

LENEXA EDIFIER

"and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

December 17, 2023

Emphasizing The Basics

If the Lord's church is to survive and prosper, it must never depart from the basics of the gospel.

A wise and experienced elder once told me, "I've never known a church to grow that didn't emphasize the basics. If a church is struggling, they just need to get back to first principles and preach them like the people have never heard them before." That was good advice.

If Christians do not have a basic understanding of the elementary principles of the gospel, they have no solid foundation on which to build and grow. One of Christ's parables spoke of the need of making certain that we build on the right foundation (see **Matthew 7:24-27**). That reminds us of the importance of teaching some of the same lessons over and over again.

There are several reasons for this. First, there are always young people growing up who have heard these lessons from the time of their birth. But, at a very young age, most of these studies do not sink in. At some point (and really, only God knows when it will be), a lesson that young people have heard numerous times finally takes hold and they understand an important truth for the very first time. We should never assume that our young people know and understand Bible subjects just because we know they have heard them before.

Secondly, we can never be sure when a visitor will show up and, perhaps, hear a vital Bible lesson at a crucial time in his life. It may be the first and only time that person will ever have the opportunity to understand an important doctrinal point, which could make the difference in his eternal destiny. That's also why we should make certain to explain the plan of salvation during a lesson every time. You just don't know who may be listening carefully and seriously considering obedience. He might have listened many times in the past, have done nothing about what he was learning, and still be receptive this time.

Also, we must not assume that our older members (not in age, necessarily, but those who have been around a while) can always remember everything they've ever heard. It might have been a long time since they have studied a particular subject, or they might be aware of

the truth but not know where the verses are that teach that truth. It is always helpful to be reminded of things we know to be true so that our convictions are deep and not easily shaken. These things help to mature and stabilize us spiritually *"till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive"* (**Ephesians 4:13-14**).

There will be certain subjects that we will never outgrow. We must never be afraid to preach lessons that members have heard many times. When someone has been a Christian for several years, there is almost no way to preach something new to him. As people have said, "If it's new, it isn't true; and if it's true, it isn't new." No matter how much "strong meat" of the word people can handle, those who are the most mature spiritually will never grow tired of hearing these basic principles of truth, because they know how important they are. They love all truth and do not have to be entertained with "some new thing" all the time.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (**Hebrews 5:12**).

If people are not growing spiritually, if the church is struggling with carnality and division, if souls are not being saved, look first at the preaching. Maybe we need to just get back to the basics.

- by Roger Hillis

WE CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS

Many people are critical of God — some even using it as their primary reason for rejecting His very existence. For one reason or the other, they are critical of Him because He does not: (1) directly intervene to protect innocent from serious birth defects, fatal injuries, or

crippling diseases; (2) directly intervene to stop evil political rulers from oppressing and preying upon the weak and vulnerable; (3) directly intervene to spare “good” people the suffering brought on by disease and accidents; (4) directly intervene to keep evil people from harming innocent people; and, (5) directly intervene to keep earthquakes, storms, floods, and volcanic eruptions from taking human lives.

At the same time they do not want God: (1) to take away their freedom to choose; (2) to take away their powers to reason; (3) to remove personal responsibility for one’s actions; or, (4) to change the immutable laws of nature. Well, we can’t have it both ways. It would have to be one or the other, with all of the consequences that ensue.

The physical universe is regulated by immutable physical laws (which we call “the laws of nature”). We can’t change them, and God certainly won’t. We must learn them, accept them, and respect them. We can rely on them and be blessed and benefited by them. Or we can remain ignorant of them, ignore them, defy them, and challenge them — and suffer the consequences. We must not expect God to protect us from “the laws of nature”, while we ignore, or fail to respect, or even challenge, and defy these laws.

Man is a free moral agent, able to learn, understand, and apply God’s immutable, spiritual laws. Man is able to (and expected to) choose between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, and wisdom and folly. If he couldn’t choose to do wrong, he couldn’t choose to do right either — he would be another animal and not a free moral agent. Each person is responsible for the choices he makes and will be held accountable by God — to whom he must one day give answer. God will “balance the books” and mete out justice.

Each one is a part of a world of people. And anyone can carelessly risk or deliberately destroy his own life, or carelessly endanger or ruin his own health, or abuse and misuse his own body, or pollute and corrupt his own mind, or defile and lose his own soul. Each one can also mislead, or deceive, or pain, or grieve, or harm those around him — physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, or spiritually. Or each one can do the opposite.

Acts 17:24-28 says, *“The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;*

neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His offspring.’” Jesus told Satan that man is not to tempt God (**Matthew 4:7**). But this is what we do when we want the world both ways. Let’s learn to respect, to cooperate with, to observe, and to be blessed and benefited by the wonderful laws of God, both the physical and the spiritual — and not always yearning to have our cake and eat it too. It can’t be done!

(Adapted from Bill Crews)

FALLOW GROUND

“Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes to rain righteousness on you” (Hosea 10:12 NASV). Oxen used in everyday farming, needed to be trained, especially to the weight and burden of the sledge they pulled when they crushed grain. Young oxen wearing the yoke learned to be at ease with this new-found burden. In fact, threshing the grain would be a “plumb” job for the animal. *“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” (Deuteronomy 25:4).* Grain was always within their grasp. And the owner of the animal would recognize its value (**Proverbs 12:10**). There was, however, the danger of the animal becoming lazy; an oxen would sometimes *“skip about like a threshing heifer”* (Jeremiah 50:11). *heifer” (Jeremiah 50:11.* What kind of message was this for God’s people?

“Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh, but I will come over her fair neck with a yoke; I will harness Ephraim, Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself” (Hosea 10:11). God’s threshing floor blessed His people; still, they forget their Lord. Grain was available but Israel turned to idols and to foreigners for safety. *“Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns” (Jeremiah 4:23).* Captivity loomed large. The stubborn animal needed discipline. The fallow ground

of sin could be plowed and nourished and yield obedience; the choice was Israel's.

Hosea used easily understood agriculture illustrations to show Israel how far she had strayed from Jehovah. Israel was a "luxuriant vine." Even though, this prosperity came from the Lord and Israel lived in abundance, she built more altars and increased her idolatry. A lack of faith deluded their hearts; they were faithless but believed they were faithful to Jehovah. Their sacred pillars would be destroyed. Idolatrous priests officiated over pagan sacrifices. Their high places yielded thorns and thistles. They had no king, but why bother anyway? A king could not help them. Their initial request for a king (**1 Samuel 8**) brought peace and security, at least for a while. Soon, wicked kings led a wicked nation into captivity and alienation from their Creator. Israel could repent and trust in the Lord. Yet, self-reliance, physical strength, and sowing to the wind, brought destruction on God's own people. The Assyrians were coming. Was there any hope?

Fallow ground could refer to ground that had been idle for a long time. Fallow ground was potentially tillable. Would Israel rise in repentance and till the ground of faithfulness to Jehovah? Hosea's wife, Gomer, sowed the wild oats of sin. Israel followed suit. They didn't have to do so; but they did.

Randy Harshbarger

What Is in Your Hand

The Lord said to him, *"What is that in your hand?" And he said, A staff.*"—**Exodus 2:2**

We have before us one of the many great questions found in the Bible. God's people are slaves in the land of Egypt and the time has come when God is going to deliver them from that bondage. God has chosen Moses to be the one to lead the people out of Egypt but Moses, feeling inadequate to take on this task, says "they will not believe me." To this the Lord asks this simple question, *"what is that in your hand"* to which Moses replies, *"a staff."* That which was just a stick of some kind in Moses' hand when placed in the hand of God became the staff of God (**Exodus 4:20**) that by the power of God became the force that brought the plagues on Egypt, divided the Red Sea and brought water from a rock.

As I think about this event in the life of Moses, the thought occurs to me that our God can take whatever we are willing to put into his hands and make them into something that will be great and mighty. I think about David who once held in his hands only a sling and five smooth stones as he went out to fight the giant, Goliath (**1 Samuel 17:20-51**). I hear David as he says to Goliath, *"you come to me with spear, sword and javelin but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel"* and with that said, he placed a stone in the sling and slew Goliath. In the hands of God, that sling and those stones became the force that put the Philistine army to flight.

I think about a little boy who had only 5 loaves and 2 fish (**Matthew 14:12-21**). In the hands of that little boy nothing more than a simple lunch just for him but when placed into the hands of the Lord, that simple little lunch fed 5000 men besides women and children with 12 baskets left over. On another occasion 7 loaves and a few small fish placed into the Lord's hand fed 4000 men besides women and children.

Sometimes I fear that we may look at ourselves and begin to think that we are just small, weak, frail, insignificant individuals with very little to offer the Lord. Yet we hold our life in our hands and both our present and future life are going to be what we make them to be. Time is a precious gift that has been given to us and it is priceless. Time is our greatest friend or enemy, depending upon how we use it. We hold influence in our hands and it will bless us or bring harm to us. We have talents and abilities in our hands that we will one day be held accountable for as to how we have or have not used them.

I submit to you that if we will place our life, our time, our influence, and our abilities into the hand of the Lord with the attitude, "Lord, here am I, use me", he can and will make our life beautiful, wonderful and useful. Folks, this is not a matter of what can I do; it is a matter of what can God do through me. If we, without reservation, willingly place ourself into the hands of God, the results will without a doubt surprise us with some marvelous results.

Charles Hicks, Gallatin Tennessee
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Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

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WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS:

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SUNDAY SERMON: **WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?**

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10