

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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What This Church Offers

Believe it or not, all churches are not the same! If your idea has been "a church is a church is a church," then let us challenge your thinking. This church is different.

The greatest single difference between this congregation and many other churches in our area is that we are striving to be the New Testament church. We truly want to be a church of Christ. Our organization, work, and worship are patterned after the ideals stated in the New Testament. Most modern-day churches are not at all interested in being a first-century church in the twenty-first century. They are more concerned with what people desire in a church, instead of what God wants.

All around us are churches who have resorted to gimmickry and gadgetry to add to their numbers. Rather than "holding fast the word of life" (Philippians 2:16) they offer the public food, fun, and frolic. Their programs turn their churches into Country Clubs or sports arenas. Is this what the Savior of the church had in mind when He announced His plans (Matthew 16:18) to build His church? The New Testament reveals a noble, spiritual design.

Our offer to the community is quite straightforward and simple. We offer the Gospel of Christ and its message of salvation (Romans 1:16-17). In today's religious atmosphere, that makes this congregation unique! The Gospel has always drawn sincere people to Jesus. If entertainment, recreation, social events or political activism is what someone is looking for in a church, then they will not be interested in what we are offering. They might give us an initial look, but they will not stick around here for very long. Nearly every week someone tries us on and realizes we do not "fit" them.

This is why we do not have a Family Life Center or a gymnasium. It is also the reason why we do not offer prizes for attendance, sponsor ball teams, cook barbecue, or operate a daycare. These kinds of things are simply out of place in a New Testament church. The Lord's church wasn't designed by Him for these things.

If someone is looking for a church to fill their social calendar, then we are not the place for them. If they are wanting a pulpit that will be devoted to a discussion of current political issues, then our Gospel sermons and Bible teaching will not appeal to them. We make no apology for this. We simply recognize that we are not everyone's cup of tea. We wish we did appeal to everyone who visits with us, but the reality is we are not attractive to everyone we meet.

However, if people are searching for a church that will challenge them to grow spiritually by faithful teaching from the word of God, then this church will fit them well. If they are looking for fellowship with God through worship, Bible study and interaction with other saved people, then we are the place for them. We are "not ashamed of the gospel" (Romans 1:16) so we continue to preach this primitive message to our fashionable generation. We realize this emphasis makes us rather quaint in the landscape of contemporary churches. Some will say, "You folks remind me of the way church was when I was a kid." Others will find us quite boring, unexciting, and uninspiring.

Our aim is not to please men, but God. If that goal appeals to you, then, in the words of Moses to his Midianite brother-in-law, "come with us and we will do you good" (Numbers 10:29).

- Mark W. White

Even a Little Compromise Is a Compromise!

It is estimated that Daniel and his companions were mere teenagers when taken into Babylonian captivity. What would you have done? If you were a teenager, taken into a foreign country (a pagan nation) for the rest of your life, what would you have done? If you were given the opportunity to live, not among the captives, but among royalty, what would you have done? Would you have been tempted to compromise your faith? Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah did not budge in their faith and devotion to the Lord!

Test of Faith: Partake of God-forbidden foods. In chapter 1, the king appointed daily provisions of delicacies and wine from his table. Daniel and his friends refused, and ate only vegetables and water. In the end, they were found to be "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm" (1:20). Doing things God's way is ten times better! Faith tested: NO compromise!

Test of Faith: Bow down with everyone else. In chapter 3, the three Hebrew friends were pressured, when "all the people...fell down and worshiped the gold image," to do likewise, lest they be thrown into a burning fiery furnace (3:7, 15). Their response: "We do not

serve your gods, nor will we worship the image" (3:17). The king began to take notice of the Most High God. Faith tested: NO compromise!

Test of Faith: Notoriety, wealth and power. When Belshazzar offered Daniel a purple robe, a gold chain and the third place in his kingdom, was Daniel tempted to tell the king something pleasant that would make him feel good? Daniel told the king to keep his gifts and rewards; he would stay true to the message of God, and he delivered a message of doom. The king kept his word and was slain that night. Faith tested: NO compromise!

Test of Faith: Stop praying to God or hide your devotion to Him. The governors and satraps wanted to trap Daniel, so they convinced the king to make prayer to anyone other than the king punishable by death. Daniel knew this. Did that stop him? Did he decide to back off for those thirty days, tone it down and hide his faith for a while? He went home, opened his windows (no hiding), knelt down, prayed and thanked God. Consequently, he was thrown into the lions' den but spared by God. The king took notice. Faith tested: NO compromise!

These boys were young when first tempted to compromise their faith in God. How often have you been tempted to compromise your faith, maybe even just a little? Will your response be as definitive as these Hebrews: "We will not!"?

- David Sproule

It is Easier . . .

It is easier to compromise the truth than to stand for it. It is easier to ignore sin than to expose it. It is easier to justify the sinner than to demand his repentance. It is easier to criticize the preaching of truth than to endorse it. It is easier to be silent than to contend for the faith. It is easier to refuse an admonition than to receive it. It is easier to be worldly than to be godly. It is easier to commit sin than to avoid it. It is easier to neglect than to take heed. It is easier to give sparingly than to give liberally. It is easier to make excuses than to be faithful.

Why is this true? Simply because it is easier to travel the broad way than the narrow way. (Matthew 7:13-14).

- David Harkrider

What's In It For Me?

Through the years we have had a number of people who have attended the worship service of this local church, stating that they are looking for a place to be part of the membership. We love all visitors, and we do a good job at making them feel welcomed. We are thankful people who are grateful for the encouragement received from others. There is something that I have noticed, and I am wondering if you have observed this also.

Those looking to be a member somewhere almost always ask the sort of questions that would fit in the category of, "What's in it for me?" When I invited a lady across the street to come to our worship service, the first question I got in reply was, "What programs do you have for the young people?" Well, we don't teach them the rules of basketball and ping pong, but we can teach them how they need to live to stay out of jail, not cheat on their school work, tell people the truth instead of lies, obey their parents, respect authority and have a loving home and family of their own one day. How would that be? And sadly, many churches have adopted all sorts of things to cater to people's tastes "so they won't leave." They have become program promoters, turning the Lord's church into a merchandising institution.

What all people need is to hear the word of God, the doctrine of Christ that is not "watered down" in an attempt to cater to the preferences and desires of people who have been drawn away from the faith by the enticements of the world. Precious few prospects have come through the doors looking for opportunities to serve God by serving the body they wish to fellowship, by loving and helping to teach others, building up the brethren and helping the sinful in the local community to find repentance and forgiveness in Christ. Must we not avoid selfishness, looking out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-5)?

Our Lord said this:

"It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28).

Greatness in the kingdom of Christ does not come from having a position of power or high rank; it comes from lowering self and humbly serving others (cf. Matthew 10:39; 16:24-25). A life of sacrifice is what is acceptable to God (Romans 12:1). The model for members of the body is Christ Himself, who came to serve others. We must have a towel and wash basin attitude (John 13:3-17), looking for opportunities to serve others, not looking for others to serve us. This is the heart of true discipleship.

Disciples must be helpers and givers: "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35). We set our own priorities and wishes. The pattern of our lives is Christ, who came to give.

May every Christian find his place in the body of Christ, being where the Lord places him (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:18), not for what the members can do for us, but for what we can do for the members!

- Gary Smalley

* "Plastic surgeons can do almost anything with a nose, except keep it out of other people's business!"

* "Don't expect a million-dollar answer for a ten-cent prayer!"

* "God does more than hear words — He reads hearts!"

* "Prejudice is a great time-saver; it enables a man to form opinions without bothering to get the facts!"

* "We don't change God's message, His message changes us!"

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)