

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Family should be basic institution in society

The family has always been the basis of society. Satan always attacks the home and the family. For instance, the drug problem goes far deeper than drugs - it is failure in the family. Until the family issue is corrected, the drug problem will exist. Violence in school and anarchy on the streets only express failures down at the house!

The family is still the first "**school.**" Parents cannot turn educational responsibilities over to the public schools. Besides, it is too late! Kids don't go to public schools until they are six years old. The preschool training has already formulated them! From birth, a child is taught by the family - good or bad! The Bible, without apology, talks to fathers concerning their children. Parents and the home must be as they should.

The family is the first "**hospital.**" Hurt children want "Mommy to kiss their hurt toe." Refuge, healing, and helping belong in the home. Relationships can only be learned in the home. This is where we learn "we be brethren." We are brothers, sisters. We have a name, a home, a heritage. We must stick together.

The family is the first "**government.**" The game of life must be played by the rules (Gal. 6:7). Only in the home can one learn authority, obedience, cooperation. Only in the home can one learn the real worth of tradition. One who cannot obey his parents certainly will not obey the teachers or the elders!

The family is the first "**church.**" Moses told parents to teach their children (Deut. 6). Paul told fathers to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6). Parents - not the schools, the cities, the churches - are responsible for their children.

When the family stands, society stands. When the family fails, society falls. Bank on it!

- Charles Hodge

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# Motivation!

A fine woman pianist once gave a performance for a large group of women. Afterward, over coffee, a woman gushed to the virtuoso, "I'd give anything to play as you do." "Oh no, you wouldn't," said the pianist as she took a sip of her coffee and fixed the red-faced, slightly perspiring matron with a cold gaze. A hush fell over the group, coffee cups stopped on their ways to and from saucers, and the perspiring matron squirmed in sudden embarrassment. Looking about her, she repeated, but in a softer voice, her original statement, "I would too, give anything to play the piano as you do." The female virtuoso continued to sip her coffee and shake her head. "No, you wouldn't," she repeated. "If you would, you would play as well as I do, possibly better. You'd give anything to play as well as I do except the one thing it takes ... time. You wouldn't sit and practice, hour after hour, day after day, year after year. Then she flashed a warm smile, "Please understand," she said "I'm not criticizing. I'm just telling you that when you say you'd give anything to play as well as I do, you really don't mean it. You really don't mean it at all." (*This Is Earl Nightengale*, by Earl Nightengale, 319).

I am certain that many of you have said, "I wish I could ... " when referring to memorizing scripture, remembering names, singing, teaching a Bible class, etc. I have been guilty of saying the same thing. The painful truth about the reason we so often fail in these areas is a lack of motivation and commitment to the task. Most of the time our fleeting remark is, "I can't!" Sometimes we don't even try beforehand.

On one occasion Jesus stated, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). Let's all try to remember those words the next time we start to say "I wish I could ..." or "I can't!" We can do a great deal more than we think. A positive attitude goes a long way when we let go of our fears and inhibitions and let God be our motivator!

- Len O'Bryant

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## Unity And Human Reason

My attention has been called to an article in Firm Foundation (g-12-78) entitled, "Thus Concludeth The Brotherhood." The writer wisely says, "We can bind nothing upon anyone. God can bind everything he and his inspired representatives said and did upon whomever he wishes... Unity must begin where inspiration begins and end where inspiration ends." "'Thus concludeth the whole preacherhood' is not now, nor will it ever be, in the same league with 'Thus saith the Lord.'" These are noble thoughts and worthy of all acceptance.

But the chief thrust of the article is thus expressed: "The axiom is simple: Christian doctrines which take a human mind to produce are not 'solely' the result of inspiration." Or, as put elsewhere, "There are at least three categories of religious truth. There is God's word, which is absolute truth; there are opinions about God's word, some of which will prove to be true; and there are convictions drawn from God's word, again only some of which will prove to be true. Now upon which of these can we unite? Obviously, only on the first. There is only one absolute in Christianity and that is the truth as delivered by the Spirit, unmarred by human thinking. This is limited to all things recorded from Genesis to Revelation."

I asked Guthrie Dean to read and comment on the F.F. article, and got the following (which must be right, for I had thought the same thing): "1. Bible statements are pure truth. 2. These truths must pass through human minds to become operative in the Christian's life. 3. But in passing through the human mind this message becomes a 'concluded conviction'. 4. Concluded convictions cannot be made a test of fellowship. THEREFORE, no Bible truth can be made a test of fellowship." The axiom is too simple!

The F.F. writer seems sincerely to seek a solution to division, and we applaud his distinction between God's word and "brotherhood conclusions." But this only means we must continue to seek truth at its source, looking to God's word rather than to "the way we do it" or "teach it." To rule out human thinking is to cut man off from God's message altogether — unless the writer is headed for the "spiritual discernment" routine. The Bible can be read and understood (Eph. 3:4; 5:17) by human minds. The message God gave is suited to the man God made. When false conclusions are drawn, and they will be, it is evidence of faulty study: prejudiced, incomplete, or fallacious. It emphasizes the need for continued study, with attention focused upon the Bible rather than upon our previous conclusions.

The writer repeatedly reminds us that "we have, from time to time, altered some of our 'absolute' convictions." If so, we did it by thinking; and if we revised our conclusions due to reliance upon God's word that is exactly as it should be. Our "endeavoring" or "giving diligence" to keep the unity of the spirit (Eph. 4:3) is expressed by the same Greek word as "study" to present thyself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15). The end is contingent upon human effort; attainable through Christ to the faithful.

It is not our intention to be hypercritical (the F.F. article is a thought-provoker), but this and many other common concepts of unity and how to achieve it need reexamination. Maturity in unity, as in all other Christian endeavors, is not perfection in the absolute. Christ's desire and prayer that we be one "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee;" is no different than "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16), or, "Be ye merciful, even as your

Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). None of these ideals will be achieved absolutely in this life. But misconceptions regarding human perfection are greatly overshadowed by fallacious alternatives.

Substituting "brotherhood conclusions" for the perfect inspired word is one error. Richardson wrote (*Memoirs of A. Campbell*): "A sect is characterized by a marked stagnation of religious thought. The theological system of each party surrounds it with fixed boundaries which afford no outlet to free investigation." When we think we have everything worked out, and our conclusions are equivalent to "truth," we are truly a sect.

Another equally erroneous concept, and perhaps more deceptive, for its followers think they are promoting God-approved love and unity, is sometimes called "unity in diversity." We are reminded of human imperfection, and told that since God knows we cannot be absolutely one, we must fellowship (have sharing relationship, support and encourage) that which we believe to be error. Proponents even cite Rom. 14, although that passage denounces any who "condemneth himself in that which he alloweth" (14:22-23). Romans 14 urges patience with one whose knowledge is weak (1 Cor. 8:7-f), but insists each must do what he does because he fully believes God wants him to so act (vs. 5-8,12). Being considerate of a weak brother does not mean refrain from teaching him, or finance and encourage his error.

The inspired will of God is presented to the human mind with clear indication that man is capable of understanding it (Jn. 20:31; Lu. 1:3-4; 2 Pet. 1:15; 3:1-2). But we must be aware of our imperfections and ever "search the Scriptures" and "prove all things." While it is true that no man knows all truth, it is equally true that all truth is available, and no man is acceptable before God who is satisfied with his level of learning, and no longer tries to learn all that God has said. "Unity of the spirit" is achieved in the common endeavor, not in some sectarian idea of right.

Brethren can never be one until they communicate with one-another in a common search for truth. We must desire to be one (not satisfied with "our church" party). We must realize that Christian perfection is found in an attitude — the "follow-after, reaching-forth, press-toward-the-mark" mind that Paul had (Phil. 3:12-15). Some will be willing to study with you who are not true brethren; but genuine brethren are happy to learn and share their knowledge of God's word. We are ONE at it's best when we stand mutually humble before the throne of God, genuinely trying to serve Him. Party pride (John 12:42-43) is Satan's most powerful tool against Bible unity.

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, April, 1979

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- > "Go boldly forward as far as you can see; when you get there you will be able to see farther!"
  - > "Fortunate is the man who is too busy to tell how busy he is!"
  - > "Repentance, to be of any avail, must work a change of heart and conduct!"
  - > "The highest reward one can get for good work is the ability to do even better work!"
  - > "Success has three unfailing foundation stones: preparation, persistence, perspiration!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Is Your Compassion Showing?"* (Text: Matt. 26:6-13); Sunday evening: *"For Those Who Thirst!"* (John 7:37-44).