

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Can Churches Heal America?

A few years ago the cover to a 1996 edition of U.S. News caught my attention. It asked, "Can Churches Cure America's Social Ills?" Hmm.

Now, as a Christian my chief allegiance is to God's holy nation of which I am a citizen (1 Pet. 2:9; Phil. 3:20); but since America is where I reside for now I want to see it do well for if it has peace, I have peace (Jer. 29:7).

As I pondered the question, "Can Churches Heal America?", I thought of some things churches are going to have to do if they hope to have an impact.

*Churches must call people back to the book (the Bible).* It's what America needs more than anything else. Just this morning, my "check engine" light came on. I didn't know what to do. Of course, I knew to check the engine, but where do I start? I immediately reached into the glove compartment for the owner's manual. It told me what I needed to know. Friend, that's what your Bible is. It's a manual from the Owner who made us all and knows what's best. No matter how broken down your life is the Bible can fix it. In it, we have all we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Why would so many people ignore a book that is so good for us? Too many people just don't want to be accountable to God. So, they reason Him away and deny the Bible as His word. Someone has said, "The atheist cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman." He doesn't want to. America is not the first nation to try to push God out. Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, took God's word, cut it up with a knife and threw it in the fire (Jer. 36:23). Perhaps he thought he had done away with God's word but he had not because He couldn't touch its Author. Try as we may to push God's word out of our lives, it lives and abides forever (1 Pet. 1:22-25). Like an anvil wears its hammers one by one, God's word has outlasted all its skeptics. Oh, how we need this book!! America's hope is to come back to the Bible.

*Churches must remember the mission of the church.* People long before us saw "going to church" very simply. God's word was highlighted above all. Some have even said that

when preachers spoke you could “feel the heat.” How do people see churches now? As people see so many denominations with recreation centers, cafeterias, gymnasiums and the like, are people impressed with the need for the spiritual over the physical? Jesus had to deal with that problem. People came in hoards wanting physical food. When He made it clear that His mission was to provide spiritual food, most of them walked away (John 6:26-27, 66-68). A few in the religious world have been willing to admit that without all the physical attractions their numbers would drastically fall off. Jesus didn’t worry about that. He sadly let them walk away. In fact, if you’ll notice, every time crowds began to build, Jesus’ teaching became even more challenging (Luke 14:25-25). He wanted those who wanted Him. That’s it. The mission of the church is to preach the truth, period (1 Tim. 3:15). Many years ago, a French statesman, Alexis De Toqueville (1805 – 1859) came to America trying to find the secret of its greatness. What he found is interesting. Listen to this!! *“I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers – and it was not there... in her fertile fields and boundless forests – and it was not there... in her rich mines and her vast world commerce – and it was not there...in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”* Local churches must remember their mission. Preaching is growing weaker in too many places. Preachers must call sin, sin (John 8:31). Faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Without God’s word, America will be faithless.

*Churches must encourage members to come home to family.* Too many homes hardly have anyone home. Dads must provide (1 Timothy 5:8) but they can be gone far too much in their pursuit of climbing the ladder of success. Moms need to focus their minds on being keepers at home (Titus 2:4-5). Even kids can be away from home too much. We must spend time together. I’ll never forget brother Connie Adams telling of a yard sale at his parent’s home. Reluctantly, they decided to sell the family dinner table he had sat around all of his growing up years. There were so many good memories. For most of the day, it had not sold. Inwardly, Connie was sort of glad. Then...a buyer came, loaded it up and drove away. Connie said as he saw it go away, he cried. I understand. How many families today would have such sentimental thoughts about their table? We just need to come home and build our homes on Christ (Matt. 7:24-27).

*Churches must teach members to deny worldliness in their lives* (Rom. 2:17-24; Mt. 5:13-16). If we, one-by-one, will let the Lord put our lives together, the world will fall right into place. If you want to heal America, start with you. May God bless the United States of America.

- Jeff May

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# How Are Men Drawn To Christ?

Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." (John 6:44-45). Who comes to Christ? The one whom the Father draws. How is he drawn? By being taught of God, hearing and learning. One who refuses to be taught, one who refuses to learn cannot come to God through Christ. No unwanted pressure or irresistible force is ever exerted upon man to improve his spiritual condition. God draws and allures man through instruction in His word. There is no mysterious process involved in one's conversion. It is simple.

Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." If you wish to come to Christ, you must do so through receiving the teaching of the gospel. It is the power of God to provide salvation to the one hearing and learning. This is how God draws and allures men into His salvation. Don't care about His salvation? You will not be drawn by His offer. Love truth? You will, with that honest and good heart (Luke 8:15), find the salvation He has for you.

Notice, that this teaching is an appeal to man's intellect. This is rational and intelligent thought. No appeal is made to man through his appetite, his desire to eat food. No appeal is made to man through the avenue of entertainment, comedy shows, games, sporting events, music concerts, "karate for Christ," or any such gimmicks which appeal to the flesh. The gospel is a spiritual message which draws the heart of a man, not his stomach.

When so-called religious groups offer these kinds of carnal appeals in order to draw followers, yes they will certainly come, but for what purpose, to what end. These are drawn for the wrong reason. And as the old saying goes, "If you 'hot dog' them in, someone else will 'hamburger' them out." People will be driven by satisfaction of their carnal desires and appetites, not by the desire to live for Christ.

Paul wrote, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." (Philippians 3:18-19). What draws you?

- Gary Smalley

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## "Legalism" or Obedience - Which?

Now to insist on obedience to these commandments is legalism. Against it, of late, not a little has been said, and nothing wisely. The term legalism I do not like. It is an offensive term, with a bad sense, as popularly used, and should therefore, not be employed. Obedience to the commands of Christ is its exact equivalent, and should always be used in its stead. But few men, however, could be found bold enough to speak against obeying the commandments of Christ. The result here would be too glaring. None could fail to see it, and few would hesitate to pronounce it infidelity. A more insidious method is adopted. Legalism is the thing inveighed against. But the act amounts to the same. Legalism and obedience to Christ's commands are the same. Hence to speak against that is to speak against this. Nor have I any more respect for the man who masks the law of Christ, and then speaks against it, than I have for him who insults it directly.

- Moses E. Lard, 1890

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- > "King Saul thought Goliath was too big to fight; David thought he was too big to miss!"
  - > "Many who are well prepared for a "rainy day" are totally unprepared for eternity!"
  - > "Adverse criticism from a wise man is more to be desired than the enthusiastic approval of a fool!"
  - > "Place God at the head of your priority list!"
  - > "When the truth is in your way, you are on the wrong road!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Where Does Blame Belong?"* (Text: Gen. 3:8-13); Sunday evening: Class: Hebrews 12:1-13, page 130.