

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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"Can Churches Heal America?"

A few years ago the cover to a 1996 edition of *U.S. News* caught my attention. It asked, "Can Churches Cure America's Social Ills?" Hmm.

Now, as a Christian my chief allegiance is to God's holy nation of which I am a citizen (1 Peter 2:9; Philippians 3:20); but since America is where I reside for now I want to see it do well for if it has peace, I have peace (Jeremiah 29:7). As I pondered the question, "Can Churches Heal America?", I thought of some things churches are going to have to do if they hope to have an impact.

Churches must call people back to the book (the Bible). It's what America needs more than anything else. Just this morning, my "check engine" light came on. I didn't know what to do. Of course, I knew to check the engine, but where do I start? I immediately reached into the glove compartment for the owner's manual. It told me what I needed to know. Friend, that's what your Bible is. It's a manual from the Owner who made us all and knows what's best. No matter how broken down your life is, the Bible can fix it. In it, we have all we need (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Why would so many people ignore a book that is so good for us? Too many people just don't want to be accountable to God. So, they reason Him away and deny the Bible as His word. Someone has said, "The atheist cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman." He doesn't want to. America is not the first nation to try to push God out. Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, took God's word, cut it up with a knife and threw it in the fire (Jeremiah 36:23). Perhaps he thought he had done away with God's word but he had not because He couldn't touch its Author. Try as we may to push God's word out of our lives, it lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:22-25). Like an anvil wears its hammers one by one, God's word has outlasted all its skeptics. Oh, how we need this book!! America's hope is to come back to the Bible.

Churches must remember the mission of the church. People long before us saw "going to church" very simply. God's word was highlighted above all. Some have even

said that when preachers spoke you could "feel the heat." How do people see churches now? As people see so many denominations with recreation centers, cafeterias, gymnasiums and the like, are people impressed with the need for the spiritual over the physical? Jesus had to deal with that problem. People came in hoards wanting physical food. When He made it clear that His mission was to provide spiritual food, most of them walked away (John 6:26-27, 66-68).

A few in the religious world have been willing to admit that without all the physical attractions their numbers would drastically fall off. Jesus didn't worry about that. He sadly let them walk away. In fact, if you'll notice, every time crowds began to build, Jesus' teaching became even more challenging (Luke 14:25-27). He wanted those who wanted Him. That's it.

The mission of the church is to preach the truth, period (1 Timothy 3:15). Many years ago, a French statesman, Alexis De Toqueville (1805 – 1859) came to America trying to find the secret of its greatness. What he found is interesting. Listen to this!! "I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers – and it was not there... in her fertile fields and boundless forests – and it was not there... in her rich mines and her vast world commerce – and it was not there... in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

Local churches must remember their mission. Preaching is growing weaker in too many places. Preachers must call sin, sin (John 8:31). Faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). Without God's word, America will be faithless.

Churches must encourage members to come home to family. Too many homes hardly have anyone home. Dads must provide (1 Timothy 5:8) but they can be gone far too much in their pursuit of climbing the ladder of success. Moms need to focus their minds on being keepers at home (Titus 2:4-5). Even kids can be away from home too much. We must spend time together. I'll never forget brother Connie Adams telling of a yard sale at his parents' home. Reluctantly, they decided to sell the family dinner table he had sat around all of his growing up years. There were so many good memories. For most of the day, it had not sold. Inwardly, Connie was sort of glad. Then...a buyer came, loaded it up and drove away. Connie said as he saw it go away, he cried. I understand. How many families today would have such sentimental thoughts about their table? We just need to come home and build our homes on Christ (Matthew 7:24-27).

Churches must teach members to deny worldliness in their lives (Romans 2:17-24; Matthew 5:13-16). If we, one-by-one, will let the Lord put our lives together, the world will fall right into place. If you want to heal America, *start with you*. May God bless the United States of America.

- Jeff May

WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

When you see a man with a dinner pail in one hand and some carpenter tools in the other you say he is heading for work. When you see a boy with a fishing pole in one hand and a tackle box in the other you say he is heading for the creek. Likewise, in a moral and spiritual sense, you can determine where people are heading by certain indications about them.

When you see people neglecting to study their Bibles, absenting themselves from the services and putting other interests ahead of their responsibilities to the Lord you know they are heading for danger. In a little while, if they continue in this course, they will be hardened sinners, away from God and doomed for eternal destruction (Hebrews 2:1-3).

When we see people running with worldly associations, to worldly places we know that it won't be long until their morals are corrupted and they will be influenced in evil ways (1 Corinthians 15:33).

When we see people deliberately setting aside God's marriage laws fulfilling their lusts in unlawful ways, and engaging in sensuous practices, we know they are heading for broken homes, broken hearts, dishonored names, and many days of sorrow and remorse. We cannot sow to the flesh and expect to reap spiritual good (Galatians 6:7-8).

When we see parents failing to teach their children obedience, respect and honor, and allow them to grow up unrestrained and undisciplined, we know they are headed for many sorrowful moments. Those children will bring shame and reproach to their parents in years ahead. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15).

Yes, when we see people grabbing after money, seeking pleasure instead of God, attending filthy movies, feasting their minds on lewd and indecent literature, dishonoring their bodies by indecently exposing them to the gaze of the opposite sex, and desecrating things holy and sacred, we wonder just where we are heading. Unless people are stopped

in their mad rush to destroy themselves - unless they repent of all evil - there will be no stopping this side of HELL! God help us to wake up and LIVE!

- Charles W. Cochran in "The Sinton Review", November, 1959.

Abraham's Seed

In Genesis 22:18, God told Abraham, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." What did God mean by this promise?

There are passages in the Bible that contain the word "seed" that are referring to a person's children (offspring) or future descendants. For example, when Eve said when she gave birth to a son, whom she named Seth, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him." (Genesis 4:25, ASV).

Abraham's faithful obedience to God resulted in several promises and great blessings being given to him. The promises were not limited to Abraham alone. God had a promised land that his descendants would come to possess. He told Abraham, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:" (Genesis 15:18).

The greatest promise given to Abraham was that all nations would be blessed through his seed (cf. Genesis 12:3; 18:18). The inspiration of Scripture assures us that God's promises to Abraham included the salvation of man by faith as revealed in the gospel of Christ (Galatians 3:8). Paul stated, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." (Galatians 3:16; cf. Acts 3:25-26). Paul explains here that God was promising to bless all nations through only one of Abraham's descendants. That descendant was Jesus Christ. The salvation through Christ was offered to the entire world!

Jesus Christ provided for blessings to every nation by paying for their sins in His sacrificial death on the cross: "so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9). Concerning all mankind, Paul declared, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." (Galatians 3:29; cf. 3:7). Christ is "to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation," (Hebrews 5:9). Are you in Christ?

- Gary Smalley

- * "He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay!"
 - * "Give the devil an inch and he'll become your ruler!"
 - * "Give God what's right, not what's left!"
 - * "Everyone who thinks there ought to be a Sunday Bible Class ought to attend one!"
 - * "Give your all to Christ; He gave His all for you!"
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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)