

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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UPS AND DOWNS

Perhaps the most abused word to come out of the 60's besides LOVE was the word PEACE. There was a gesture for it, a sign for it, and it replaced the term GOOD-BYE for millions of people.

Another 60's phrase was "Stop the world, I want to get off!" Indeed, another 60's phrase encouraged people to do just that: "Tune in, turn on, and dropout." Has the attitude of escapism become non-existent today? There are millions of people who dread getting up in the morning, who don't know if or how they are going to survive the day. I am not speaking of the clinically depressed, but of people who let life and its daily events get the upper hand and thus allow themselves to follow paths of quiet desperation.

One summer in the early 1930's my mom's family went to an amusement park in Canton, Ohio, called Myers Lake. Erected well before Cedar Point, King's Island, and Six Flags, my mother and her six siblings looked so forward to the one day a year when her parents would cram them into their Stutz-Bearcat and traverse the 45 miles just in time to meet their Canton cousins at the entry gate at 10:00 opening time.

By the virtue of reaching her 10th birthday in January, Mom was adamant she was ready to tackle the biggest ride offered—the Roller Coaster. She had already mastered the Octopus, the Tilt-a-Whirl, and Laugh in the Dark. "Are you sure, Mavourneen?" inquired my grandfather. But his headstrong fourth born had her mind made up.

After the first hill and subsequent dip, mom turned to grandpa: "If you don't stop this thing now, I'll drop my left shoe over the side!" He told her, "Honey, they won't stop the ride if you kick both your shoes overboard! Now, hang on!"

Like Mavourneen, we are on the ride for the duration of our lives. As Christians, there is no "getting off" or "dropping out." We have all had days when everything "goes wrong."

But we have the Bible and prayer for our aids as well as our Christian brothers and sisters. Think of the lyric, “blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!” A rapturous foretaste, indeed.

And there is no invisible scale somewhere that decides you have had enough of a good time to put some nastiness in your life to balance out the yin and the yang. The Bible doesn't hold a windfall or disaster in your future to keep your scales balanced. The Bible tells us the rain falls on the good and bad alike (Matt. 5:45).

Where is the sense in looking for reasons behind what happens in life? That way madness lies. When poor Aunt Martha tripped and fell over the edge of the Grand Canyon, aliens didn't have invisible wires installed to harvest humans. Life is life in all its variegated manifestations. Please remember God is in charge. We can't pray: “Thy will be done” if we don't mean it. When Jesus gave the model prayer it wasn't, “... thy will be done as long as it doesn't conflict with my desires.”

How terrible that people choose palm readers and astrology, looking to understand what to avoid in their lives or to plan a daily game plan of survival. For Christians, when we are troubled about ourselves, our family, our nation, our species, we can allow the balm of these words to steal over our souls: “Peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (Jn. 14:27)

We are all on the roller-coast of life. God provides backbones of steel through Jesus Christ, His son. Take advantage of His bounty.

- Larry Purkey

THE RELUCTANT DISCIPLE

The nature of “church” combined with the religious freedoms and sense of entitlement bestowed in our culture has led to a rise in what we might call “the reluctant disciple.” Where Jesus calls us to eagerly, passionately and zealously follow Him, this world naturally discourages such radical discipleship. Where discipleship demands a whole-hearted, absolute and determined commitment, this world encourages a much softer and looser approach to one's faith. Thus, the rise of the reluctant disciple.

A reluctant disciple is only willing to go so far in his service to God. There are things the Lord asks that are just too much. Modern ideas of what makes one a “Christian” allow the title to be worn despite an unwillingness to serve the Lord as He commands, expects and

deserves. “Suffer for His name’s sake”—not a chance. “Give all that I have”—no way. “Lay down my life”—absolutely not. “Love my enemies”—who does this?

It’s not just the exceptional things, but the more daily things Jesus asks that overwhelm the reluctant disciple. Assembling more than once each week is just too tasking. Opening my home for hospitality, study and fellowship is not my cup of tea. Talking to others about my faith, the gospel and about Jesus Christ is a little too open for my taste. Confessing sins makes me feel way too vulnerable. Laying by in store is just too demanding. There always seems to be a line that the reluctant disciple is unwilling and hesitant to cross.

Christianity is not for the weak, hesitant and unwilling. It requires total commitment. It came at an incredible price and there is a cost that must be counted and paid (Luke 14:25-33). If we are only willing to follow Jesus when it is easy and convenient, then we have no idea what it means to be a His disciple. The Suffering Savior bore so much to bear our sins on that great cross of shame. How is it that we believe we can follow Jesus at a distance and still please a Heavenly Father who exacted so much from a Beloved Son to save our souls?

- Jonathan Perz

THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A PARENT

Perhaps there is no greater responsibility than being a parent. It is rewarding bewildering, challenging, frustrating, enjoyable, loving and all over the map emotionally.

Our children are free moral agents, just like their parents. God took the risk on us when He gave man the privilege to choose for himself. But, He loved us enough to create us and give us that privilege. Why do parents have children? Because of the very same reason God created man. We want them to love them and share our lives with them.

A few things I reflect on that seem essential for children to learn. One is to do right because it is right (Eph. 6:1). No excuses, no qualifications, no exception. We must teach them to do right! Children need to learn that when we give them our word they can trust us to keep it. Then, they will learn the

value of keeping their word when it is given. Of course, they will not learn that by our simply saying it. They need to see their parents doing it.

Next, we must teach them the value of honor and that honor has no price. It is not for sale. Honor looks at self-respect. An esteem that demands appropriate conduct to match that sense of self. Honor is a sense of what is decent and what is good. They need to learn to honor God because He is God. They need to learn to honor others and take the lead in giving them that honor (Rom. 12:10). Of course, they will learn that by watching their parents.

Further, we need to teach them to feel. They need to learn to feel the hurt and joy of others. People with no feelings have a marked history with sad atrocities against humanity. There is little value in having skin so thick we cannot feel. If we don't listen when our children cry we shouldn't expect them to listen when we cry. To risk feeling is to expose our humanity. It reveals who we really are, our true self. They need to feel what it means to be grieved by injustice and a wrong. Of course, they will learn that by watching their parents.

The task is formidable. The lessons endless. Parenting never ends. There is no single thing in life more rewarding than being a parent. Correspondingly, there is no single heartache more piercing than parenting when a child walks away from the Lord.

God took the risk on man. We take the risk with our children.

- Rickie Jenkins

A Little Dating Advice for Singles

Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish on him. (2 Samuel 14:25)

How much stock do you put into appearance?

To some, it's the first (and only) thing they see, especially when looking for a mate. For them, Absalom would stand out as a good catch. His was wealthy, powerful, good looking, and apparently a smooth talker (see 15:1-6).

But you wouldn't want to date a man like Absalom. He was a rebellious, vengeful, murderous, lying, manipulating, prideful, power hungry young man whose lack of character ultimately led to his own premature death.

So to all the singles out there looking for a husband or wife, I encourage you to be discriminating and careful about who you date. Don't be deceived by externals. A good marriage is built on common faith in God and solid character. A marriage built on appearance alone is doomed to fail.

Father, please give wisdom and discernment to our singles who are looking for a mate!

- David Maxson

> "He who has the most trouble has usually been busy making it!"

> "No person is as bad as he is said to be, nor half as good as he could be!"

> "Criticism is a thing that may be avoided by saying nothing, doing nothing and being nothing!"

> "Give not from the top of your pocketbook, but from the bottom of your heart!"

> "You may tie your shoestrings in the morning, but the undertaker may untie them before night!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*When Tragedy Strikes!*" (Luke 13:4-5);
Sunday evening: *Calvinism* (Lesson 13, pp. 74-76, sections I. – III.).