

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **I Want To Be Like Jesus!**

Several years ago the slogan WWJD – What Would Jesus Do? – became popular, especially among young people. The acronym was featured prominently on jewelry, bumper stickers, and on the Internet. While I share the skepticism voiced by many about the appropriateness of the public displays, and the motives of some people in displaying them, I also applaud the sincere desire to be motivated by the example of Jesus in making decisions.

The New Testament is clear that we should be striving to imitate Jesus in our lives. Paul asked the Corinthians to "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Peter reminded his readers that the sufferings of Christ served the purpose of "leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). So, when I hear Christians saying that they want to "be like Jesus," it inspires me. The optimist in me feels positive and proud.

The pessimist in me, however, cannot help but be concerned when I hear the phrase "I want to be like Jesus" chanted almost as a mantra. I find myself wondering, as noble as the sentiment is, do these folks really understand what it means to be like Jesus? My fear is that to many people, wanting to "be like Jesus" is pretty much one-dimensional.

I have asked a number of people who expressed the desire to "be like Jesus" exactly what they meant. Almost without exception, the replies focused on one particular aspect of the earthly life of Jesus – His compassion and concern for the "less fortunate." It is certainly true that Jesus showed love and a desire to serve those He encountered who had various physical needs. The four gospels contain numerous references to Jesus' acts of mercy toward those who were suffering (cf. Matthew 9:1-7). Jesus ate with sinners, touched lepers, and healed the blind, lame, deaf and dumb. And, He ministered to others without prejudice. He served regardless of class, race, or social status (cf. John 4:4-26). Serving others, meeting their physical needs without prejudice, is a vital part of what it means to be a Christian, what it means to "be like Jesus."

I wonder, however, if many of those who profess a desire to "be like Jesus" have considered the full implication of that ambition. I am convinced that the motto "I want to be like Jesus" is sometimes put forward to promote a view of the Scriptures that is seriously at odds with the earthly life of Jesus. Often when someone says that what life

is all about is just trying to "be like Jesus," what is really being advocated is the view that Christians are not under law of any kind. In their view, the only thing that matters to God is the effort we put forth as both individuals and local congregations to meet the "felt needs" of other people, both saints and non-saints. This view overlooks a vital fact about the earthly life of Jesus – His attitude toward the will of God. Jesus cared deeply about both knowing and doing the will of the Father.

All four gospel writers reveal Jesus' attitude toward the scriptures and the will of the Father. For the sake of space, however, just a few examples will suffice from the gospel of John.

Jesus was determined to "be like the Father." In John 5:19, Jesus affirms, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

Just a few verses later, Jesus says that He does "nothing on My own initiative." He added, "I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30).

In John 8:29, Jesus made an amazing claim – "For I always do the things that are pleasing to Him!"

Jesus was so concerned about doing the will of the Father that even as His own suffering and death were imminent, He asserted that He did "not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak . . . I speak just as the Father has told Me" (John 12:49-50).

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing . . . I can do nothing on My own initiative . . . I always do the things that are pleasing to Him . . . I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak . . . I speak just as the Father has told Me!" Has it ever occurred to you that to practice the noble philosophy of trying to live your life so you can truly "be like Jesus," you must be diligently seeking to know the will of the Father and putting it into practice in your life?

If I am really sincere about a desire to "be like Jesus," I will be conscientious to share His concern. Concerns not only for serving others, but also for serving the Father to the best of my ability according to His revealed will, the scriptures.

- Gary Kerr

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## *Clippings . . .*

"the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," and a patient endurance of unjust persecution has always been one of the church's most potent tools of evangelism.

- Henry Morris, in *The Revelation Record*

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# Headquarters in Heaven!

While working in a secular job a few years back, someone in the office where I had a desk attributed agreement with statements made by President Obama's preacher in Chicago to me because I am a member of the church of Christ. I denied any agreement with Jeremiah Wright, and absolutely no affiliation with his beliefs as I understood them, nor his church, which is called, "Trinity United Church of Christ." There is a definite difference between the two churches!

This gave rise to a question that is sometimes asked: "Where is your church's headquarters, anyway?" Would you be surprised to learn that the church Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18) has no earthly headquarters? Put another way, would you be surprised to learn that the church which belongs to Christ has a command center, but it is not to be found on this earth?

In that Christ is the "head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22-23), then wherever He is would be the "command center", or the "administrative center" of His church. Where is He?

Jesus Christ executes His authority (Matthew 28:18) over His kingdom, the church (Matthew 16:18-19), from heaven. Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15), has been seated on His throne "at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). From there He is "head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:20-23). His disciples, Christians, believers, are members of His body over which He is head. Those who are in Christ's church are in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:6), and recall this important point: Jesus said that His "kingdom is not of this world . . . not of this realm." (John 18:36). Paul says "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Why are so many people telling us that Christ will come again and set up His kingdom in this world, in this realm, when He has already declared the opposite?

Since the righteousness of God is found in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17), and the teaching of the gospel is noted above, we may consider application of these truths with regard to the church into which Jesus adds the saved (Acts 2:47). [Please do not forget that we are discussing the church that belongs to Christ, not the churches that belong to men.]

What holds Christians together in unity (Ephesians 4:3) is the love for God (Mark 12:30) and submission to the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). The result is a common faith (2 Peter 1:1) and allegiance to the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:9). James wrote, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge" (James 4:12). Legislative, executive, and judicial authority resides wholly and solely in Christ, no other (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Christ's church has no pope, no archbishops, no cardinals, no ecclesiastical officials, no "reverends," no presidents, no clergy-laity distinctions, nor any other visible head on this earth. One must leave the simplicity of the gospel (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3) to find written support for the creation of these positions (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:5; Romans 1:21). Have you forsaken the Holy Scriptures for the ecclesiastical writings from the councils of men?

The "church" is not the mediator between God and man; Christ Jesus is our "one mediator" (1 Timothy 2:5). Believers approach Jesus the Son of God for mercy, grace and help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the specially chosen apostles of Christ never created nor taught others to implement any "national headquarters" for the Lord's church (not even in the Jewish holy city of Jerusalem). Each local church was fully empowered to perform the work that the Lord intended (evangelism, edification, and benevolence) with the installation of a plurality of "overseers [elders] and deacons" among the membership (Philippians 1:1). Such wisdom of God eliminated a potential avenue for the devil to operate by institutional intimidation or outside influence.

The local church is amenable only to Christ. All beliefs and practices of the early churches were founded upon the inspired word of God (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Clearly during the last two-thousand years many have departed from the faith, just as the Spirit indicated in the revelation from God (1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-9). There was no seminary, no official conventions, associations, or synods. There was no Book of Mormon; there was no Westminster Confession of Faith. There was no official publishing house, no Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. There were no attempts to glorify any particular man, human doctrine, man-made tradition or practice. The early Christians were commanded to be diligent in "holding fast" and entrusting "sound doctrine" to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:9). Far too many have become unfaithful and reckless in handling the word of God (cf. Galatians 1:6-10). Men must not allow themselves to attempt to improve on God's perfect spiritual blessings. Men must resist becoming blinded to the danger of tampering with God's purposes for the reconciliation of mankind as revealed in His word. The Lord Jesus rules from His throne in heaven. God made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). The church that He purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28) has no earthly headquarters.

- Gary Smalley

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\* "Where is your nose today, in other people's business or in God's Book?"

\* "Write injuries in dust, benefits in granite!"

\* "Some people think they need faith as big as a mountain to move a mustard seed!"

\* "God feeds the birds of the air, but he does not put the food in their nests!"

\* "If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God. If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers." (1 Samuel 12:14-15).

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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)