

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Read Your Policy

People often accuse insurance companies of not honoring their policies. Having spent a few years in that business I know the charge is seldom true. State and federal regulations force insurance companies to honor their policies. Insurers do exactly what they say in their policies; the problem is that most people have never read their copy. What keeps people from reading their policy?

Sometimes people trust their agent so they figure there is no reason to question his word. This is sad for there are a few "bad apples" in every business.

Sometimes people claim the policies are too difficult to understand. I believe most people who say this have never attempted to read their policy anyway.

I have also noticed that many people look at religion the same way they would a life insurance policy. They put blind trust in a smooth talking salesman (some preacher) and hope that he knows what he is doing. They never read their policy (the Bible) for they imagine that they couldn't understand it anyway. It is much easier to trust a priest or preacher than to read and study for themselves.

The Holy Spirit guided the apostles in the writing of the New Testament (John 16:13). Paul told the Ephesians that "when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). The Bible was written so a person with a limited education can read it without difficulty.

Yes, there are some things that require a good deal of study. Peter spoke of the epistles of Paul "in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16). Peter simply said some people will "twist" not only the difficult things, but also the "rest of the Scriptures."

When a man claims the Bible is too difficult to understand, he is impugning the character of God. Jesus told us we will be judged by His words (John 12:48). It is against every law of humanity to hold a person accountable for something they can't understand. But, there is a big difference between the words "can't" and "won't."

Jesus spoke of some in His day by quoting Isaiah 6:9, 10. "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them." (Matthew 13:14, 15).

Proverbs 23:23 tells us to "Buy the truth, and do not sell it." To those who do not have a "love of the truth," "God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

I have heard people speak of the Bible and say "it's a mystery to me." The word "mystery" can be used in two different ways. Sometimes it means something that is hidden and cannot be understood. Other times it refers to something we are ignorant of. For example, the workings of a diesel engine are a "mystery" to me. I believe I could understand that engine if I applied myself, but right now I am ignorant of it. If the Bible is a "mystery" to you, it is because you have not applied yourself.

The Bible can be understood. It is given to us in this life and will be opened before us at the judgement (Rev. 20:12). What you know about God's word, and what you do about it, will determine what He says to you in the final day.

Let us imitate the noble Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

- David Padfield

Freedom in Giving is Fraught with Danger

In the Old Testament the amount that Jews had to give is pretty definite. Some think they only gave a tenth. They did not "give" a tenth. They were taxed a tenth. They came more nearly giving 25% than 10%.

In the New Testament the Lord has left the amount to us—put us on our honor. "Give as prospered;" as we "purpose in our hearts," "cheerfully." Have you ever considered the

danger inherent in this freedom? If you have not, it is time you did. The very freedom which God has granted us in our giving (as “prospered” and as we “purpose in our hearts”) may be the means of causing us to lose our souls. Seldom have I met a member of the church who was not concerned with the “amount” he should give. And I have found that generally speaking, what he wants to know is how “little” can I give? What is the very least the Lord will accept? He wonders if a tenth, a tithe, will do. Either this fellow does not care or he has not yet learned that the very fact that God did not specify the amount we are to give is the means of testing us.

One fellow asked, “How is a man to treat his wife?” The answer came back, “Love her with all your heart and then just treat her any way you please.” Of course if he loves her with all his heart he would not mistreat her. And I might add that he wouldn’t spend much time wondering if she could make out with one dress and one pair of shoes. Not if he loved her. The Lord knew about this disposition in man before we found out about it. And the Lord knows that if we love Him, we will not have to be told exactly how much we must give. In leaving it up to us He makes it a test of our love for Him and for His church.

If “as he is prospered” means “how little” to you, you need to be converted to Christ-at least on this point. If “as he is prospered” means “how much can I spare and still meet my obligation to my family,” then you have found out why the Lord did not tell us how much to give. Giving is a grace, Paul said. And grace is something God does for us, not something we do for Him. God does not need your money. He does not need you. Then why did He tell us to give? He could have preached the gospel to every man on earth through the medium of angels if He had desired to do it that way. Where then did we get the idea that God needs our money? The only reason on earth that God requires us to give anything is for our benefit — to help us. What other motive could have prompted the Creator of the universe, including man, to ask for the use of our measly, soiled dollars. Ask yourself that question out loud sometime and then be honest with the answer.

- Luther Blackmon, via *Truth Magazine*, XXI: 41, pp. 653-654, 10/20/1977.

Do Miracles Occur Every Day?

What does the Bible teach regarding miracles? Is it true, as some claim, that miracles are happening every day?

In reality, even during Bible times, miracles did not occur "every day." Miraculous activities for the most part were confined to certain periods of Biblical history. These included the miracles of the creation week. Then when Israel was in Egyptian bondage, God sent the ten plagues, caused Israel to cross the Red Sea on dry land, fed them with manna, and

on occasion also miraculously gave them water. Later, the ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha were characterized by numerous miracles.

The next "cluster" of miracles was during the ministry of Christ, and finally, during the establishment and spread of the church (Acts). Obviously then, miracles were not "evenly distributed" over the centuries of Biblical history, but rather were used by God only at certain times, to meet unique needs, and to accomplish specific purposes.

Among the many miracles Jesus performed we read of His healing the man with an amputated ear by simply touching him (Luke 22:50-51). Honestly, do you see that every day, or any day? When there was a great tempest in the sea of Galilee, Jesus "rebuked the waves and the sea and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:23-26). On another occasion, on that same sea, Jesus came unto His disciples walking on the water (Matthew 14:26). Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish (Matthew 15:32-39). There are three recorded occasions where Jesus raised the dead. These include the only son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26) and Lazarus (John 11).

These are but a few, a very few of the miracles Jesus did. The purpose of Jesus' miracles is stated in John 20:30-31: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." That purpose has been accomplished.

Further, Mark gives us insight into the purpose of the miraculous when he writes, "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). Reference is made to the salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord, "and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will" (Hebrews 2:3,4).

The purpose of the miraculous then was to reveal and to confirm the word of God. There was a time limitation on the miraculous. Gifts such as tongues, prophecy, and knowledge (miraculous) would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) with the completion of the revelation. God's power has not ceased. His presence and glory are evident all around us. We are abundantly blessed by Him (Acts 14:17; James 1:17). He hears and answers prayer (James 5:16). When the revelation of truth was completed, and had been fully confirmed, the miraculous ceased, having accomplished its purpose.

- Leon Mauldin

- > "Man's way leads to a hopeless end. God's way leads to an endless hope!"
 - > "Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop!"
 - > "Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on the door forever!"
 - > "You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him!"
 - > "Jesus died for you. Will you live for Him?"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: Guest speaker: Elijah Pierce, "*Heaven: Worth the Suffering?*" (Text: Heb. 12:1-6); Sunday evening: "*Untimely Deaths in the Book of Acts!*" (Acts 1:15-20).