

THE ONLY BOOK GOD GAVE

David Halbrook

There are many modern claims that “God told me. . .” or “God gave us this book.” Paul warned that there would no new message and even if an angel or apostle brought a new message *let him be accursed* (Galatians 1:6-9). The Bible *thoroughly equips us for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17), so we need no new message or book from God.

The Koran claims that “Gabriel. . . has by God's grace revealed to you [Muhammad, dh] the Koran” (2:98). If God's grace revealed this, His grace also told husbands, “As for those [wives, dh] whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them.” (Koran, 4:34) So husbands should “teach” their wives to submit by not going to bed with them and beating them. Did God reveal this book or not?

In the Bible, husbands are not told to put their wife in submission but wives are told to submit themselves (Ephesians. 5:22). Do you see the difference?

All religious books are not equal. The Bible is the only book God gave.

Editor's Note: This week's article in *Arkansas Weekly* would be easily accepted by most people in Batesville. Few people will object to identifying error in the official book of the Muslims, so its good to warn while we can. Ironically, if they would not object to warning of Muslim error, why would they object to citing the official writings (creed, website, etc) of any other religious group? Do they object to Jesus, Paul, and Luke answering the religious error of their day? If Jesus, Paul, or Luke lived today, they probably would object, but we can't let that stop us.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

May 19, 2013

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THE BENEFITS OF A SMALL CHURCH

Stan Cox

When I moved to Fort Worth from Odessa in 1989, I remember one of the members here asking me if I was used to preaching for such a small church. I assured them that “small” is relative. I grew up in a congregation that numbered about 30-40 for Sunday morning worship. I cut my teeth preaching for a group in Monahans that would have 15 present on a good day. So, West Side seemed to me to be a big church!

Regardless, there is a big difference between a congregation of 100 and a congregation of 200-300 or more. While many would advocate that bigger is better, I would assert that there are actually some benefits to being a member of a small congregation.

For example, in a small church there is often a greater sense of family. Often in larger congregations there will be people who do not even know one another. If you don't know everyone in a congregation the size of West Side, it indicates a lack of involvement on your part. We are given the admonition as Christians to “*love the brethren*” (cf. 1 John 3:14). Paul admonished the Corinthians because of a lack of deference and concern for one another. Notice the situation as described by the apostle, “*Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it*” (1 Corinthians 11:17-18). There is a great sense of family here at West Side, and for that I am thankful. I pray that it extends to all who are members here. These feelings can be strengthened if we all seek such in love and humility.

In a small church there is often more of an opportunity for service, and spiritual growth. There are always men and women ready to teach, and men ready to serve publicly in worship. When a congregation is large, however, many seldom have an opportunity to serve publicly. Since the pool of available members is smaller, it is

more likely that a disciple will be used in a small congregation. It is also true that such a one will be missed if they are not present to help. This puts a greater onus on the individual to be diligent in attendance, preparation and punctuality. It is disappointing to have individuals who have the talent and willingness to serve, but who are not dependable because of their lack of punctuality or attendance. Here at West Side we need men and women to teach the Bible classes, and we need our men to assist the deacons in worship preparation by being present and early to the services.

While it can be a wonderful experience to be a part of a small congregation, it certainly is not appropriate for us to be stagnant in our duty to the Lord. We should always be desirous of growth as a congregation of Christians. Smallness is not intrinsically virtuous. Many congregations remain small simply because of a lack of effort. In fact, there is often an increased opportunity to grow in the small congregation. Individual Christians are allowed the opportunity to teach and participate, and in so doing improve their Bible knowledge. Such competence encourages confidence to share that knowledge with the lost to the salvation of souls.

Each Christian should have a sense of duty to the work done in a small congregation. There is the greater opportunity for the individual, and a commensurate greater need for his involvement. When you are a member of a small congregation, you can't sit around and expect the work to be done. You must have a part in doing it yourself!

That personal responsibility is revealed by Jesus in John 15:1-2. *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*

As members of a small congregation, we must utilize our assets to growth. If we all do our part, growth is inevitable. We will each grow spiritually, and as a result of our efforts, souls will be saved.

The alternative to this is stagnation. A small congregation can't afford to stagnate, as it can result in atrophy, or even death. So, brethren, let each of us get to work!

<http://soundteaching.org/2008/06/07/the-benefits-of-a-small-church/>

GRACE AND OBEDIENCE

Edward O. Bragwell Sr.

I am hearing and reading a lot lately about why we should not focus on obedience or as some put it "law keeping" but on God's grace. Often it is said in a context that

makes one think that God's grace somehow had been long lost sight of by most, if not all, of my generation and now is being rediscovered by this generation.

Let me assure you that most of my generation and generations before me have been very much aware of God's grace and our need for it. Without the grace of God none of us would be saved and able to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. If the new generation had been listening they would have heard us speak of God sending His Son, His shedding of His blood on the cross, His establishment of His church (purchasing it with His blood), His revelation of His grace and will through the apostolic writings, and heard us pray fervently for His grace in the forgiveness of the sins that we commit while trying to serve Him. All of this is acknowledging the grace of God.

Now, as to why we have said so much about obeying or keeping His commandment (law keeping). It is because that is our part of the equation. God has taken and is taking care of His part of the equation perfectly. There is nothing that we need to do or say to assure that His end of the equation is taken care of – we just gratefully acknowledge and praise Him for it. Having done that now we can focus on our response to His grace by focusing on our end of the equation—learning and obeying His will (commandments) for us and trying to persuade others to do the same i.e., doing what His grace teaches us to do (cf. Titus 2:11-12). If the present generation has only heard the "law keeping" part of our preaching and not the "grace" that teaches us to obey all things commanded and is turned off by it, maybe they were not listening closely enough when we spoke of the reasons for our obedience.

When the Lord tells us to "go work today in my vineyard" (cf. Matthew 21:28) we should acknowledge His great wisdom in designing, planting, and watering His great vineyard and His goodness toward us by giving us the opportunity to work in such a great facility provided to us by His grace. While we might stand there in awe of His greatness in providing such a wonderful vineyard, we do not need to JUST stand there awestruck and sharing your awe with fellow laborers. While acknowledging the Master's wisdom and goodness, we need to shift our focus to doing what He has called us to do and get busy doing what we were called to do and encourage our fellow-laborers to do the same. As we focus on pleasing Him by doing His work (obedience) we have confidence in our Master's doing His part and is forgiving when our work in His vineyard, in spite of our best efforts, is less than perfect.

{The Belleville (IN) Messenger Apr 21, 2013}