

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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### Right or Wrong?

I have noticed a change in our society. There are some things that were once considered wrong, even illegal, are now considered okay and legal. One example is the legalization of marijuana. When I grew up in the 1960's and even until recently, the use of that drug was illegal. Now some states have legalized it.

What was once wrong is now considered to be right. I once read an article about "civil disobedience." The article was about individuals who were objecting to the minimum wage and wanted it increased to \$15.00 per hour. There was even a meeting being held on civil disobedience. One lady commented that their efforts would change the moral consciousness of people. I am afraid our society has become more lawless in many areas, and the idea of obedience is not what it once was. Society is changing the idea of right and wrong.

What does the Bible say about this? God, after all is the great lawgiver and lawmaker. From Him we learn obedience and disobedience. Isaiah, the prophet, wrote, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20). In the book of Romans Paul wrote about those who "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Romans 1:28).

Obedience is something the Bible emphasizes. Jesus saves those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Paul wrote that people should obey the gospel (Romans 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9). Jesus stated, "If you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The Hebrews writer stated: "We have human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" (Hebrews 12:9). What we learn in one area of life can often affect us in another. My concern is that when our society makes legal that which was once illegal, and makes disobedience something to be considered right, what will happen to the souls of individuals who need to obey Christ? Will they understand the obligation to the law that

God has given? Will they obey that form of doctrine that was delivered by the apostles? (Romans 6:17).

We need to obey the Bible, no matter what man says. Peter and the other apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). So when society says something is okay, we should see what God has to say. When society makes something legal, we need to check what the great lawgiver has in mind. When society promotes disobedience and rebellion, we need to look at what is written in God's Word. God wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). We can only do that if we know what it means to obey the laws which God has given.

Let us learn from the Scriptures and obey from the heart. (Romans 6:17)

- Bill Brandstatter

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## **Are Responses Wrong?**

Along with most preachers, I have noticed the increase in the number of restorations in response to the invitation. In the past year, more than thirty of the 200 members of the church for which I preach have come forward to ask for the prayers of the congregation. Did they do wrong in coming? It seems highly unlikely. Who would accuse anyone of sinning in confessing sin?

There are, however, two circumstances under which restorations, while not absolutely wrong, may be harmful to those who respond to the invitation.

If coming forward is substituted for real repentance or a true confession of sin, then it hurts more than it helps. Sometimes Christians make a general confession of sins in public when they should confess a specific sin to a particular individual (Matthew 5: 23, 24). Sometimes they give no indication of why they came forward. At other times, it appears that coming forward has been substituted for repentance, because no change is apparent in the life of the individual who has responded. These practices are harmful to the individual because they may lead him to believe he has forgiveness when he has not actually met the conditions of forgiveness.

If public prayer is substituted for private prayer, then the person who responds lives without the peace he ought to have. I believe the reason why many Christians respond to the invitation is that they do not enjoy the Blessed Assurance, the peace that passeth understanding, the joy that comes from daily living with Christ. They fail to pray privately for forgiveness, and then feel that they should ask for the prayers of the church. They

should be taught to seek God's help, guidance, and forgiveness daily. If they did, they would not feel the need to be restored.

The prayers of the church are appropriate for any Christian at any time. But if an individual Christian substitutes the prayers of the church for repentance or for his private prayers, he robs himself of God's blessings.

- Coy D. Roper, via Firm Foundation, Nov. 9, 1965

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## WALK WITH GOD

Never do I cease to learn from Proverbs as I continue to seek its great wisdom. It unfolds the pattern of righteous living, essential for all who claim to know God. One of the most frequently quoted passages is this: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil." (Proverbs 3:5-7). A dear Christian mentioned it in a phone conversation just last night.

Someone has suggested that these words are to Christians what the wedding ceremony is to newlyweds. In devotion to God, ways to think and act, and ways not to, are specified. Our devotion to God and to wisdom cannot be separated, and these words of admonition establish our walk with God from the very first step through to the last of our days. Those inspired by God referred to the righteous life as a walk (Psalm 26:11), or even a run (Hebrews 12:1). Trusting in the Lord builds on those steps that are taken, just as building a good marriage builds on the steps taken while locked, arm in arm. That is trust. That is confidence ("He will make your paths straight."). Do you count upon the Lord to fulfill His purposes in you? Do you realize the sense of security and well-being that comes from having confidence in the Lord?

The walk with the Lord requires commitment, nothing less than "with all your heart." You are putting your entire life in the hands of God (See also 1 Chronicles 28:9). My friend Richard Creel reminds that the decision to become a Christian eliminates struggles to decide so many other questions in life. The Lord has already made many decisions for you, in all areas of life ("In all your ways").

On whom are you leaning? Self-reliance is a step in the wrong direction. "Thus says the LORD, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD.'" (Jeremiah 17:5). The arrogance of self-reliance is fighting for supremacy, hence: "do not lean on your own understanding." Of course we use our minds, but the dangers of putting our reliance exclusively here should be known by the Bible student. Are we not fallible in our own thinking? Don't our own prejudices and

temptations point to vulnerability? Have we become quite skilled in rationalizing what we want to do? (Recall: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate;" Genesis 3:6.) Wisdom will not be found in the secular. What is our perspective without fear of the Lord? Limited. What direction am I travelling by following Him? The best one. What path am I travelling when I seek and follow His guidance? The straight one.

"In all your ways acknowledge Him." Your private version of what is right and what is wrong must be in submission to God's word. All of our beliefs and decisions originate from Him. We believe what He tells us to believe. We do what He tells us to do. We desire to know God just this well. Before anyone else is consulted, go to the Lord. In all of your concerns, ordinary matters and practical decisions, difficulties to be solved, in matters small and great, in matters temporal or eternal, "in everything" (Philippians 4:6-7), consult the Lord. How can I maintain faithfulness to my marriage vows? Follow the Lord's direction. How can I enjoy the happiest childhood? Follow the Lord's direction. How can I find and enjoy the fulfillment of labor? Follow the Lord's direction. How can I prevent living a selfish life? Follow the Lord's direction. How can I repair a broken relationship? Follow the Lord's direction. How do I prevent destruction from evil influences? Follow the Lord's direction. How can I effectively serve the Lord in His kingdom? Follow the Lord's direction.

"Abraham, the believer" (Galatians 3:9), "the father of all who believe" (Romans 4:11), is an example of righteous living. Wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar to God (Genesis 12:7; 13:18). Even when finding a wife for his son, there was no resemblance to the standards of leaning to one's own understanding; there was no criteria of beauty, riches, power, or fame. There was only the directive of his God and humble submission to it (Read Genesis 24:1-8). Right here is a serious test of a believer's devotion to God; this is trusting in the Lord with all of the heart. Notice the very solemn commitment to divine standards in order to preserve the godly seed, those in a succession of people who maintained knowledge of the true God. The Lord had prospered Abraham in all things, so He would direct his straight path to success and blessings here, thus preventing desertion from the faith. So, Abraham trusted in the Lord with all his heart. He did not lean on his own understanding, but in fear acknowledged the Lord. The Lord made his paths straight. Where is Abraham now (cf. Matthew 22:31-32; Luke 16:22-23)?

Do you fear the Lord and turn away from evil? What is the source of your wisdom, your own understanding or the Lord? Do you trust in the Lord with all of your heart, or rely on yourself? Do you acknowledge Him in all of your ways, or only some? Who makes your paths straight?

- Gary Smalley

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- \* "Christ means little to the church unless He means everything!"
  - \* "Change is inevitable, growth is an option!"
  - \* "Deal with the faults of your friends as gently as if they were your own!"
  - \* "Camels and Christians both release their burdens on their knees!"
  - \* "Don't fear tomorrow; God is already there!"
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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)