

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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Remember...

In his final epistle, written near the end of his life, the apostle Peter told his fellow brethren, "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you" (2 Peter 1:12-13).

Reminders are good things. The older I get, the more I appreciate them. Like so many others, my memory is not what it used to be so it is good to be reminded of doctors' appointments, my wedding anniversary, my wife's birthday, etc.

Often it is good for us to be reminded of some basic things in relation to our spiritual life. These things are very fundamental. All who are Christians know them. Yet, it is good to be reminded of them from time to time so that we might always remember them.

Remember Who You Are

The apostle John wrote, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:1-2). It is good for Christians to remember at all times that they are children of God. Christianity is not something that is donned on Sundays or when around other Christians. It is who we are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our conduct should reflect that fact.

In John 8:44, Jesus told the Jews of His day that they were children of the devil because it was his will they desired to do. Conversely, if we are going to be children of God, we must desire to do His will in our lives. It is something we need to remember constantly.

Remember Why You Are Here

Sometimes, even though we might have the best of intentions, we get caught up in the ideas of the world around us and worldly things seem important to us. We give priority to our education, our job, our possessions, etc., instead of remembering what life is really about. No better statement of the purpose of life can be found than that which Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." Let us never lose sight of the purpose of our existence. Let us not be distracted by the world and its enticements. Let us be firmly resolved to remember that "our all" is to live lives that honor and glorify our God. Let us never lose sight of that fact.

Remember Why You Worship

Jesus reminded the Samaritan woman at the well that, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." We should always remind ourselves that worship is directed to God. Sometimes, some who claim to be Christians are dissatisfied with worship or even stay away because it was not done in the way in which they desired or by whom they wanted. Somehow some of us have gotten the idea that for worship to be what it should be that it has to be done to please us. In reality, is that not worship of self rather than worship of God?

Self is never to be the focus of worship. Hebrews 10:24-25 says we assemble to worship God and to "...consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another..." As we worship, we should be thinking of God and others, not of self. Remember the purpose of worship.

Additionally, remember the purpose of the building in which we worship. Though not sacred in and of itself, it was purchased with the Lord's money so that Christians might have a comfortable place in which to worship, study the word of God and carry out the work of the church. Let us not allow it to become just a social gathering place or a playground for our children. Let us respect the fact that it was built for the Lord's honor and glory. Let us teach our children such respect.

- Gene Taylor

Self-Control

"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" (1 Corinthians 9:25, ESV).

To truly excel and succeed in athletics, self-control is a must. An athlete who lacks self-control will not eat properly, will not train properly, will fail to break bad habits in his life, and ultimately will not compete very well or be victorious.

To truly excel and succeed spiritually, self-control is a must. The Christian who lacks self-control will be spiritually weak, will fail to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, will not make the needed changes in his or her life, and in the end will not be victorious. Every Christian is instructed to give all diligence to add this fruit of the Spirit to our faith (2 Peter 1:5-6; Galatians 5:22-23).

There have been many athletes that are willing to devote themselves entirely to their craft to reach the pinnacle of their particular sport in order to win the trophy. And so, they exercise self-control in ALL things. But again, that's for a perishable wreath. What about Christians today? How much does receiving the eternal reward of Heaven mean to us? How much more should we be willing to exercise self-control in ALL things in our life and "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). And yet, exercising self-control (an inward spiritual virtue exhibited outwardly through restraining or controlling one's total being - thoughts, speech, actions) in our day-to-day lives proves to be a real struggle and weakness for many Christians.

- We need to exercise self-control with our thoughts (Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 1:13-16).
- We need to exercise self-control with our emotions (James 1:19; Ephesians 4:26-27).
- We need to exercise self-control with our tongue (James 1:19, 26; 3:1-10).
- We need to exercise self-control in the sexual realm (Matthew 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 1 Corinthians 7:5).
- We need to exercise self-control with our time (Ephesians 5:15-16; Matthew 6:33).

With God's help and our determination, we must learn to Control Self! As our brother Paul would go on to say, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27). So, let us never lose sight of what our spiritual race is all about and what is at stake. Let us strive each day to exercise self-control in all aspects of our life so that we may one day receive that imperishable crown!

- Jesse A. Flowers

A More Excellent Way

In the First Corinthian letter, Paul detailed a "more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31) for these Christians than the self-promotion and divisiveness that had seized many of

them. In chapter 13, Paul contrasted some things that would cease because they would no longer be necessary (miraculous gifts) with the "more excellent way" —"Love never fails;" (1 Corinthians 13:8); it never ends!

Consistent with the context, Paul highly praises love:

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

He then proceeds to characterize this highest, excellent love, this undefeatable goodwill of dedicated commitment that is seen in the heavenly Father (verses 4-7). He is teaching Christians to always act in harmony with the purposes of God and on behalf of other people. They must do so with spiritual excellence, with love.

Whereas the miraculous spiritual gifts from God would cease upon the completion of God's divine revelation to man (verses 8-12; cf. Hebrews 2:1-4), faith, hope and love will not pass away, they will abide (1 Corinthians 13:13). The gifts were worthless without love in the heart of the possessor. Long after the temporary supernatural gifts were operative among Christians, at some point yet in the future, faith and hope will find their fulfillment; their goals will be achieved in the divine plan of God. Faith will be lost in sight (cf. Revelation 22:4), and hope will be realized (cf. Romans 8:23-25). The more excellent way, love will abide and flourish eternally. Love is permanent; love never fails!

Both the gospel teacher and the gospel preacher are careful to rejoice with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6) as they speak truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Truth declares the impossibility of having this excellent love without obedience to the Lord's commands. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15). John repeated the point: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3).

Superior to the miraculous spiritual gifts is the excellent way of love. Paul has written here that the gifts are worthless without love (verses 1-3); the characteristics of love demonstrate its superiority (verses 4-7); and love is superior because it is permanent, unlike the temporary gifts (verses 8-13).

Friend, are you seeking the more excellent way, the way of love?

- Gary Smalley

- * "If the Lord Jesus is in your heart, please tell your face!"
 - * "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (John 14:2-3)!"
 - * "Have character! Don't be one!"
 - * "God can use troubles to change hearts!"
 - * "One verse of Scripture indicates the subject of heavenly rejoicing: 'The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly', even among 'a great many of the priests'! How were these becoming disciples? They were 'becoming obedient to the faith.' Check it out (Acts 6:7)!"
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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)