

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Believing in Others

An early Greek school of philosophers taught that virtue is the only good, and that its essence lies in self-control and independence. But their "second" or "third" generation became violent critics of social customs and current philosophies; so, the name "cynic" came to mean a snarler, one who believes human conduct is motivated wholly by self-interest. Cynical implies a sneering disbelief in sincerity, a distrust of others.

I am not unaware of society's immorality, nor of the need to be on one's guard lest one be "taken." Good business practice demands investigation, analysis, and the records that protect the innocent and widows. But there is something inherently wrong with an attitude of general distrust. When we can no longer believe in any one else, it may be we have too highly appraised ourselves. Extensive distrust suggests our own familiarity with the "temptation." (It takes a thief to catch a thief.)

Some may call it "gullible" "simple" or "naive," but we find much to admire in that person who believes in his neighbor, who lives in trust, who is optimistic about the future. Love "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:5-7).

Trust in others tends to gender an honest response — to bring out the best in them. Optimism opens doors forever closed to the pessimist. The cynic sours in his own juice, while the optimist improves qualitatively, even if there were no other credits. Of course, I refer to genuine optimism, not a "policy" of "positive thinking" to be adopted for personal gains.

Self-esteem, confidence, and what some Kentuckians call "pride," spring from our belief we are "God's children," and "God don't make no trash!" While we believe others are O.K., we can believe in ourselves without harm. But watch out for the attitude that "others are Baalites, and I am left alone." Righteous judgment does not condemn until fruits demand it; and even then, encouragement may correct what snarling will only drive away.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, March, 1982

The Grudge-Holder

The grudge-holder suffers from an unusual kind of wound. Although his grudge is related to a past conflict with another, it is a wound that is self-inflicted. Remarkably, its healing is hindered in not being desired. In fact, it is actually a cherished spirit of resentment; a welcomed feeling of ill will toward another. You might say the grudge-holder is glad to be mad at someone. If so, it is about the only gladness that comes from grudges.

One thing you will never see is a happy grudge-holder. His mind is forever troubled because the object of his grudge becomes the object of his thinking. He continually rehearses and relives his mistreatment — perhaps even magnifying it. With each recollection comes more bitterness and resentment, if not self-pity. Harboring a grudge defiles the heart, poisons the thinking and produces misery. The grudge-holder will be hard put to "rejoice in the Lord" as encouraged in Phil. 3:1 — because "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

Moreover, so speaks he. As Jesus taught, "...the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart..." (Matt. 15:18). The grudge in the heart soon translates to words in the mouth and to the detriment of many. As the grudge-holder vilifies and speaks evil of his brother, he sins against God (Jas. 4:11), hurts himself, hurts his brother, and hurts those he tells. But it gets worse.

Grudges can easily become the wedges of division. As the tongue advertises the grudge-holder's flavored grievances in search of sympathy and allies, some are apt to be influenced and prejudiced — especially kinsmen and friends. Their thinking and conduct toward the perpetrator of this "great injustice" are adversely affected and, thus, others become involved in a way that threatens unity in the church. As Paul said, "...a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). Many churches have been made to suffer unnecessary and irreparable harm through the influence of grudge-holding brethren.

None is more deceived than the Christian who thinks he can hold a grudge without jeopardizing his soul. Calling it something else doesn't remove the problem. Even when it may not be all that apparent, we can be tempted to harbor a deep-seated kind of resentment and bitterness toward others. We must be honest with ourselves. God says to put away ALL bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and malice (Eph. 4:31). Do we believe it?

Finally, no matter how justifiable the grudge may seem, it is always an expression of contempt and hate. God commands us to love one another (Jn. 15:12; 1 Jn. 3:11; 4:7) — even enemies (Matt. 5:44). The grudge condemns; love forgives. "Be ye kind one to

another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). Forgiveness! — man's greatest blessing. How desperately we need it: — yet the grudge-holder would forfeit it by withholding it from others. Brethren, let's get grudges out of our hearts and out of the church!

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, Oct., 1982

“FRIGHT SHICKN”

My title isn't a mistake. It is found on a sign on a roadside restaurant in the little town of San Fernando, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The sign was prominent and obviously expensive, complete with neon bulbs. Can you tell what the owner intended to say?

Apparently, he had heard Americans call his victuals "fried chicken", and he had the sign made. His intentions were good but instead of luring me in with my mouth watering, he left me laughing with a thought for a bulletin article! His misguided efforts suggest a few lessons for Christian speech:

(1) Before you speak, put yourself in the place of the listener. How will your words be taken? Will they mean to him or her what they mean to you? Sometimes there are consequences for being misunderstood.

(2) Don't assume you know everything. If in doubt ask someone more experienced or educated on the subject.

(3) Check yourself out. Ask if you have been rightly understood, particularly if sensitive issues are being discussed. Just ask, "What did you hear me say?"

Have you ever said something like "fright shickn"? You knew what you meant, but you were unprepared for how others might hear your words. It has happened to me more than once.

The other side of this little tale is obvious: be a careful listener. Are you sure you heard what the other intended to say? Many misunderstandings can be prevented by asking, "Did I hear you right?"

James 3:2 - "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body."

- Randy Daw

Life Without Regret

In daily living we do many things which we later regret and concerning which we are ashamed. But here are seven things which you and I will never regret: First, showing kindness to an aged person, or to anyone, as far as that goes; second, destroying a letter written in anger; third, offering an apology that saves a friendship; fourth, stopping a scandal that is ruining a reputation; fifth, helping a boy or girl find themselves; sixth, taking time to show consideration to your family and friends; and seventh, accepting the judgement of God on any question, for His judgements are always right. Someone has written that "A good deed is never lost. He who sows courtesy, reaps friendship; he who plants kindness, gathers love." (from Positive Notes For Daily Living by E. Clifford Payne.)

The article above reminded me of a passage that the inspired apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatian Christians. After listing several mean and ornery actions that will keep people out of Heaven (5:19-21), he said, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:23, 24).

Mr. Payne's article made a very apt application of the principles found in those verses. As long as we allow God to rule our lives, we will have no regrets. Neither His law, nor our own civil law, will find anything to condemn. What a blessing we can be to others if we will conform our lives to the word of God, and thus be led by the Spirit!

- Len O'Bryant

No Regrets

When I think of relationships with parents, I'm reminded of something my mother said back when I was eight or nine. For some reason (I hope it was a good one) I was home from school, and mother was taking some pies she had baked over to my grandmother's. I remember insisting that we should keep those pies for our own family and let "Granny" as we called her, take care of herself.

Mom gave my lecture a mild reprimand or two, and when she had about all she could take she proceeded to tell me of a sudden accidental death of her father in an oil field and of deep regrets she had experienced time and time again for what she had and had not done toward him and then she said that she'd give anything if she could go back and be kinder and more considerate but of course that was impossible. She then went on to say,

"We've got to do for people what we can when we can because later on we don't want to have regrets for the way we treated them."

You know, that great principle has such tremendous application for our lives, not only in our families, but also in every area of life. A writer of a Reader's Digest article a few years ago told of an antique salesman who had made a wonderful impression on her family, so much so that they once remarked: "We should tell him how much we appreciate him." They agreed to do so when he came by for his next call. But when the time came, his daughter came instead. They asked about her father and she replied, "Oh, didn't you know? He died last month." Then when they mentioned how much they had appreciated him, the daughter said, it would have been wonderful if he could have known that. You see, he was the kind of a man who had great need of appreciation and reassurance." Then, the writer went on to say how much her family regretted not having taken time to express their appreciation.

The challenge is to live "that there be no regrets later." Congregation, let's respect and cooperate with the elders, that there be no regrets later. Everyone, let's respect and love the Lord and do his will, that there be no regrets later. One day it will be too late to do a lot of things that it's not too late to do now!

We can't turn back the clock, but we can use the time as it comes, to obey the Lord, to love and serve each other, and to so live that there be no regrets.

- Joe Goodspeed

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- > "The reward for honest labor is always greater than the wages received!"
 - > "Whatsoever we ask of God, let us be willing to work for it!"
 - > "You will keep on getting what you always got if you keep on doing what you've always done!"
 - > "Spending more on the material will not enrich us; spending ourselves on the spiritual will!"
 - > "I don't know how much wood a woodchuck can chuck, but I do know more Christians need to chuck their crosses over their shoulders and follow Jesus!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Tell Me About Your God!"* (Text: Psalm 33:1-9, 20-22); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*