

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Home, For The Grown-Ups

God made man, and woman. That is just about as basic as a study can get. And the next most basic step is, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:21-25). Jesus adds, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). The home is the most basic element in society.

We do not refer to mere biological procreation. Artificial insemination, state supervised harems, or temporary relationships may suffice for this. But in a home, former ties and individual aspirations are second in importance to the preservation of this permanent unit. Its roles of trainer, protector and stabilizer far outweigh that of procreator. Women Libers, socialized governments and current morals may minimize its importance, but revelation and historical evidence cry out against their error.

The "first division" of the Ten Commandments has to do with God. He is ONE, SPIRIT, HOLY, and the God of DELIVERANCE. But the "second division" has to do with man, and begins with the fifth command: "Honor thy father and thy mother..." The sixth command protects LIFE, and the seventh protects the sanctity of the HOME: Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exod. 20:1). Further reference to the inviolable nature of the home is found in the last command: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, wife, etc." Paul pictures Christ's love for His people in terms of the home, not as a "party" loyalty (Eph. 5:23-f); for we are the "family" of God (3:14-f). Reader's Digest (March, 1978, p.111) quotes Michael Novak, Harper's Magazine, as saying, "The family is the critical center of social force. It is a seedbed of economic skills and attitudes toward work. It is a stronger agency of educational success than the school and a stronger teacher of the religious imagination than the church. Political and social planning in a wise social order begins with the axiom: "What strengthens the family strengthens society."

What Novak calls "religious imagination" I would call "faith;" but I would have to agree that the role of the home is greater in this field than is "the church" — for I assume he refers

to collective activity, in a "church building," under institutional guidance. Many people, including many brethren, have never learned that God's family (the "church") also acts distributively, as saints function in domestic, economic and civic affairs. It is absurd to think that Bible classes and an hour or so of formal "worship" can have a greater influence upon society than can a truly "Christian" home.

And I'm going to say this if it cancels half our readers. By "Christian home" I do NOT refer to one that simply transfers formal worship or "class" activities from the church building into "daily devotionals," puts "God Is Love" on the wall, and formally expresses "thanks" for the food. These worthwhile endeavors may even have an adverse effect upon our children unless they are coupled with a genuine atmosphere of fairness, understanding, love and faith in God.

The fundamental concept of "home" is expressed in the oft-neglected words of Jesus: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother..." He, and the woman, must "leave" their former domestic units to form a new one. This necessitates growing up, accepting responsibilities, being no longer dependent upon dad and mother. Our age has encouraged a "child forever" attitude, where each individual is to "do his thing," freely flit about in pursuit of individual satisfaction; and then, when things go wrong, run home to mother (or her substitute, socialized government) to cry about our "rights" being violated. "Johnny hit me," continues, as we blame others for what might never have happened if we had matured.

But it is also necessary that we "cleave" to our partner, becoming one. This takes the maturing process much further. The solitary individual of unmarried adulthood is superseded by one who no longer thinks of himself alone, but of "us;" not of "mine" but of "our" happiness and well-being. A child, in process of preservation and establishing identity, can't do this. Nor can a "child" of 20, 30, or 50 years. That is why some "people say of marriage that it is boring, when what they mean is that it terrifies them.... that it is deadening, when what they mean is that it drives us beyond adolescent fantasies and romantic dreams." (Novak; *ibid.*) Successful marriages, and homes, are for those capable of "leaving" and "cleaving" in order to form a new unit.

God's word teaches the proper relation of husband and wife, of parent and child, of youth and aged (Eph. 5: 22-f., Titus 2:1-f, etc.). So when the church in its collective function upholds the Bible, it encourages God approved homes. But a lack of understanding, or faith, in the spiritual and eternal goals of the church has perverted its emphasis. Many congregations have diverted their treasury and energy to social and domestic activities, adopting "home" functions. This has not improved the home, but offers a substitute for it. Homes do not spring from local church programs. It is the other way around. Firmly

established and successful local churches are most likely to come from homes that are firmly planted upon divine principles. Lacking this, neither church nor nation can endure.

There is nothing more realistic, no more honest facing of facts, than an open recognition of the place of marriage and the home. The so-called "liberated" individuals of our day close their eyes to man's basic nature, civilized history, and cries of pain from our current tortured society. There are none more "intellectually dishonest" than those who follow their child-like fantasies of self-indulgence. This is not "enlightenment" but willful ignorance of the long demonstrated facts of life.

The home is not Utopia, nor is it "found," floating on dream clouds. A good home is earned, with labor and self-sacrifice. In the process we learn that the striving is also beautiful; that giving is the truest form of getting. And in a good home, attained, we find more romance than we ever dreamed possible.

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, June, 1978

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## **It is Not Long before High Standards Deteriorate into Low Standards!**

Not many people know anything about a small subdivision of the Motion Picture Association of America known as the Production Code Administration (established in 1934). All filmmakers were required to submit their films for approval by this group before they could be released. They provided high moral standards for all films. After the retirement of the Administration's leader twenty years later, those who took over gradually weakened the code, and the decline led to a long battle to gradually chip away at the high standard, wherein decency was ultimately lost. The relentless pushing against boundaries eventually resulted in the demise of the Code. In 1968, a Rating System without standards replaced it. Consider the moral filth that comes out of Hollywood today!

This example parallels so many other events in the history of all men that untold volumes could be written cataloging them. It would not be difficult for a fifth-grader to illustrate points in time where moral standards were very high followed by a clear degradation over time: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to banishment because of sinful disobedience; Moses giving God's Law to the newly established covenant people who were led out of Egyptian bondage, only to rebel in the wilderness; the people rewarded with entrance into the Promised Land, only to experience disappointment and hardship because of unfaithfulness, disobedience and idolatry adopted from evil influence from heathen people; the early church under the direction of the apostles and the doctrine of Christ,

over time, let their guard down and were influenced by false teachers and people of the world, leading to such departures that would corrupt the organization of the New Testament church. This led to the formation of such things as the Roman Catholic Church as well as all the differing denominations that arose since that time; etc.; etc.; etc.

Sinful people get comfortable with evil, but the holy God never does! People begin to tolerate various evils that continue to fight for reception until they are accepted and embraced by more and more people. People get so accustomed to the influence of common evils that they no longer become offended by them.

The ungodliness that we classify as horrible, that is common place and acceptable all around us, that we find pleasurable, will be actually embraced by many of us in time. It does not bode well for the future of the church to see so-called Christians advocating such things as homosexual acts, abortion, adultery, "living together" arrangements, "one night" stands, white collar crime, recreational drug use, lascivious clothing and actions, and gambling. To many so-called Christians, who have allowed the world's influence to sway them, deceit, greed, jealousy, selfish ambition, slander, backbiting and hate do not have an evil enough connotation to be opposed and fought against.

But those who wrote the New Testament and understood the doctrine of Christ believed and taught differently: Deceiving a person insults God (Matt. 5:33-37); greed is idolatry, an actual act of worship to a false god (Col. 3:5); jealousy and selfish ambition are ungodly arrogance (Jas. 4:14); hate nourishes murder and destroys eternal life (1 John 3:15); fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, revilers (verbal abusers), and swindlers, will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 4:3-4, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." He also wrote of many who would not even want to hear the truth anymore (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

- Gary Smalley

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> "If you don't practice what you preach, it would be better for you to listen than to try to teach!"

> "Many a man aims at nothing - and hits it with remarkable precision!"

- > "To blame others for our shortcomings is to come short in overcoming them!"
  - > "When something is not right, it is wrong, and if it is wrong, no amount of wishing, praying or rationalizing will make it otherwise!"
  - > "There is no right way to do a wrong thing (Acts 5:1-11)!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** The sermon for Sunday morning is: "*A Commitment to Cleanness!*"  
(Text: Numbers 18 and 19).

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## ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

### **HEAR THE GOSPEL**

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

### **BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST**

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

### **REPENT OF PAST SINS**

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

### **CONFESS CHRIST**

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

### **BE BAPTIZED**

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

### **LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE**

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)