

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Fewer See The Bible As The Word Of God

The Gallup organization reported in July 2022 that a new high of 29% of Americans say the Bible is a collection of "fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man". In 1980, 10% of Americans felt this way. As you might imagine, the results fell broadly in line with American's religious affiliation. For instance, 16% of people who identify as "Christian" believed that the Bible was mythical and produced man, while 65% of Americans who had no religious affiliation felt this way. The bottom line is belief in the Bible is declining, part of a general pattern of declining religiosity among the American population.

Of course, the Bible itself claims to be from God. Paul, the most prolific writer of the Bible, said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that Scripture originated with God. In fact, New Testament writers identified the Scriptures with the voice of God (Matthew 19:4-5; Acts 4:24-25; Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 3:7).

Beyond the claims, what evidence is there that the Bible could be from God? Can anything be suggested that shows it could be more than "fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man"? Think about these proofs:

Unity: The Bible contains a consistent picture of the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin. There is a historical continuity to the unfolding of the scheme of redemption; God's plan for saving man runs like a single thread from beginning to the end.

History: No archaeological discovery has ever been made that contradicts historical statements in Scripture.

Foreknowledge: The Bible does contradict some theories held by scientists. However, a conflict between scientific fact and the Bible has never been established.

Prophecy: Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of divine inspiration. God rests His claim to Deity on His ability to predict the future and then to bring it to pass (Isaiah 41:4; 42:9; 44:7; 46:8-11; 48:3-5). He did that beautifully with over 300 prophecies of the Messiah.

Impartiality: A book written by man would seek to minimize the faults of its heroes. This is not the case with the Bible. It deals very frankly with the sins of its figures like David, the apostles, and the churches.

Humanistic philosophy has been successful in diverting people away from a high concept of Scripture. But Bernard Ramm wrote, "A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put."

- Kyle Campbell

Sacrifice — What?

During the days of our infamous Civil War, a humorist named Artemus Ward boasted, "I have already given two cousins to the war, and I STAND READY TO SACRIFICE MY WIFE'S BROTHER." Needless to say, Ward's name is not remembered alongside the names of Grant and Lee as a major figure in that conflict.

Jestingly, Ward admitted the same lack of commitment which characterizes so many of us in the Lord's church. We are willing to go anywhere, do anything, give all — just so long as no effort, no expense, no sacrifice is required. As Caleb C. Colton once remarked, "Men will wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; anything but live for it." Indeed, we talk much and do very little, which brings us shamefully close to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees of Jesus' day who said and did not.

The world is dying without Christ, yet we stand ready to sacrifice our brothers-in-law, our cousins, the elders, the preacher, anyone but ourselves to the cause of evangelism. The philosophy which says, "Let George do it" suits us just fine, so long as our name is not George. We rationalize, excuse, procrastinate — and all too often, that's all we do. Knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different things.

According to an inspired writer, we must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

Try as we might, we can't serve the Lord by proxy. We can't excuse our lethargy by hiring men to do the good works for us that we ought to be doing ourselves. Christian responsibility is an individual thing. It can't be talked away, it can't be ignored in the hope it will go away; it can't be farmed out. On the great day of final judgment, "every one of us shall give account, of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

- Dalton Key, via *The Reminder*, 02/26/1984

Only One Way to Heaven

Men often say there are many roads to heaven just as there are many roads coming into a city. But Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Again the Lord said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13-14).

There are only two roads for mankind to travel. One leads to eternal destruction, the other to eternal life. Most of the people are on the broad way; only a few are treading the narrow way.

Which road are you traveling? The choice is yours to make.

- Jimmy Thomas (1932-2020)

An Unbelieving Spouse

The number of Christians who are married to non-Christians is not precisely known, but certainly it is very, very many. Homes where this condition is true are certainly divided. Since the foremost allegiance of the Christian is to the Lord God and the married companion is not a believer, there will always be unhappiness over this issue to some degree. In some cases the lack of harmony will not destroy the marriage, whereas in other cases it will contribute to marriage destruction. And certainly there are varying degrees of disharmony.

The apostle Paul wrote of this in the first century, indicating that harmony can be maintained through the contentment of remaining together (1 Corinthians 7:12-13). He does, however, imply that their interests are divided. The important conviction of the Christian is "to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:35). In any case, the degree of happiness in that home would increase were it not divided.

Certainly, the greatest concern of the Christian in that marriage is to bring about belief and conversion in the heart of his or her companion. When the life-priority of both husband and wife is identical, as it is when both are servants of Christ (Matthew 4:4; 6:33; Mark 12:30), sweet peace, unity and happiness result to such an extent that any other disharmonies may be diminished and/or dissolved.

How may one's marriage companion be won to Christ? Here are some considerations:

(1) Do not use Christianity as a bargaining chip to please yourself. You are certainly happy to see anyone become a Christian through belief and obedience to the gospel, but you are certainly wanting them to do that for the right reasons. When their motivation is not for the right reason there is a greater likelihood that they will not steadfastly endure (cf. Matthew 13:20-21; Luke 8:13). Perseverance in doing the will of God is needed by all who pursue eternal life (Romans 2:9).

(2) You cannot coerce anyone to live as a Christian. When the apostles of Christ went into the world preaching His gospel, they persuaded people (2 Corinthians 5:11) using sound teaching methods and reasoning (Acts 18:4; cf. John 6:44-45). They never forced anyone to serve Christ against their will. "... And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Revelation 22:17b).

(3) You will never win your companion by failing to attend the worship services and Bible study classes of the church. Your spouse may not be a Christian, but companions know enough to determine the genuineness of your spiritual convictions and their degree of respect for you is formed on that basis. Your example of attending services regularly and faithfully will make the right kind of impression regarding the strength of your faith. If you forsake the assembly of the saints, you will not contribute to the salvation of his soul, and you may lose yours!

(4) The Lord's wisdom shows that the best way to win an unbelieving companion is by your godly behavior. Your behavior must be chaste and respectful, proceeding from a gentle and quiet spirit. Notice:

"you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 3:1-4)

Countless wives have won their unbelieving husbands by living the exemplary life of a Christian. The same principle is true for a husband in winning an unbelieving wife.

(5) For the long term: persistence with great patience and steadfast prayer is the proper course. Your unwavering activity will bear fruit (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6). Enjoying apples from an orchard is not an overnight result. It takes time. Many companions have been won to Christ only after maintaining this diligence over time without becoming discouraged.

It is not difficult to realize the wisdom in Christians finding marriage-eligible companions who are also Christians. If you are a single Christian, you are looking for a mate who possesses "undistracted devotion to the Lord." You are not looking for the "Christian" – in name only; you are not looking for a mere pew-warmer, someone who "goes along to get along." Ideally, genuine Christianity in the husband and wife will bring great blessings from the Lord in a successful and happy marriage!

- Gary Smalley

* "Get rich quick - count your blessings!"

* "Form good habits, they are just as hard to break as the bad ones!"

* "Fools say everything that pops into their mind!"

* "Why worry when you can pray?"

* "To be truly good in a wicked world one must follow the Lord Jesus Christ!"

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)