

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Starting a Spiritual Conversation

In classes and sermons this year, we have begun emphasizing and preparing ourselves to be better teachers of God's word. We all know that, as disciples, our main purpose is to spread the word. But we often don't know how to begin.

Generally, people don't walk up to Christians and say, "Hi, I'd like to study the Bible with you." We usually have to initiate the conversation, and many of us don't know how to do that.

A year or two ago, I attended a study session for men. I received some material that might be useful in helping us get started. Following are some suggestions we received:

- Look for ways to turn a nonspiritual conversation with a friend or acquaintance into a spiritual one.
- When talking with someone in the world, listen for a key word or phrase that you can use as a starting point. For example, if a person says, "Isn't that tree beautiful?" you could follow up by saying, "Isn't it remarkable how many different trees God created?"
- Or, if a person says, "The best thing just happened to me," you could ask, "Do you think God had a part in it?" This lays groundwork for a discussion regarding the source of our blessings.

Consider using some of these suggestions about what to say after you begin a conversation:

- Tell how you became interested in Jesus and God's word.
- Tell the most important lessons you have learned from God.
- Comment on Bible authority. Tell how you use the Bible. Perhaps you could use a ruler or yardstick to illustrate a standard of authority. Talk about why people see the Bible differently.
- Ask your new acquaintance if he/she worships anywhere.
- Suggest a Bible study in your home or theirs.

Other things you can do:

- Take your Bible to work and read during the lunch period. See if a conversation develops.
- When people talk about being "lucky," tell them they have been "blessed," rather than lucky. This may be the basis for more discussion.
- Don't be embarrassed to offer public prayer before your meals. You don't want to do this merely to be seen of men, but you do want your light to shine. It may open some doors.
- Show genuine interest in other people.
- Ask about their families.
- Be hospitable. Invite folks to visit you in your home. Don't be a know-it-all. Show humility; be willing to learn from others just as they're willing to learn from you. Ask what they believe and why. Show them what you believe and why.

Always be aware of opportunities. View every person and every situation as an opportunity to teach, one way or the other. Weddings, funerals, class reunions, and business meetings are occasions for teaching. Visits to hospitals and nursing homes also provide opportunities.

Read your Bible. Someone has said, "A leader is a reader, and a reader is a leader." Five years from now, you will be pretty much the same as you are today, except for two things - the books you read and the people with whom you form close relationships. The Bible obviously is the best book you can read to change your life and move you to help others change theirs.

Getting started is always difficult. We often doubt our abilities. But consider this: You can't walk on water unless you get out of the boat. People often belittle Peter because after he got out of the boat and walked on the water, he lost faith and began to sink. But, despite his weaknesses, Peter was the only disciple who got out of the boat.

- Randy Blackaby

Everywhere in Every Church

"For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

"As I teach everywhere and in every church." There is great significance in that observation, particularly as it pertains to the concept of biblical authority. It argues a pattern - that the things we read about in a letter to one congregation are the very things

that were demanded in other congregations. The requirements of God did not vary from congregation to congregation. Rather, those churches would have resembled each other. Their worship would be the same. Their teaching would be the same. Their organization would be the same. The aspirations of the members in each church would have been the same. Of course, this assumes the ideal. One group may have faltered in this or that, but what God wanted from them as directed by the apostles would have been the same. The different issues identified in the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 illustrate that each group faced its own challenges. Yet, in objective, God desired the same things from each group.

When we read the New Testament, we can understand what God wants - because the things He wanted in Corinth were the same things He wanted in Ephesus, or Thessalonica, or Philippi or Rome. God's Word is no hodgepodge of demands, but rather a record of His admonitions and instructions to different groups of Christians so that all could equally conform to His will. Thus, our churches should worship, think, act, and work just like those churches. We have no right to introduce other arrangements, other kinds of worship, other entities to do our work, nor other objectives to pursue. God's churches today are to be what God's churches were then. To do otherwise is to defy our Lord. Innovation is perversion - not a facilitation of God's will. If we can dismiss the patterns found in scripture, then we might as well dismiss scripture altogether. Including what it says about grace, mercy, justice, sin and salvation. We simply do not get to pick and choose.

"As I teach everywhere and in every church." May we recognize the import of that statement, and give proper respect to God's revelation.

- Russ Bowman

Clippings . . .

One Solitary Life

An anonymous tribute to the magnetism of Jesus over the centuries circulates in slightly different forms. It captures the essence of this point about his impact on history so well that it deserves to be quoted here.

Born in an obscure village, he was the child of a peasant woman. Growing up in another out-of-the-way and disdained village, he worked in a carpenter shop until he was about 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher who both talked and listened. He helped people whenever he could.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never had a family of his own or owned a home. He never traveled over 200 miles from the place where he was born.

He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness and had no credentials but himself.

While he was still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through a mockery of a trial, after which he was executed along with two thieves.

While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he owned - a coat. Only because a generous friend offered his own cemetery plot was there a place for him to be buried.

Nineteen centuries have now come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. The leader of the column of spiritual progress. The ultimate example of love.

It is no exaggeration to say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the kings who have ever reigned, all the congresses that have ever convened, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this Earth as that One Solitary Life.

- Unknown

Stay Busy with Righteousness!

In the gospel according to Luke, "there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord." (Luke 1:5-6).

At times, we find ourselves overwhelmed by the references to a stiff-necked and rebellious people, but here we may take comfort in finding the affirmation that righteousness in the sight of God and faithfulness after the pattern of Abraham was alive and well. Can people actually keep ALL the commandments and requirements of the Lord? ABSOLUTELY! And they did! That is why they were righteous.

Further, notice that these people were busy with the things of God: Zacharias fulfilling his spiritual duties, "performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, ... to enter the temple of the Lord

and burn incense" (verses 8 and 9), and a "whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering." (Verse 10). Those who were faithful to God were busy serving Him!

What does it say in praise of godly parents who teach their children to be faithful to the Lord, and especially in this case, continuously through generations since it had been approximately four hundred years since revelation had been received from God (cf. Malachi 4)? Faithfulness to the Lord was maintained in some hearts! And it happens only by diligence. There were still those who had faith in God's promises, "those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38), "the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25).

Let us now ask ourselves: Are we "righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord"? They did it, we can also (cf. Ephesians 1:4). Are we busy in the things of God (cf. Ephesians 4:12)? They were. Are we doing absolutely everything possible to instill the faith of Christ in our children (cf. Ephesians 6:4)? These folks did.

May the Lord God bless you today as you stay busy in the righteous things of God.

- Gary Smalley

- * "One of the first things which a physician says to his patient is, "Let me see your tongue."
A spiritual adviser might often do the same!"
 - * "There are times when silence is golden, and there are times when silence is yellow. It is high time the church found out which is which!"
 - * "If you want to make an easy job seem mighty hard, just keep putting it off!"
 - * "If one wishes to be a knocker, he needs neither brains nor education!"
 - * "It does a man no good to sit up and take notice if he keeps on sitting!"
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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)