

News & Notes

Afternoon Singing: We will meet today at 5pm in the auditorium for an afternoon singing.

Ladies' Bible Study: The next class will be held at Angela Wisdom's home tomorrow evening at 7PM.

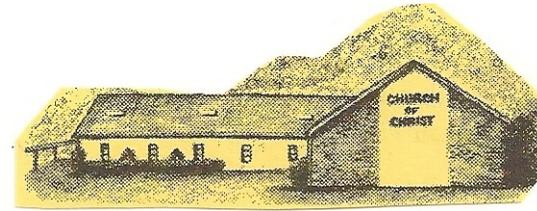
Young Adult Study: There will be a meeting for Bible study this Friday evening at the Sheffield's' residence, at 7:30PM.

Kid's Review Class: We will meet again on May 9th, in classroom #7, shortly after the PM service.

Prayer Requests: *Our brethren:* Norm Blackburn, Kayla Cunningham (Nearing the end of her pregnancy), Marian Church (Still suffering effects of memory loss), Mildred Church, Vernita Goodall & family (With the loss of her sister), Linda James, the Lawson family, Steph Marschall, Leon & Ruth Miller (Leon has a procedure scheduled for Tuesday, May 5th), Butch Morgan, Dottie Reynolds (In need of prayer & encouragement), Wayne & Christine Ryland, the Sheffield's, the Stevens family, and the Wharton family.

Our friends and family: Please continue in prayer for Larry Wisdom's mother (Canera Wisdom), Hal Lewis, Pat Dickey (Doing much better, now cancer free, & has two treatments left) Joan Mott (A friend of the Days), Heather Tyre, and Waylon Townsend.

Group Meeting: Group (2) meets tonight after worship. Please make an effort to be involved in this good work.



Lakeland Hills Leader

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ELDERS

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SERVICES

Sunday
Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
Michael Sadler
Moses Stevens
David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

God's Word: Our Window to Heaven and Mirror of Our Soul

“Preach the man, and not the plan.” “Spiritual transformation comes from not looking at the rule, but looking at the ruler.” “You’re too busy looking at the Bible, rather than looking at the GOD of the Bible.”

What do all these catchphrases have in common? They are all phrases that we have either heard or read that proclaim the same basic message. Various versions of the first we have heard all of our lives from denominational circles and some liberal brethren. The second we have recently heard favorably quoted by brethren. The third was told to us by a brother who had it said to him.

The message conveyed, intended or not, is that to properly magnify God and His Son, we need to de-emphasize the word. From what I can ascertain that by looking past the word we are supposed to be able to somehow forge a closer personal relationship with Deity. Also involved is the misguided notion that strict adherence to the word is not nearly as important as the supposed personal relationship to God. As we have said, that denominational preachers have for years preached the “the man, not the plan” concept. In recent years, it is being

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 4/15/15

Song Leader: Keith Marschall
Opening Prayer: Nick Ross
Invitation: Bucky Day
Announcements: Bob Marschall
Closing Prayer: Jim Elliot
Parking Lot: Larry Hicks

Sunday Evening: 4/19/15

Song Leader: Colby Sadler
Opening Prayer: Bob Marschall
Lord's Table: Nick Ross
Announcements: Larry Hicks
Closing Prayer: Paul Lloyd
Parking Lot: David Williams

Sunday Morning: 4/19/15

Lord's Table: Nick Ross (B)
Jeremy Wharton (C)
Serving: Ben Cunningham
Nick Groenhof
Song Leader: Charles Rawdon
Opening Prayer: Leon Miller

Announcements: Larry Hicks
Closing Prayer: Jerry Williams
Parking Lot: (9:00) Norm Blackburn
(9:50) Ed Lawson

warmed over by some of our younger preachers' use of the clever catchphrases like we quoted above.

These catchphrases also encourage the contention that doctrine and adherence to the biblical pattern should not be the basis for fellowship, but rather our common faith in Jesus as the Christ. And that our salvation does not depend on our keeping the rules (commands), but rather our love for the Ruler.

And taken to its extreme the idea makes one question the very nature of the New Testament writings. So we hear people talking about how the writings of the apostles were never meant to be "law," but kind of love letters. While all who repeat these phrases may not take them to such extremes, they are nonetheless sowing the seed for others to do so.

The Primacy of the Word

In reality, the only true relationship that we can have with the Lord is through his word. If one is looking for some kind of "personal" familiar relationship similar to the relationship we have with a close friend or relative in whose physical presence we are, he is not going to find it. Unlike physical relationships, our present relationship with the Lord is a "by faith" and not "by sight" relationship. (2 Corinthians 5:7). Closeness to friends and relatives involves their being in our physical presence and our having physical interaction with them. When one tries to forge that same

kind of closeness to Deity, either he will be disappointed or he will exercise a fertile imagination to make himself "feel" or "sense" the same kind of closeness and personal presence that he feels in his close physical relationships.

Our "by faith" relationship with the Lord causes us to love him whom we have not seen (1 Peter 1:8), touched, nor heard personally. It is forged only through the word given to us by the Lord, the word of faith that was preached by inspired men (Romans 10:6-8, 17). We can only know the Lord through that means. All we know about his attributes, his nature and his will is what is said in the word. You cannot minimize the word of God and get close to him – you can only get close to him by having the "word of faith" close to you "in your mouth and in your heart" (Romans 10:8). You don't get near to him by trying to bring him down from above nor up from the beneath so you can experience a personal presence and interaction. You get near to him by having the word of faith near you – in your heart (mind) and your mouth.

As our title suggests, the word is our window to heaven. We can only see heaven and its inhabitants through the eye of faith opened by the word of God. All we know about them, for certain, is in the word of God embedded in our minds. It is also through the word that we really know ourselves, thus making it the mirror of the soul (see James 1:25; Hebrews 4:12).

The only way we can get to and please "the man" is to obey "the plan." This is the only way we can avoid his vengeance when he

comes again (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The only way to stay near to him is to abide in his doctrine (2 John 9-10). Is it any wonder that Jesus is called "the word?" (Cf. John 1). Or that Jesus said, "if you continue in my word, then are you truly disciples of mine." (John 8:31). Or that John wrote, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:2-3).

It would be extremely difficult to overemphasize the importance of the word. It is through it that we can "see" and "know" God this side of heaven. Any claims to a deeper knowledge of God than what we get through the study of the word is bogus. It is only through the word that we know God's plan for us. It is only through the word that we know what God does and has done for us. This is why we are not interested in hearing one "testify" as to what God has done for him, but rather let him tell us what the word teaches that God does for him.

When one gives testimony of his subjective experience and view of God, he is only doing what thousands do regardless of their doctrinal beliefs or religious affiliations. One is just as credible as the other. Even the Muslim can subjectively "testify" what an "awesome" god Allah is and what he has done for him. But when one points to the Scriptures as to who God is, what he can and does do for his children, then he is offering objective credible evidence for his hearers to consider.

Likewise, the only way that we can know the will of God is through his word. The way that we love God is by keeping the commandments of his word. (1 John 5:3). So we should be suspicious of any effort to distance, to whatever degree, the God of the Bible from the Bible of God. We suggest that one spend his time searching the Scriptures to learn all that he can know of God rather than spending time trying to capture just the right feeling that he imagines that one should have toward God. When one gets to know the God of the Bible through searching the Scriptures that "just right feeling" about God and his relationship to him will take care of itself. He will know that God is "awesome" because of what the word reveals rather than what his heart feels. He will know that the heart is deceitful because the Bible says so (Jeremiah 17:9) He will know that the word is a lamp unto his feet and the light unto his pathway because the Bible says so. (Psalm 119:105). He can confidently sing the little children's song: "Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so."

Do you want to truly magnify God, then magnify His word: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (Psalms 138:2)

- Written by: Edward O. Bragwell, Sr