

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Dad's Nine Rules for Living

[Written by Frank Walton on the occasion of his daughter's high school graduation.]

Put God First. We exist for His glory and then to enjoy being with Him forever (1John 1:3). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10).

Follow Jesus Daily. He became as we are, in order to make us as He is (1 John 2:6). "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6).

Study the Bible Regularly. Scripture is God's one and only guidebook to eternity (Acts 20:32). "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105).

Pray Constantly. It keeps us close to heaven's pure air for our souls (Romans 12:12). "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16).

Think Hopefully. Our lives are what our thoughts make them (Proverbs 17:22). "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." (Proverbs 4:23).

Improve Yourself Consistently. With God's help, you can make the best of any situation (Philippians 4:13). "Press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14).

Do the Right Thing Always. Character is the sum of all our choices (Proverbs 27:19). "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day." (Proverbs 4:18).

Treat Others Lovingly. God put us on earth to help lift others up to heaven (Matthew 7:12). "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

Be a Faithful Member of Christ's Church. Jesus is counting on you to carry on His work by exercising your talents in His one body (Ephesians 4:16). "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10).

- Frank Walton

The Never-Diminishing Power of God's Word

The Bible teaches that God's Word has power! It has the power to...

- Produce faith (Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31)
- Make one wise (2 Timothy 3:15)
- Beget spiritual life (1 Peter 1:23)
- Convert the soul (Psalms 19:7)
- Judge us (John 12:48)
- Cleanse us (John 15:3)
- Sanctify us (John 17:17)
- Save us (James 1:21)

There is little question the Word of God was powerful when it was first spoken or written, but does it still contain the same power today? Some see the Bible as an outdated book. It is a treasured volume of antiquity, having served its purpose to mankind in the past, but no longer relevant to man today.

One of the undisputable laws of nature is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, also called the Law of Increased Entropy. This law states that while the quantity of mass and energy remains the same, the quality of mass and energy deteriorates gradually over time. As usable energy is used for productivity, growth and repair, it is converted into unusable energy. "Entropy" is defined as a measure of unusable energy within a closed or isolated system (the physical universe). As usable energy decreases and unusable energy increases, "entropy" increases.

"The implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics are considerable. The universe is constantly losing usable energy and never gaining. We logically conclude the universe is not eternal. The universe had a finite beginning - the moment at which it was at 'zero entropy' (its most ordered possible state). Like a wind-up clock, the universe is winding down, as if at one point it was fully wound up and has been winding down ever since" (<https://www.allaboutscience.org/second-law-of-thermodynamics.htm>).

We see this law at work in our world all the time. When we say something is "showing its age," we mean that it is worn out. It has fallen victim to the ravages of time. This happens to machines, buildings, cars, roads, and people.

One way we know the Bible is from God is that, even though the words were penned centuries ago, they are still as powerful today as they have ever been. The gospel is still God's power to salvation (Romans 1:21). The Word still convicts the heart, cleanses the conscience, and converts the soul. It has been left as our roadmap to Heaven, will be present on the Last Day to judge us, and will exist into eternity. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Don't lay aside the Word of God for the passing fads of men. Do not interpret God's Word according to the opinions and doctrines of men. Cling to the Word of God. It is Divine. It is eternal. It still has power!

- Heath Rogers

When We Are Strong

The emphasis men place on strength may not be the same God places on it. Paul said, "... for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Paul said he was strong when he was being persecuted and when he had infirmities and reproaches for Christ's sake. Let's take a look at real strength. We are strong:

(1) *When we have respect for the authority of the Bible.* Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). We are strong when we recognize that we must have Bible authority for all we do religiously.

(2) *When we are not ashamed of the gospel.* We need more people who say as did Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). We are strong when we want only the gospel preached and that in its fullness.

(3) *When we practice what we preach.* We need the teachings of Paul to the Romans when he said, "Thou therefore which teachest another teachest thou not thyself?" (Romans 2:21). There is a great demand for the people of God to practice what we preach. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; ..." (Galatians 2:20).

(4) *When we are filled with zeal and knowledge.* Paul prayed that the Colossians might "be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). Couple zeal and knowledge in a child of God and you have strength.

- Johnie Edwards, via The Ellettsville Church Bulletin, October 9, 1986

Simply: Christians!

Through the years people have asked me what I am religiously. My reply has been, "I am a Christian." More often than not, their follow-up question has

been, "What kind of Christian are you?" To me, this question reflects greater familiarity with religious culture of today rather than devotion "to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42) as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. Today, such inquiry into the "kind" or "brand" of Christian comes from a place on the road so far from the first seed-planting and sprouting of division among disciples of the Lord (condemned in 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25) that the sinfulness of schism, division and dis-unity in the body has become as accepted as idolatry was by Israel in the days of the divided kingdom (resulting in their being swept away by the wrath of the holy Lord God). The various "kinds," "types" and "brands" of Christians are simply an outgrowth of tolerating, accepting and perpetuating divisive conditions among disciples that the Lord Jesus has condemned (cf. John 17:20-21; Ephesians 4:1-3). History shows the record of contention and self-seeking which characterizes disciples who developed a party spirit and became factious (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). The Lord has commanded that all who are faithful to Him must be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is not a mere suggestion!

Would-be disciples are treading on very dangerous ground when they continue to promote what is disobedient by wearing any other name than the name revealed by the Holy Spirit in Scripture: "Christians" (See Acts 11:26; cf. Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Christians cannot go beyond what is written to do more or less (1 Corinthians 4:6); it is arrogant to do so. Christians must be obedient in all things (2 Corinthians 2:9).

Christians must not seek to maintain divisions from other Christians in any respect, including the worthy name we wear as bondservants of the Most High God. We must never attempt to distinguish ourselves from other Christians by putting a prefix before the word Christian ("Methodist-Christians," "Baptist-Christians," "Presbyterian-Christians," "Lutheran-Christians," etc.). In the history of Christianity, if there ever had been an appropriately convenient time to make distinctions among disciples of Christ it would have followed the long-standing traditional division between Jew and Gentile. However, notice the commandment of the Lord: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28; cf. Romans 10:12; Colossians 3:11). Well-pleasing disciples of Christ will fail to be such by wearing divisive names and following divisive traditions (cf. Mark 7:6-8).

People in the days of the apostles responded to their gospel preaching by becoming Christians, and Christians only. There were no brand "X" or brand "Y" Christians. King Herod Agrippa II declared that Paul was attempting to persuade him "to be a Christian," (Acts 26:28), without prefix or suffix. Peter wrote, "but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name." (1 Peter 4:16). No follower of Christ should attempt to glorify God by wearing some other unauthorized name. Wearing other names only continues to promote division.

So, are you simply a Christian? Do you add anything to it (Deuteronomy 4:2)? The only safe and certain course for the Christian is to give up everything believed and practiced that cannot be found in the Scriptures! I am unwilling to be a Christian in any other sense or description than what is revealed by the God-breathed Scriptures (See Acts 4:12). Can people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, obey His gospel and become simply Christians as they did in apostolic times? YES! Friend, will you?

- Gary Smalley

* "A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor!"

* "It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret!"

* "What you laugh at indicates more plainly than words who you are!"

* "If you are not as close to God as you once were, you need not wonder who moved!"

* "The mirror of the Word of God is painfully clear!"

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)