

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **Real Giving**

We do not completely partake of divine nature until we learn to give. The history of God's dealings with mankind may be summarized in the two words "God gave." God gave a promise of redemption in the very shadow of the first transgression. He gave to Abraham a seed to keep alive his promise that one of his seed would bless all kindreds of the earth. He gave to Israel a land for their inheritance. He gave them fruitful seasons and victory over their enemies. He gave them judges to lead in righteousness, and prophets to make known his will.

The greatest gift of all was the sending of Jesus, to seek and save the lost. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son ... " (John 3:16). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). When Jesus ascended to his Father, he gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles to lead them into all truth. On the day of Pentecost, they "spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance" (John 16:13; Acts 2:4). We are greatly blessed in that God, through this arrangements, gave us the terms of pardon. He gave the believer power to become a son of God (John 1:12). God gave Christ to be "head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22-23). All authority "in heaven and on earth" has been given to Christ (Matt. 28:18).

Such divine giving calls for response on the part of man. While salvation is the gift of God, it must be accepted and received on the terms specified by the Lord. The secret of acceptable giving is self-denial. Jesus denied himself to become man. He did not grasp, or cling to, his equality with The Father, but willingly emptied himself (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus also taught that for one to be his disciple, he must deny himself and take up his cross. He must give up self. The Christian is never done with giving while he lives.

The Macedonians were commended because they "first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). One who has given himself to the Lord will have no problem determining the giving of his time, his talent and his resources in the service of his God. The early church gave that her needy might be supplied and that the gospel might be preached (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16). In describing the final judgement, Jesus said he would say to some "I was hungry and ye gave me meat, thirsty and ye gave me drink." To others

he would say "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink" (Matt. 25:35, 42).

What about you? Have you really given yourself in response to all that God has given in your interest?

- Connie W. Adams

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## Church Casual

Recently, I read an article in the Birmingham News entitled "More Birmingham-area congregations going casual on Sundays." The article described how area churches have declined in membership over the years and are trying "new techniques to encourage membership." One of those new techniques is a "come as you are, come casual" approach.

Many churches have adopted this approach as their slogans testify: "Relaxed and friendly atmosphere," "We're the church for those who don't do church so wear comfortable clothes and enjoy a no pressure environment." "We want you to have a great time with your family" "Church-casual" "Even Jesus wore sandals."

In Thicket Magazine we read, "One congregation that certainly exemplifies the current trend is Church of the Highlands, a non-denominational church {that} features energetic music, a heavy use of technology, a cafe that serves Starbucks coffee, and a casual, come-as-you-are attitude. Founding pastor Christ Hodges encourages worshippers to bring their mocha Frappuccino into the service if it makes them more comfortable. 'We're trying to make church fun and for people to want to be there ...'" - Thicket Magazine, "Podcasts and Praise Songs"

This is the thinking of many churches today: "We're the church for people who don't want to do church, we don't want you to have to dress up or anything like that, and you just come as you are!"

What exactly does church-casual mean? How can anything be casual that involves the worship of Almighty God? In the book of Exodus, Moses is told to get the people ready, to be prepared. "The Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day." (Exodus 19:10-11) Moses introduced an entirely different approach to worship than "come as you are," so prevalent in our society today. Moses told Israel to "Consecrate yourself, make preparation." The children of Israel were to put limits on their behavior, they had to change

their dress, they had to do some preparation if they were going to come in before Almighty God and worship Him.

Of course we are not under the Old Testament regulations today, but the principle still applies. Men don't just go to worship God on their own terms. We are to worship God on God's terms!

Nadab and Abhiu learned that one's attitude and demeanor in worship is of critical importance (Lev. 10:1, 2). We need to ask ourselves: Am I casual in my attitude towards worship? Do I think somehow that I can worship God however I may please to do so? Can I worship God whenever I please? Doing whatever I please? Or is worship to be a meeting of the heart and the soul of the very Creator, something of such significance and importance that I will make preparation to offer my worship to Him?

How much preparation do we make towards our worship of God? How often do we allow life to interfere with proper worship? Sometimes we're so busy in the hurry and scurry of everything we don't prepare ourselves properly to worship. How often on Saturday night we don't get our clothes ready, don't find our Bibles, don't reflect on what we are going to engage in the next day? Do we stay up too late watching the late movie? Sunday morning comes and we're a blizzard of activity, "Where's my Bible? Where's my lesson book? Where's my tie? I can't find my shoes." We come flying in 3 minutes late and our thoughts are everywhere but where they need to be! Our worship is unacceptable because we have not taken our obligation to worship God seriously.

Is all the preparation we do prior to the Lord's Supper the song we sing before the communion? Is that it? Is that all we need to do to get our minds ready? Are we that casual in partaking of the emblems? We need to think more seriously about what it means to worship our God.

Some will mistakenly believe that this is about clothing and dress. That is not our stated purpose. We are not trying to impose some sort of artificial dress code here. Instead, we're talking about an attitude of heart. An attitude that says worship matters, the very opposite of casual, that this is so important I'll properly prepare myself to do it.

That casual mindset will not work in worship. God is to be revered and His worshippers are to approach Him with the proper demeanor. That is the very opposite of that, "It's no big deal, it's all casual" mentality.

In Psalm 95:6, the Psalmist says, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" I love that. That talks about getting serious with the Lord. Do you remember that old hymn, "Take Time To Be Holy?" It takes time to prepare ourselves

to be holy and to make the right decisions about worship even on Saturday night so that our spirit will be rested, and calm, and ready on the Lord's Day.

Real worship begins with an understanding that we are coming into the presence of God, and we want to make the right preparations so we can do that in the very best way possible. *"Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. Abiding in Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be; They friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see."*

- Aaron C. Andrews, via The Gospel Power, May, 2014

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## **"Is It Peace, Jehu?"**

Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel, was king over Israel. The idolatrous worship of Baal filled the land. God had anointed Jehu to be king and to destroy the house of Ahab and the worship of Baal. He was approaching Jezreel when Joram came out to him and asked: "Is it peace, Jehu?" Jehu replied, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" (2 Kings 9:22.)

There could be no peace while those conditions continued; so Jehu destroyed Joram, the house of Ahab and the Worshipers of Baal out of the land. And to him the Lord said: ". . . thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes ... " (2 Kings 10:30.) Today, our land is filled with religious attitudes, bodies, and practices contrary to the religion of Christ. Roman Catholicism, Protestant Denominationalism and infidelity is on every hand. Even in the church modernism, institutionalism and worldliness are taking the day. "Is it peace?" "What peace, while God's will, authority and grace are being trodden under foot and the souls of humanity are being destroyed by Baal's influences?" We must not shed blood to destroy these influences and we must not destroy peace where it can exist in righteousness, but there is no peace between God and Satan, truth and error, nor divine and human religions. We must be "set for the defense of the gospel." Then, "Is it peace?" No! Not unless we "bow our knees to Baal."

- L. R. Hester

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## **Don't Wait Too Long**

It was once said that figures don't lie, but that liars do figure. I am giving these figures with the hope that a liar didn't figure them:

"It is estimated that at age 25, one in five thousand becomes a Christian. At 35, one in twenty-five thousand; at 50, one in 150,000. At 75, an unconverted person is almost

certainly doomed eternally. 78 % of all conversions occur between the ages of 12 and 16."

Parents, if these figures don't shake you up just a little bit, then you must have a hardened heart. You have been given the great task of bringing up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). They need it - and you need it!

- Bob Buchanon

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- "It isn't the load that weighs us down - it's the way we carry it!"
  - "To make a long story short, there's nothing like having the boss walk in!"
  - "If folks did not carry gossip, it would not go so far!"
  - "Bad men excuse their faults; good men abandon them!"
  - "As a man grows older and wiser, he talks less and says more!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"A Successful Building Project!"* (Text: Acts 20:17-27); Sunday evening: *"Of Hirelings And Shepherds!"* (John 10:1-21).