

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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What we gain every time we meet!

Sometimes we approach our service to God with questions like, "Do I have to?" This tends to take an approach that leads to the feeling of forced service or drudgery. Instead, what if we focused on the positive benefits that we gain when we meet together? To that end, I'd like to remind us of what we are doing when we come together as a church. Another reason for this reminder is that it is all too easy for us to get wrapped up in the entanglements of the world, even though they might be matters that are not in themselves sinful. Even so, they take time and energy, and sometimes God and His people get pushed to the back seat of busy lives. We've all struggled with this. We don't usually do this purposefully, but gradually over time we allow more and more of the activities of the busy world take time and energy from us and we lose out on the ability to make the most of opportunities as we face evil days (Ephesians 5:15-17).

"Opportunities" is the operative term. Meeting together is indeed a commitment of time and energy, but these are also great opportunities to learn, grow, and come away with a renewed sense of zeal and purpose. We find the time to do what we value and love, so let's be reminded of the value of coming together as a congregation dedicated to serving the Lord.

Every time we meet, we gain opportunities:

1. *To Praise God in Unity with Others.* We have been redeemed to the praise and glory of God (see Ephesians 1:3-14). We want to be with other redeemed people so that we can praise and glorify Him together. After making the point that we need to redeem the time because the days are evil, Paul continued, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Ephesians 5:18-20). By doing this together, we show unity and encourage each other.

2. *To Receive Strong Biblical Teaching.* The word of God will be read and taught, whether in classes or general assemblies. Even in our singings, we are teaching biblical concepts and principles. But make no mistake: we are committed here to present the strongest biblical messages we can. We are committed to Scripture as God's word, and we will hold this standard out for all to hear and follow. As Paul told Timothy, so we will do: "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). You will, therefore, have opportunities to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18).

3. *To Have Fellowship with other Christians.* Do not underestimate the power and importance of having fellowship in person with brothers and sisters in Christ. We are here to share jointly in the spiritual blessings of Christ. When we meet, we will see examples of faith and love. We will see godly people showing us what it means to be faithful. We will see Christians loving one another. We want to develop that family bond, and we need each other present to do so. By this, we will have the opportunity to lift up and encourage others who might be weak or struggling (Hebrews 12:12). We will stimulate one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:23-25). We need this time of fellowship together.

4. *To Recommit ourselves to the Lord.* Of course we can do this anytime, but when we come together we are especially reminded of how important it is to be dedicated and committed to the Lord every day. By meeting with the brethren every opportunity we have, we will be showing our commitment and will be reminded of the need to cast off the old man of sin to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). We ought to leave every meeting with a renewed commitment to serve our great God daily.

We realize that there are issues that can prevent us from attending (e.g., sickness), and some situations are difficult. Nevertheless, we need to see the value of what we gain when we are present, and what we miss when we are absent, whatever the reason. We need to develop a longing and love for the assemblies. Think, also, of the impact this love and commitment will have on our children and future generations. And may I make a special appeal for our Sunday evening assemblies? We have even more opportunities than to grow, and every time we have is valuable. If you've not been in the habit of coming every time the doors are open for classes and assemblies, please reconsider and think of what you are missing and what you will gain, and how you will help so many others. Let's cherish our times together.

- Doy Moyer

"Not Far From the Kingdom of God"

In Mark 12:28, when a scribe was impressed by the answers of Jesus, he posed a question about the foremost commandment. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. The scribe readily agreed and Jesus told him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (v. 34). I imagine this statement was meant to stimulate and challenge him to further thoughtful reflection and decisive action. Are there sections of your spirituality where you're not far from the kingdom?

Are you "not far" in your faith? You should be adding to your faith (2 Peter 1:5-8) so that it will abound (2 Corinthians 8:7). Faith left to itself often sinks against the crashing waves of the world.

Are you "not far" in your doctrine? You should give attention to doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16), for knowledge makes you strong and inoculates you against destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1).

Are you "not far" in your morals? You should want to live holy or free from the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), and then depend on the power of the gospel to deliver you from temptation (Romans 1:16).

Are you "not far" in your benevolence? You should dedicate yourself to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5) and devote your energies to helping humanity (Matthew 25:33-36; Acts 9:36).

Note that Jesus said you are "not far." He didn't say "good enough." The woman caught in adultery had to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Even though the rest of her life could have been spotless, she had to press forward to please Christ. You will have to do the same in faith, doctrine, morals, and benevolence.

- Kyle Campbell

"With an Outstretched Arm"

In Exodus 6:6, the Lord God spoke to Moses saying, "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.'" ["stretched out arm" – KJV] Do you find it interesting that the Lord used this expression many times to describe His great power? Here it refers to His mighty

power to redeem Israel from slavery in Egypt. In praise of the Lord, Psalm 89:13 says, "You have a strong arm;" (cf. Psalm 44:3). In the song of Moses and Israel, following the crossing of the Red Sea, we have: "Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased." (cf. Deuteronomy 4:34). We are impressed with the mighty power of God as we read of His deliverance of His people from Egyptian bondage ("with great terror and with signs and wonders;" Deuteronomy 26:8). All of His mighty works to accomplish deliverance are summed up in, "with an outstretched arm." Nothing like this has ever been seen before!

In Jeremiah's prayer to the Lord, he uses the expression in reference to the power of God in creation: "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You," (Jeremiah 32:17; cf. 27:5, where the Lord used the same expression to describe to other nations His creative power).

Ironically, the outstretched arm that delivered Israel from Egypt was used to support the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem in punishment for their idolatry. "I Myself will war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation." (Jeremiah 21:5).

The powerful Deliverer, Creator and Judge was magnified by Moses in his final blessing of the tribes: "The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; ..." (Deuteronomy 33:27). Our habitation of shelter is in God (Psalm 91:1). Those who trust in Him, even in the midst of the greatest distresses and burdens, are supported, protected and consoled by the undergirding of God's everlasting arms! "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes." (Isaiah 40:11).

The arm image can be found in only two places in the New Testament (Luke 1:51; John 12:38), but both allude to the use in the Old Testament. But think about this: the stretched out arm that delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage was stretched out and nailed to a cross to deliver believers from the consequences of their sins!

- Gary Smalley

* "God gives and forgives; men get and forget!"

* "God is always present, whether asked or not!"

* "God is just a prayer away. Petition Him!"

* "God made time and gave it to man; use it to learn of Him, serve Him and worship Him!"

* "God has made no amendments to the Holy Bible!"

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)