

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ

People have offered a variety of reasons for their religious connections. I am here presenting my reasons for being a member of the church of Christ; but, first, some negative thoughts:

1. *Not because of wealth.* The Roman Catholic Church is probably the wealthiest (in material worth) religious organization in the world. The Mormon Church ranks high in wealth among American churches. If I were interested in the material value of a religious body, I would not be a member of the church of Christ.

2. *Not because of popularity.* The Southern Baptist Denomination boasts the largest membership of any Protestant body in the United States. If I wanted to be lined up with something big and popular, I would not be a member of the church of Christ.

3. *Not because of social prestige.* Most of the people in the church of Christ are just plain, ordinary folks socially.

4. *Not because of convenience.* At times it would be much more convenient to belong to some denominational organization. One could remain in good standing with little effort, and could be considerably more lax in his living without anyone attempting to correct him.

5. *Not because of family connection.* No one ever tried to get me into the church of Christ in order to maintain a family tradition. If he had done so, and I suppose such things may sometimes occur, he would have been using the wrong motive.

The Real Reason

The reason why I am a member of the church of Christ is quite simple. I heard the gospel, believed it, and was baptized for the remission of my sins. The people who taught me the gospel were content to stop where the gospel stops. They did not ask me to affiliate with

any denomination. I have never done so. Hence, I became a Christian and a Christian only, was added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47) and have since worked and worshipped with the people who did the same.

You might say that I am a member of the church of Christ for the same reason that I am a Christian; obedience to the gospel of Christ never makes one anything else. The same Lord who saves people (making them Christians) adds them to His church (the church He built).

If the Lord added to the Methodist church such as should be saved, I would be a Methodist. If He added to the Lutheran church such as should be saved, I would be a Lutheran. If He added to the Presbyterian church such as should be saved, I would be a Presbyterian. But since He adds to His own church, that is where he put me and that is where I am to stay.

- Irvin Himmel

What Is Happiness?

How many times have you reasoned, "I'd be happy, if only..."? And then the dream usually continues with "if only I had more money," or "if only I had married someone else," or "if only I had more friends, a better education, a better job, a bigger house, better health," etc. The breakthrough into happiness for many hinges upon those two words, "if only."

What Is Your Concept?

Most of those of the world have little trouble coming up with their own formula for happiness. It usually consists of wealth, status and power, and freedom from frustration of any kind. If this is similar to what you have conjured up in order to be happy, then you need to consider whether this is a worthwhile goal or not. The best way to find out is to consider others who have lived in such conditions. King Solomon is a prime example of one who "had everything." According to 2 Chronicles 6-9, Solomon had enough wealth to make some of our modern-day "tycoons" seem like paupers.

Consider Solomon's Wealth

On a yearly basis, Solomon received six-hundred sixty-six talents of gold (2 Chron. 6:13), "besides that which chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon" (2 Chron. 6:14). Six-hundred

sixty-six talents of gold would be about 960,000 ounces. Comparing that with today's standards (say at \$300 per ounce) it would amount to something like \$288,000,000.

There was no need for Solomon to purchase certain items. He made two hundred targets of beaten gold and three-hundred shields made of beaten gold (2 Chron. 9:15-16). His throne was made of ivory, overlaid with pure gold — “There was not the like made in any kingdom” (2 Chron. 9:17-19). All of the drinking vessels of King Solomon were made of gold, in fact, “none were of silver; it was not any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon” (2 Chron. 9:20).

In 2 Chronicles 9:21-22, we read of Solomon importing finery from all parts of the world. Then, those who visited him, seeking his wisdom, brought “vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year” (2 Chron. 9:23-24). When the Queen of Sheba came “to prove Solomon with hard questions,” she brought spices, gold in abundance, and precious stones (2 Chron. 9:1-2).

But wealth was not everything. The Bible says that Solomon “loved many strange women” (1 Kgs. 11:1). Of course, this is an understatement, for “he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines” (1 Kgs. 11:3). A total of a thousand women!

But Was Solomon Happy?

Being king, Solomon could do just about anything he desired, and that is precisely what he set out to do. He wrote about this in the book of Ecclesiastes. He experimented with almost everything under the sun, but this non-stop entertainment grew tiresome (Eccl. 2:1); he mentions drinking wine (Eccl. 2:3); he built elaborate houses, temples, vineyards, gardens, etc. (Eccl. 2). He stated, “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor” (Eccl. 2:9-10).

In consideration of the aforementioned, one would be almost certain that Solomon was a very happy man. But was Solomon genuinely happy? Unfortunately, Solomon was miserable. “Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 2:17).

Consider Paul

At this point another man comes to mind who, to some, would have had every right in the world to be miserable. This man is the apostle Paul. At times he had to go back to his old trade of tent making. He did much traveling under adverse conditions by foot or by ship. His life was one of constant danger. Paul catalogs many of his sufferings, perils and anxieties in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28.

Also, there was a great deal of worldly honor given up by Paul “for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:4-11). Then, on top of all that, Paul had what he referred to as a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7).

Yet Paul Was Happy

True abiding happiness is not derived from earthly wealth, position, sexual freedom, or unlimited power. Paul was a contented man. A “contented” man is a “happy” man! “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11). “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

Did Paul know something about happiness that Solomon didn't? No, Solomon knew the basic formula for happy living, but he ignored it and it literally ruined his life. As an old man, reflecting over the wasted years, he gave wise advice to the young: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw night, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1). Then his closing words, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). And these same principles, if you obey them, can make you happy, no matter what your situation in life may be. If you choose to ignore these principles, then the results will be otherwise.

Christians can be happy! Christians should always be happy! What an occasion for rejoicing a Christian has with all the joys and blessings that are ours as children of God. We enjoy all the spiritual blessings which are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). We enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding (Phil. 4:4-7). Happiness is obeying and faithfully serving God. If you have not yet obeyed the gospel of Christ, we encourage you to do so now.

- R.J. Evans, via Guardian of Truth, 10/20/88

Rejecting the Counsel of God

The Scriptures say, speaking of John's baptism, "The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30). If to fail to be baptized by John, as these people did, was to reject the counsel of God against themselves, what do you suppose it will be to reject the baptism of Jesus? The one was a servant, the other the Son. "If the word spoken by angels (messengers like John) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him?" (Heb. 2:3) In the estimation of the apostle it was a much more terrible thing to reject the teaching of Jesus than of the messengers that came before him.

- J.A. Harding

- > "Casting blame on others is often the sign of a guilty conscience!"
 - > "The father who does not teach his son his duties is equally guilty with the son who neglects them!"
 - > "If everyone who demanded their rights also observed the rights of others, the world would be a better place!"
 - > "Self-discipline is choosing between what you want now and what you want most!"
 - > "No matter what you've done for yourself or for humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Six Questions You Should Be Able to Answer About the Death of Jesus!"* (Text: Rom. 5:8-11); Sunday evening: *"As They Observe Your Good Deeds!"* (1 Pet. 2:12).