

## Lessons My Dad Taught Me By Leon Mauldin

When a loved one dies, it is normal to engage in some reflective thinking on the life of the deceased. One's memory seems to select those incidents and occurrences, which, now that death has come, take on special significance. Perhaps this is a factor that helps the survivors in the "healing process" that needs to occur when we "have said 'Good-bye' to the dearest on earth" to us. It has just now been two years since my father died of cancer. This has given me the occasion to reflect upon lessons that I learned from him, for which I will always be thankful.

### The Bible Is Right

My father had absolute faith in the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. For example, he had unquestioning faith, childlike faith, in the Genesis account of creation. When God's Word said in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," that settled the matter. In looking up at the skies, the handiwork of God was seen. No theory of evolution was ever seen as a plausible explanation of the things "that have been made" (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 11:3).

Likewise, in the matter of God's provision for our salvation in Christ (Isa. 53; John 3:16) and obedience to the Gospel that we might receive salvation, the Bible is right (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). One of my Dad's favorite passages was that of the conversion of the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:26-40). Just weeks before his death, when he was no longer able to locate references, he asked me to find that text for him.

I learned from my Dad that in all matters, the Bible is right. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Tim. 3:16,17).

The reason that this attitude toward Scripture is important, is because it is the attitude that Jesus had toward the word of God: God's Word is right "and the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

My father taught me that Scripture is that which is spoken to you by God; that it is God's word for us today. When Jesus was asked a "knotty" marriage question that was really intended to disprove the resurrection, He replied, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:31-32). Although the words to which Jesus referred (Exodus 3) had been spoken more than 1400 years earlier, the Scripture had direct application and relevance for His audience. This is the exact view of Scripture which we must have!

### The Futility of Denominationalism

While there was never hatred or malice for our friends and neighbors who were members of various denominations, I learned from my father a very important principle: that the doctrines and traditions of men are futile. If name, or doctrine, or belief or practice was not from heaven (revealed in God's Word), then it was manmade, and was to be rejected. With my father, it was as simple as that.

This principle is not true because he believed it, but because God's word reveals it: "Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition...And in

vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:6, 8-9). "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted... And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matt. 15:13-14). (Please read also Gal. 1:6; 2John 9; Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46).

#### That Liberalism Is Wrong

When we moved to Sumiton, Alabama, in the early 60's, the Sumiton church had not been established. I remember my Dad making a call to brother Pryde E. Hinton, who was preaching at Sayre (Jefferson County), whom we had never met, and asking him how the Sayre church stood regarding church support of human institutions. Upon learning that the church was scriptural in its organization and work, we began to worship there.

Even before that, I remember hearing discussions with relatives, where Dad would maintain that there is a difference between an individual's money, and the treasury of the church, and a difference between what he could do with his money, and what the church could do with the Lord's money.

Regarding this subject, as well as much of these matters included in this article, I have had the occasion to thoroughly study for myself. My faith is not my father's faith; it is my faith, as indeed it must be for me to be pleasing to God. But it is the word of God that speaks of local churches with bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1); of elders who tend the flock among them (1Peter 5:2). It does not authorize such arrangement as the sponsoring church, with elders overseeing the funds and work of many churches. The Bible teaches that the work of the church is evangelism, edification and benevolence (relief of needy saints). The work is not recreation, entertainment, or social program. Jesus did not shed His blood to purchase unto Himself a people that would duplicate the services of various human organizations (Red Cross; Human Services, etc.). I learn from reading the Bible that the church is not authorized to build and maintain human institutions that propose to do the work that God assigned to the church.

#### Sensitivity To People

From my father I learned to care about people; to be sensitive to people. He was observant as to whether one "had something on his mind," or was upset, or had hurt feelings. In this regard, he readily saw what others either do not see, or else have to be told.

Repeatedly in the ministry of Christ, we read that He was moved with compassion. We also should have a heart of compassion (Col. 3:13) that is sensitive to the needs of others, and be tenderhearted (Eph. 4:32). This should find expression in our family. Truth must be lived and practiced, but that includes conveying to one's spouse and children tenderness toward them, and genuine care for them.

This is true regarding our brethren; sensitivity is needed here also. Each of us are at different levels of growth. It is clear that if one is unruly (disorderly, ASV), he is to be warned (1Thes. 5:14); and if that warning is not heeded, he is to be withdrawn from (2Thes. 3:6). Truth must never be compromised. But we need to be sensitive to the fact that not all are unruly; some are faint-headed, others are weak. Some may struggle with problems which they have not informed others about. "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faith-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1Thes. 5:14). This calls for wisdom, and for sensitivity. In all of this our goal should be to strengthen our brother's hand in God (1Sam. 23:16).

Toward those not yet children of God, there is a need for sensitivity. I must ever keep in mind that "by the grace of God, I am what I am" (1Cor. 15:10). Error must be met forcefully, but I must not be motivated by glee in answering the opponent's argument. Remembering that people in error have feelings too, I need to approach them as I would want someone to teach me if I were in their shoes (Matt. 7:12). Each Christian is told to be "ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1Peter 3:15). That individual we teach in his home, in an effort to convert him, must see that we are not merely filling our quota of calls for the week; he must see that we have a genuine interest in and love for his soul.

Conclusion: I have not written about opportunities that were fumbled, and blunders that were made. There were many weaknesses in his life of which my father was aware, and many things of which he was rightfully ashamed, but I will always be thankful to have had these foundational truths from God's Word to build on. These principles have helped fortify my faith, and it is my desire that in some small way they may strengthen your faith also. (Via Searching the Scriptures, Nov. 1990, Vol. 31, #11)

#### A Moments Wisdom

A wayward child is sometimes straightened out by being bent over.  
People determine your character by observing what you stand for, fall for, and lie for.  
The Bible has survived the ignorance of its friends and the hatred of its enemies.  
Exercise daily: walk with God and run from Satan.