

Pockets with Holes

By Jason Hardin

“Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes” (Haggai 1:3-6).

Ever had a pair of pants with a hole in one of the pockets? Each time you put those pants on and place your hand in the pocket, you remember. And then you rationalize that it’s not that big of a deal. There are other, more pressing things. It will be all right. You will remember. Until you absentmindedly drop some coins, or a pen, or a check, or your keys into that same pocket.

Pockets with holes are annoying! (Can you tell I’ve lost more than one item through a hole in a pocket?) But did you know that God, through his prophet Haggai, used that same everyday idea to make a vital spiritual point? Though we live in a different era and a different context, it is still wise (and essential) to “consider our ways” in relation to our priorities, actions, and reactions to the revelation of our Creator. Will those things that I’m pouring into the “bag” of my life “abide forever” (1John 2:15-17)? I brought nothing into this world, and I cannot take anything with me (1Tim. 6:6-8), but am I living life as if I believe those facts?

This lesson emphasizes four major life lessons as defined by the God who created us:

- Life outside of Christ is a bag with holes (Romans 8:31-32).
- Life that revolves around me is a bag with holes (Matthew 16:24-26).
- Life without the kingdom of God first is a bag with holes (Matthew 6:33).
- Life without treasures in heaven is a bag with holes (Matthew 6:19-20).

You are pouring a lot of things into your life. But will they last? Does the “bag” of your life have a hole in the bottom? And if so, isn’t it time that you did something about it?

Elders Who Serve Well and Those Who Don’t

By Kent Heaton

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear” (1Tim. 5:17-20).

The leadership of the local congregation is under the care of those men shepherding the flock of God as prescribed by the Holy Spirit. It is a grave task of oversight to be in care of the souls within a local community. Each man will give an account of their work before God receiving a heavier judgment for their actions. No task is greater than serving as an elder of the church. Like a shepherd watching over the flock each man has a regard for the sheep in a personal manner. Jesus describes the shepherd as knowing his flock, calling them out by name and going before them as they follow his lead. The tender care of the elder towards the members is manifested in the love he has for them. There will be times of difficulty when the elders must make hard choices. All of their actions are in accordance with the will of the Father and the welfare of the sheep.

No work is more rewarding than serving as a bishop of a congregation. Those men who embark upon the oversight of the church of Christ are men of character exhibiting leadership in guiding the flock by the word of God. Paul exhorts Timothy to acknowledge the men who rule well suggesting that the leaders of the church should be compensated for their efforts. The Holy Spirit clearly establishes that elders can be supported in their exhaustive work of watching over the flock of God. Considering the amount of work in a local congregation for an elder to be engaged in the financial support would be needed for him to carry out effectively his work. They should be recognized with such recompense.

The Holy Spirit also knows that elders are men who have failings that may need to be addressed. Serving as shepherds does not suggest they are above rebuke or exhortation concerning their lives. If the life of a man who serves as an overseer has a matter of reproach, he is to be rebuked but only at the testimony of two or three witnesses. This must be a public charge so that others may see the seriousness of the sin. It is easy for elders to assume they cannot be rebuked. This is not what the Holy Spirit says. All men are challenged by the temptations of life and shepherds of the church are not exempt. The character of humility will guide their lives to repent and acknowledge their failings. This does not always suggest a man must resign from his work. Depending on the character of the charge and their influence, repentance may resolve the issue by God's grace. Whatever the case the elders are to be acknowledged for their diligent work of looking out after the flock and if the case arises to be rebuked for a lacking in their life.

No church is as strong as it can be until the pattern of the New Testament is followed in leadership. God expects every church to strive for the proper kind of leadership under the work of elders. Churches that go for many years with no effort to establish an eldership are failing the clear commands of the Lord and should repent. Men who serve should be acknowledged for their diligent work. Those who need rebuking should receive the judgment in humility. The mission of the church is so great. Leadership is needed to guide the church in the paths of truth.

A Moments Wisdom

- Supremely blessed are those who are famished and parched for perfect acceptance, for they shall be gorged.
- There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread.
- If Darwin's Theory of Evolution was correct, cats would be able to operate can openers by now.
- You have to be with a child today to be in his memory tomorrow.
- We can no more spend major time on minor things than we can spend minor time on major things.
- If you are fortunate enough to take the elevator to the top, it becomes your responsibility to send it back down for others.
- Just because you don't have a problem, doesn't mean the problem doesn't exist; believing this is so, is the definition of privilege.
- The brook would lose its song if we removed the rocks.
- Things turn out for the best for people who make the best of the way things turn out.
- Prosperity is a great teacher, but adversity is a greater. Possessions pamper the mind, but privation trains and strengthens it.
- Being overcome with envy is like running into the ocean; the deeper you go in, the harder it is to get out.
- Reputation is what folks think you are; personality is what you seem to be; character is what you really are.
- Is it better to appreciate things you do not have or to have things you do not appreciate?
- To have beauty is to have only that; to have goodness is to be beautiful, too.
- Maturity begins to grow when you can sense your concern for others outweighing your concern for yourself.
- When people share their fears with you, share your courage with them.
- Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you.
- Sitting in a church building doesn't make you a Christian any more than sitting in a henhouse make you a chicken.
- You are your own doctor when it comes to curing cold feet.
- Ten two letter words that can change the world: If it is to be, it is up to me.