

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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January 27, 2019

Volume 39, # 05

HOW MAN COMES TO JESUS

As Jesus taught the multitude concerning the fact that he was the one sent into the world to give life to man, he emphasized the need of man coming to him. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

But, how does one come to Jesus? If we were to ask the religious teachers of our day, we would receive a number of answers. Some would tell us that man must wait until the Holy Spirit operates in some mysterious way to bring one to Christ. Others would say that those who come to Christ have been predestined by God before the beginning of the world. According to this theory, if one is not of the number selected by God to receive eternal life, there is no way for him to come to Jesus. If one is of the predetermined number, there is nothing which can keep him from being drawn to the Lord; He will be drawn with an irresistible power.

Since Jesus introduced the subject, let us consider what he has to say about how one comes to him. In John 6:44-45, Jesus stated, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh to me." One who comes to Jesus must be drawn by the Father. But according to verse 45, this is accomplished as one hears and learns of the Father. Man is an intelligent being. He has the ability to understand and then make a decision based upon that understanding. The word of God, the gospel, is directed to the intelligence of man in order to teach him of the will of the Father.

The book of Acts records the account of the gospel being preached to men by the apostles of the Lord. In every case, when men received the message of the inspired apostles they turned to the Lord. This is the means by which men were taught by the Father in the first century. There is no example of one being taught by the Father, or of one coming to the Lord through any other means.

The principle of which Jesus speaks is recognized in other areas of life. For example, one is drawn to a certain profession as a result of learning the benefits of the profession, its requirements, etc. When one learns of the benefits available from the Father, his desire for those benefits will cause him to comply with the conditions of receiving those benefits.

It is through the gospel that men come to know the great benefits available through Jesus Christ. The gospel declares the love of God which is to motivate man to love Him (1 John 4:19). It tells of the death of Christ on the cross for the sins of man. The story of this event is to draw man to the Lord. (John 12:32-33).

The gospel is not only designed to cause man to want to be reconciled to God, but it also reveals how man can be reconciled. When man is willing to comply with the requirements set forth in the gospel, then, and only then, can he be drawn to the Lord by the Father.

- Bennie Johns

Re: Older Couples "Living Together"

On our Q&A radio broadcast the following question was phoned in: What if an older couple, a man and a woman, each of whose spouse has died, lives together but does not get married, so as not to disrupt their Social Security checks - isn't marriage just a piece of paper?

Our answer must begin with the premise that marriage is not some idea that we human beings originated, God is the author of marriage (Gen. 2). It is His will that must govern and regulate it. It is His word by which we will be judged.

Is it true that marriage is just a piece of paper, and that there is no difference between people who "live together" (provided they are "committed" to each other), and those who are married? What constitutes marriage? Marriage certainly involves intention, an agreement to live together, but it is more than intention.

Marriage is referred to in scripture as a covenant. For example, the adulterous woman is described as one who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God (Prov. 2:17). Marriage is more than a piece of paper. God rebuked the priests of Malachi's day because of their treatment of their wives with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant (Mal. 2:14).

Marriage also involves compliance with the laws of the land (Rom. 13:1-7).

Whatever the law requires for marriage, God requires for marriage, as long as God's law is not violated (Acts 5:29).

Simply living together does not constitute a marriage. The woman of Samaria had been married five times and then was living with a man to whom she was not married, Jesus said, "he whom thou hast now is not thy husband (John 4:16-18).

The marriage feast that Jesus attended (John 2) and spoke of in parables (Matt. 25:1-13) illustrates that the point at which people are married is not left to their own whims or a mental state; rather it was when certain requirements were met. Passages such as Heb. 13:4 apply whether a couple is young, middle aged, or old -- Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled: but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Consider 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites ... will inherit the kingdom of God (Cf. Gal. 5:19-21). The practice of cohabiting outside of marriage is often thought to be committed primarily by young people. After this question was phoned in, some pointed out to me that they knew several older couples who were involved in this trend. "Living together" is not just a young people's sin.

One whose spouse has died is free to marry another (Rom. 7:2-3), not to cohabit with another. One may object, "But it's not fair for their income to be reduced." It could also be said that the tax structure for working married couples is unfair. That does not argue for a couple living together outside marriage; that would not make their unlawful co-habitation right. Sometimes it costs to do what is right. One who would be pleasing to God is willing to pay that cost.

- Leon Mauldin

“Blood is Thicker than Water!”

This is very common saying that is used to mean something different from its original use. Long ago, the expression was, “The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.” Originally, this maxim meant that blood that was shed in battle (literal blood) bonds soldiers more strongly than simple genetics, or the family you were born into. The "water of the womb," or our family relationship, is not as strong as the "blood of the covenant." It is also possible that the “blood of the covenant” could be a reference to the old practice of cutting each other and mixing their blood together in some type of oath.

We do not mean this when we use the expression today. We commonly use it to suggest the strength of family ties, that there is no stronger friendship bond than your family allegiances. People who are related have stronger obligations to each other than to people outside the family. Family is more important than anything else. Typically, it is used as a means to shame family members who side with friends over their family members, parents or siblings. We use the term "blood" in the same sense as "blood relations," or people in our immediate family. But if "blood" is referring to blood relations, then what is referenced by the word "water?" Only, "non-family."

I have coined my own alteration of the proverb: "Blood is thicker than *baptismal* water." By "blood," I mean "blood relations." By "baptismal water" I mean the spiritual family of believers, disciples of Christ, my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Unfortunately, what I have in mind, based upon what I have observed through the years, is a very sad occurrence.

I have personally witnessed several cases of "blood kin" blindly defending Christians who have sinned, not because they have behaved exactly as Christ commanded them to, but for no better reason than they are family members. I have been further appalled to see this behavior in more responsible positions in the church: elders defending their sinning children, preachers defending their rebellious relatives, and deacons defending their stubborn kin. This behavior flies in the face of "you who are spiritual" seeking to "restore" the brother who is "caught in any trespass ... in a spirit of gentleness" as the Lord commanded (Gal. 6:1). This behavior roadblocks the shepherding responsibilities of every godly elder in the body of Christ. These men are charged by the Lord to "keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." (Heb. 13:17). Their work for the Lord is sabotaged by people who defend the sins of their family members, thus showing that self has dethroned Christ in their hearts. The ties that bind are stronger when it comes to family than people outside the family (e.g., brethren in Christ).

To these guilty ones: would it make any difference to remind you of what the Lord said about it? "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." (Matt. 10:34-39).

If you, friend, fully intend to be a Christian, serving at the Lord's call, then you cannot

afford to defy your Master by defending and covering up the sins of your “Christian” relatives by your prideful and selfish “face-saving” tactics. You need to get on the “cross” trail and follow your Master: work diligently in love with your relatives to bring them to repentance. Stop working against those who so labor!

- Gary Smalley

- > “Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow's troubles!”
 - > “Worry over tomorrow pulls shadows over today's sunshine!”
 - > “Worry is like a rocking chair; it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere!”
 - > “Worry is a guest admitted which quickly turns to be master!”
 - > “Worry is an indication that we think *God* cannot look after us!”
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*The Dangers of Violence!*” (Text: Gen. 6:11-13); Sunday evening: “*Betrayal in a Garden!*” (John 18:1-11).