

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

841 Old Hickory Blvd.  
Jackson, TN 38305  
*oldhickorycofc.com*

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### **What Does God Want From Me?**

In his little book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcolm Muggeridge confided that his earliest memory was of walking down the road wearing someone else's hat and wondering who he was. In a real sense, the whole of humanity is walking down that same road, tormented by the same question. The question is built in; the answer is not.

In order to be whole we need to know who we are and what is expected of us, but only God knows that. Human beings, being creatures, cannot answer such questions. American poet Theodore Roethke expresses in haunting words this profound human yearning:

"I close my eyes to see,  
I bleed my bones their marrow to bestow  
Upon that God who knows what I would know."

Denying the existence of God not only solves nothing but reduces us to utter meaninglessness. Accepting by faith that God exists and wants us to seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), and that God has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2) opens up all kinds of blessed possibilities. It is wisdom to listen reverently and learn our duty well.

It is evident from the Bible's beginning that man, created in the image of God, was expected to honor his Creator with due reverence and worship Him in a divinely prescribed way. Cain could tell you about that (Genesis 4:3-5). Not everything goes. The foundation of worship had to be faith and the proper expression of faith was obedience (Hebrews 11:4). King Saul learned that lesson when he presumed to worship God in a way that violated His will. Samuel's rebuke tells the story: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." (1 Samuel 15:22).

The Old Testament prophets speak to our question often. When Israel sought to placate God with the multitude of their sacrifices, Micah told them straight out that God wanted more - "And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:6-8). To the hypocritical shallowness of their worship Isaiah and Amos and Jeremiah say the same (Isa. 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-24; Jeremiah 7:21-23). Jesus echoes the prophets by His frequent quoting of Hosea: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6; Matt. 9:13; 12:7). What Jesus and the prophets were saying was not that the sacrificial offerings of the law (Leviticus) were unnecessary but that God's desire was for far more than that.

What is the lesson here? Do not try to turn God away from getting what He wants from us by offering the part for the whole -- even actions that God has clearly required -- frequent attendance at church assemblies (Hebrews 10:24,25), regular eating of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 2:42), communal prayers and spiritual singing (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19,20) et. al. All these are to lead to a higher purpose -- our transformation into the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29). What God wants is you and me, that which is expressed in the first and greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:28-29). In short, God wants all there is of us, given gladly and freely in the same measure that He has poured Himself out on us.

- Paul Earnhart

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## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

For many years a merchant conscientiously used a measure which did not hold what the government standard required. He was honest and had no intention of defrauding those who purchased from him. He took the word of the man who sold him the measure and never thought of having it tested. When the merchant passed on, his son's attention was called to the fact that his father had unknowingly failed to give full measure to his customers. Could the son be honest and continue to use the measure?

Are your religious practices in harmony with the Bible which is our standard? When you study the Bible and find that some practice of your loved ones did not come up to the standard, would you be honest if you continue as they did? The Word of God declares, "To him, therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17).

- Unknown, via *"The Instructor"*, Vol. 4, No. 11, Nov., 1967, p. 4.

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# WORSHIP MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

1 Peter 2:5 - "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Bible students are keenly aware of the fact that when it comes to worship directed to the God of heaven, only what is directed by Him in His word is pleasingly acceptable. There are so many people in the world who attempt to worship God in ways that have been invented by man. That doesn't avail with any true value. John's gospel account quotes Christ: "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). It is by the grace of God that I have this teaching that guides me to worship God in the manner that pleases Him and brings glory to His name as well as blessings for the good of His children. What a wonderful privilege and blessing, unique to the Christian who yearns to please his Father.

1 John 3:1a – "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. ..."

When Christians offer worship to their God in heaven, they are actually obeying His command (John 4:23, "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."). When Christians worship their Father, such nourishment aids their spiritual growth (They "bear fruit with perseverance," Luke 8:15; cf. John 15:7-8; Rom. 12:1; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 3:18). When Christians worship it provides encouragement to others who are desiring to grow spiritually (Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Corinthians 10:33). Worship to God shows the world where the Christian's priorities are (Matthew 6:33).

Colossians 1:10-14 – "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

When Christians offer worship to their God in heaven, they are expressing their love for Him: "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5b; cf. 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9; James 2:5). Since we are admonished to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with

all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30), should we not avail ourselves of one of the opportunities that God has provided for this purpose?

God has provided the very avenue by which His children can praise His name. In the days of Solomon, at the temple of the Lord, "All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, saying, 'Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting.'" (2 Chronicles 7:3). The sentiment found in Exodus 15:2 could very well be ours: "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him."

When Christians offer worship to God, they offer spiritual sacrifices: "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5). As opposed to animal sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices are things offered to God, such as "thanksgiving" (Psalm 50:14) and "praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15). Offering God these types of gifts is a means of expressing love for God, it is not to focus attention on what the Christian denies himself (as is reflected by the modern definition of "sacrifice").

Worshipping God is certainly an expression of thanksgiving for the countless things He has done for us. When I worship God, I thank Him for all He has done for me. It is a time of communion with God, wherein the world and all its attractions are entirely shut out – this is my time with my Father!

What a wonderful time of rejoicing! Have a wonderful worship as often as you possibly can!

- Gary Smalley

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\* "When you cannot see the bright side, polish the dull side!"

\* "Wicked men obey from fear; good men, from love!"

\* "Nothing is too big for our God to accomplish, and nothing is too small for Him to use in accomplishing it!"

\* "Faith is a way of walking, not a way of talking!"

\* "Life is tragic for the person who has plenty to live on, but nothing to live for!"

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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)