

The Old Paths

Volume 12, Issue 30

September 25, 2005

“759 Ways To Improve Your Life”

Jarrod Jacobs

The above title was on a magazine cover I saw recently. As I read that title, I could not help but stand amazed at the extent to which our society has become so enamored with self-improvement in recent years. If we went back in time a mere 60-75 years, we would see that folks did not have the means, or ability to consider “759 ways to improve your life”! Their concern was how they would survive on earth, provide for their families, and prepare for Heaven. That was their daily struggle! In addition to this, I thought it funny that the writer could only find “759 ways” to improve someone’s life. If someone could find “759” ways to improve one’s life, what about finding one more to make it 760 ways? What about 1000 ways? Where does it end?

I did not read the article with the above title, but based upon the magazine it was in, I am positive that this article lent itself toward the improvement of the physical body, and not the soul. Is it not amazing that someone could find “759 ways” to improve one’s physical life, and in all of this not see that there is but one thing that will make the greatest improvement of all; and that is the salvation of one’s soul from sin? Yes, it is the soul of man that needs the help, rather than the body! The apostle to the Corinthians stated, “... though

our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (II Cor. 4:16). Our “outward man” continues to perish, regardless of the vitamins, exercise, medicine, snake oil, etc., that we put into it, while our “inward man” is being renewed day by day. In addition to this, we learn, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (I Tim. 4:8). Looks to me like true “improvement” is going to come when we endeavor to make our souls right with God, and not when our life is spent in the pursuit of physical perfection, which today is achieved and tomorrow is gone (I Pet. 1:24)!

Such Biblical facts as these ought to show us that spending our days practicing “759 ways,” or 1000 ways, to improve our physical lives really does little for us. Our focus ought to be on trying to find that “one thing” which will improve our spiritual lives now and prepare us for eternity! Let us focus upon our soul and be determined to have it cleansed from sin and then prepare ourselves for eternity! How is this done? It begins with obeying the Lord’s plan for salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Not only must this be our focus, but also bear in mind that we need to continue in being faithful to God (I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). We need to “seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). It is tragic, but for

many in this world, the last thing they think about is their soul! It is too easy to place jobs, retirement, hobbies, yard work, boats, friends, and family responsibilities ahead of our soul and our relationship with God and think, “I’ll worry about my soul later.” For many in the world, they have no “later”!

While we’re thinking about the value of the soul, parents, what thought have you given to your children and their precious souls? Remember, you have been entrusted with these dear ones, and are to train them up right (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Titus 2:3-5; etc.). Parents, have we ever considered the fact that Matthew 5:14-16, 7:12; Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31; II Timothy 2:2; and similar passages apply in the home as much as anywhere else? We cannot allow our brains and actions to go on “auto-pilot” in raising our children, whether they are 9 months old, 9 years old, or 19 years old! Do not assume they have Bible knowledge simply because they sat beside you in church services! Furthermore, don’t assume YOU have acquired sufficient Bible knowledge (Eph. 5:17; II Tim. 2:15) if YOU have done nothing more than occupy a seat beside your children!

Brethren, it is high time we stopped looking for “759 ways” to improve ourselves, and look for the ONE THING that truly will!! When our soul is right before God, then the physical life will follow. Isn’t this Christ’s point in Matthew 6:33? However, if we think that improving the physical body will improve the soul, we have put the cart before the horse! Think seriously about how we are living now, and how we can prepare for eternity! (II Cor. 6:2)

Is One Church As Good As Another?

Jarrold Jacobs

Perhaps the most common attitude among “religious” people is the attitude that one church is as good as another. Many who believe it “taboo” to talk about religious matters will say, “You do what you want to do and I’ll do what I want to do.” Some folks, once the conversation turns to religious matters, will cut you off saying words to the effect, “Just stop right there, I’m satisfied with what I have!” Friends, what does this say about people’s attitudes?

Let us take a moment and consider the consequences of the statement, “one church is as good as another.” If “one church is as good as another,” this says:

1. The name of men is as good as the name of Christ. Is this true? Peter said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). There is only One whose authority (name, Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17) is all-inclusive - Christ!

2. The blood of men is as good as the blood of Christ. Paul said that the church was purchased by Christ’s blood (Acts 20:28). Is there anything more precious than the blood of Christ that was used to purchase the one true church (I Pet. 1:18-19)?

3. The foundation of men is as good as the foundation of God. Yet, the foundation of the church of Christ, is Christ (I Cor. 3:11; Matt. 7:24-27)! He is de-

scribed as “the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6-7).

4. The will of men is as good as the will of God. Read Hebrews 9:15-17 and learn that Christ is “the mediator of the new testament.” As a result of His death on the cross, His testament is in force. Where is man’s testament that can nullify or make void the New Testament?

5. The word of men is as good as the word of God. In truth, it is only God’s word that gives us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” and “thoroughly furnishes us unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:20-21). What word of man (creed, etc.) could make this claim?

6. The organization of men is as good as the organization of Christ. Local congregations of the Lord’s church are scripturally organized when they have elders, deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1). Could anyone improve on this plan?

Truly, one church is not as good as another. In addition, folks who believe such must also accept the above consequences of that position. Our responsibility is to be a part of the Lord’s church, and no one else’s (Rom. 16:16). Are you a Christian? Have you been added to the Lord’s church (in contrast with man’s, Acts 2:38, 47)?

“Pointed Paragraphs”

R.L. Whiteside (1869-1951)

♦ If you become a little squeamish about denouncing false teachers, read Jeremiah. If you think people are so hardened in sin that they hate you for preaching the word, read Jeremiah. A careful study of Jeremiah is good tonic for anyone.

♦ To write the word of Christ upon the heart, or, what is essentially the same, to let it dwell in us richly, means more than to commit it to memory. It is to make it the dominant factor in our thinking and in our plans and purposes.

♦ The apostles were practical men. Some were fishermen; one, a tax collector. Both callings teach a person not to believe all he hears.

(The Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy, p. 17, 99, 45)

Which Is Worse?

A child afraid of the dark?

OR

An adult afraid of the light?

(See: Mark 10:15; John 3:20; Romans 13:12)

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