28).

Remember, 900 million people are watching on earth, and One is watching in heaven.

- Brent Petrillo

The Strength of A Church . . .

It is well to look at the strength of a congregation and then learn how to increase it. A Church's strength does not necessarily depend on the number of its members. Many times we misjudge strength because we estimate strength by the number of members. We "count noses" rather than seek spirituality, maturity and loyalty to God's word.

It is possible for a church to have a large membership and yet be a very weak congregation. We sometimes hear people say that a certain congregation is "strong." They make this statement often solely on the large size of its membership. Sometimes a few faithful members constitute a stronger church than great numbers of unconverted people.

A membership half-converted and half-taught is a very weak church! Often times withdrawals or subtractions would increase the strength of a congregation; sometimes subtractions are better than additions.

The Lord can, and very often does, work with very few faithful ones.

- Author Unknown

> "Always keep your head up, but be careful to keep your nose where it belongs!"

> "Counting time is not so important as making time count!"

> "The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will and the other from a strong won't!"

> "The man who never makes mistakes loses a great many chances to learn something!"

> "You teach more with your life than with your lips!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Prayer That Teaches Disciples How To Pray!"* (Text: Matt. 6:9-15); Sunday evening: *"The Credentials of Jesus!"* Part 2 (John 5:31-47).