



The Voice Of Truth

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Hillcrest church of Christ

1621 Hillcrest Drive
Green Bay, WI 54313
(920) 499-5677

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com

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Spiritual Growth

By Ron Halbrook

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," which separates us from God (Rom. 3:23). Our only hope for reconciliation to God is through "the precious blood of Christ" who died as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Until we turn to Christ, we remain "dead in trespasses and sins," destined to face God's wrath in eternal torment (Eph. 2:1-3). The man who thinks he can draw closer to God while living in sin deceives himself.

Spiritual growth begins with a spiritual rebirth. Sinners are "born again" and purify their souls "in obeying the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22-23). This happens when they believe in Christ, repent of their sins, confess the deity of Christ, and submit to immersion in water. Since we reach the atoning blood of Christ when we are baptized, the Bible says that "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). At that moment, we become new creatures in Christ and begin to grow spiritually "as newborn babes" (1 Pet. 2:2).

Spiritual growth is an ongoing process. Those who "grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 3:18; 1:4). Such growth is a struggle requiring dedication and sacrifice — "giving all

diligence." Faith in Christ is the foundation for growth in the character traits listed below (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Virtue is moral courage, the determination to do what is right at all costs. Knowledge is the true knowledge of God and his will which we learn from his word and incorporate into our lives. Temperance is self-control, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice, bringing our will into submission to God's will. Patience is endurance, staying power, sticking-with it. Godliness is an active reverence toward God, a life of reverential obedience to him in all things. Brotherly kindness is the genuine, warm concern, courtesy, and consideration shared in a family — in this case, the family of God. Charity is an active love which seeks the welfare and good of others, rather than being wholly absorbed with self.

We must learn to live "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance" and we must "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 1:14; 2:11). As partakers of the holiness of God, God's people do not participate in such things as sexual immorality, profanity, pornography,



gambling, alcohol, dishonesty, malice, spousal abuse, immodest dress, dancing, and lying.

Spiritual growth requires resisting false doctrine. God often warned of "false prophets" and "false teachers" who promise greater "liberty" but lead men into bondage to sin (2 Pet. 2). Many souls are misled by evolution and modern-ism which deny the Bible account of creation and other Bible miracles. Moral relativism denies the moral absolutes of Scripture, making every man a law unto himself. Multitudes are deceived by the liberal philosophy that allows men to replace Bible teaching with their own theories on feminism, homosexuals, and unscriptural divorce and remarriage. Denominationalism deludes men with human doctrines and practices (names like Methodist and Mormon, sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music in worship, etc.).

Those who grow in Christ will receive "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4).

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Mother's Day and Human Traditions

Larry Ray Hafley

Mother's Day is a warm and wonderful civil and social day. All who have been blessed by a godly mother are moved by sweet memories and loving feelings on this day. As we should be thankful every day and not just on Thanksgiving Day, so we should honor "father and mother," not on their day only, but every day (Eph. 6:1-3).

Many churches will celebrate Mother's Day, giving more attention to it than to "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). With carnations and corsages, amid applause, they will recognize "the eldest mother in our congregation," along with the one who has had "the most children." These same churches sponsor Halloween parties, conduct Easter egg hunts, and pass out candy canes at Christmas, and interrupt worship services to give gifts to the preacher and/or the elders.

Every-one smiles and beams with joy and pride.

But it was not always so. When these things first occurred, they were met with wondering bewilderment by a generation which was unaccustomed to such spectacles. However, their initial doubts and fears were eased when they saw their loving mother's tears. So, they buried their questions and clapped for those who were being honored. Hesitance and reluctance gave way to acceptance. Yes, they took a pinch of bread and a sip of juice, but it was not the Lord's Day. It was Mother's Day that they observed. "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9).

These churches no longer advertise in their bulletins and on their radio program that "we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent" (1 Pet. 4:11). They no longer say that "we do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names" (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). No, those are the echoes of an age long for-gotten. Instead, they speak of "This special day here in the life of our church family when we pause to honor" our mothers, our fathers, our graduates, or whatever the occasion may be. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have be-stowed upon you labor in vain" (Gal. 4:10, 11). "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Also, these churches no longer issue strong, scriptural protests against the human traditions of Easter and Christmas. Oh, they may mildly disclaim them, but their works give credence to these human traditions which make worship void and vain (Matt. 15:8, 9). Soon, churches which now honor human holy days will begin to dispute and question heavenly ones. Their observances of Mother's Day and Father's Day will become more and more elaborate. Meanwhile, their "questions" about "some of our Restoration traditions" (weekly Lord's Supper, music in worship, etc.) will be publicly aired. It is the way error works. It is how denominations are born.

So, today, while we individually observe Mother's Day, let us re-solve to worship our Lord "in spirit and in truth" (John. 4:24). As my own dear mother reminds me, it is his day and not hers.

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