

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL

Once while Raccoon John Smith, a pioneer American preacher, was speaking of the plainness of the gospel in contrast with the abstruse systems of men, a note was handed to him from the audience: "If the gospel is so very plain, as you say it is, why do you have to labor so hard to get people to understand it?"

Smith replied, "I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had the kindest soil, and the best seed and sowing was easy, I never got top or root till I took my axe and hoe and briar knife and went in and whacked and grubbed and cleared the ground. The Lord knows I do not esteem it hard to preach the gospel to those prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice, and cut out systems and clear away sectarian trash that cumbers the minds and hearts of the people."

- Unknown

Truth Is Eternal

Truth does not change; it does not fluctuate; it draws a hard and fast line within the borders of the kingdom of God and demands all men to fashion their lives according to its sacred precepts if they would enjoy the advantages it proffers. It is stationary and firm and will not be washed about by the changing tides of public opinion and human endeavor. It calls all men to priesthood and nobility; it will raise their standards and grant them the privileges of Sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Men cannot trifle with it, change it or re-arrange it. It does not grant to men the privilege of alteration, and will condemn and destroy those who endeavor to do so. Through the vicissitudes of twenty centuries it has dealt with and defeated every device of man to change its face or mar its beauty; what was Truth when Jesus walked among men is Truth still; it has not changed with the passing of time. Time does not render it old or dull; but as the centuries drop away into eternity it shines all the more bright as it lights the path of wayward feet. Indeed!

. . . . "it shall make you free" is applicable only to this product of God; nothing else can share its place or can be its equal.

Truth will be in the judgment, and the billions that have lived will then face it either as its enemy, or its friend. It will be kind to its friends but terrible to its enemies. Let us become acquainted with truth; love it, teach it, practice it. Embrace it in life and it will give you a cloak in death, one which no man can take away.

- Jesse M. Kelley, via *Mooreville Memo*, Columbia, TN, 03/06/1964

HOW MANY CHURCHES?

How many churches are there? To the best of my knowledge there are so many different denominations that nobody knows. Some claim that there are as many as 1,200 in the United States alone.

Where did all these churches come from? Nobody really knows either. Most men are sure they did not come from the Bible. Instead they seem to have come from opinions, prejudices and petty personalities and doctrines of men (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-3).

Do all these churches do any good? Well, that depends on what you mean by good. Most of them seem to encourage some concepts of morality and at least a generalized respect for some conception of God. But, if you are concerned with whether God is pleased with them, that is another question entirely. Since they cannot all preach the truth, contradicting one another as they do, we must wonder how well God is pleased with half-truths and distorted worship He never authorized (Matthew 15:7-9).

How many churches are there in the New Testament? Now, that is the question you should have been asking all along. *There is only one!* (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:3-6) Jesus founded only one; He died for only one; He is head of only one; and He is coming back for only one. You can be a part of it by simply reading your New Testament and doing what it says. Wouldn't that be much more pleasing to God than what you are doing now?

- John A. Welch, via *Pause-Ponder-Profit*, October, 1981

THE OBSESSIVE CONTROLLER

Are you an obsessive controller? I am not asking you to admit it to me. I think a good place to begin is when you can admit it to yourself. Only through honest evaluation and a

pure desire to overcome personality difficulties can you secure the help you need for efficient spiritual growth (cf. 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). I know this may be a sensitive subject.

Has someone called you a "Control Freak" because you want things to be done your way, and you seem to be obsessed about it when other people prefer to do it another way? I understand if you have felt insulted by that slang term used when people interpret your behavior as a need to control others. You may conclude that they are referring to your behavior as a weakness or a sin. You may feel like you have been mis-categorized, and you could be right because so many professional counsellors say that the real problem is anxiety and fear, not the desire for control. And these anxiety and fear disorders are in a deep area of the pond where I have no business swimming. These can be resolved with the right kind of professional help, Biblically based, of course. If an honest self-evaluation shows that you need it, then please seek it. Your local shepherds may be able to help if they are what they should be in the Lord. They can certainly discretely put you in contact with the right professional helper.

Sincerely, though, obsession with control can be damaging to people and counter-productive to the cause of Christ. Consider:

(1) It is not good when an obsessive controller pressures or manipulates others to change in order to avoid having to change himself. Christians must be people who are open to the right kind of change. The Lord commanded people to repent or perish (Luke 13:3), and repentance is a change of mind which results in a change of action. If your brother sins and you show him his fault in private, you want him to listen to you and restore the brotherly relationship (Matthew 18:15), rather than rejecting your gentleness (cf. Galatians 6:1) and charging you with being too subjective or lightly dismissing you altogether.

(2) It is not good when an obsessive controller lectures others, becomes aggressive, or manipulates things behind the scenes to make other people behave in a way that he thinks is best. It is not good when an obsessive controller cares only about winning arguments, setting rules, and even enforcing the rules he sets. No Christian should ever regard himself as above what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6). That is arrogance. No Christian should ever regard himself as above the Lord (Matthew 10:24). Diotrephes was a man who loved to have preeminence, but actually, he had not seen God (3 John 9-11). The Scriptures advocate gentleness in dealing with others (2 Timothy 2:24; Galatians 6:1; Titus 3:2; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:7; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Corinthians 10:1).

(3) It is not good when an obsessive controller lacks compassion for people who struggle and make mistakes. When one conducts himself as if he is usually, or always right, that behavior becomes most infuriating to other people. The Christian, on the other hand, knows that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). Christians are "harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;" (1 Peter 3:8). They are merciful, just like their Father in heaven (Luke 6:36; cf. Psalms 86:15).

(4) It is not good when an obsessive controller refuses to admit when he is wrong, even in the simplest things. The Christian must admit wrongs (1 John 1:8-10)! Confessing sin is required in the process of seeking forgiveness (James 5:16).

(5) It is not good when an obsessive controller, because of his criticisms and condemnations of others, leads those who know him well to conclude that he is sanctimonious, self-righteous, or hypocritical. That type of behavior frustrates others and causes resentment. And Satan is always there to encourage evil responses on the part of those affected, who have their own struggles to keep themselves pure in their responsive thoughts, words and actions. Sometimes, an obsessive controller can be abusive to people with quite a display of anger. James, in 1:20, declared, "the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." Wrath ("outbursts of anger," NASB) is a work of the flesh, not a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:20; cf. Ephesians 4:26). The Christian must: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." (Ephesians 4:31). He is not a fault-finder, looking for faults to exploit, or looking for others to condemn (Luke 6:37). Peter commanded, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8).

What Should Control Us? Paul answers: "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

It is my earnest prayer that if you need help you will seek it and find it in Christ Jesus. May we confess our faults to one another and pray for one another that healing may come from the Lord. His lovingkindness and mercy is everlasting!

- Gary Smalley

* "Getting rid of rust is a spiritual must!"

* "Faith is believing what the unbeliever can't see!"

* "Even when things don't go as we plan, God still has a plan for us!"

* "God doesn't need great men. Great men need God!"

* "Hate is not a family value!"

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)