

It Is Written

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Three Words That Save Lives

By Ken Weliever

I recently came across a post by Bryan Hodge describing the work of a young Hungarian-born physician, Ignaz Semmelweis.

The 19th century doctor was working in Vienna, Austria, in 1847 and implemented an unpopular policy that proved to save many lives. Three years later Semmelweis, an obstetrician, stepped up to the podium of the Vienna Society's Lecture Hall where some of the greatest discoveries in medicine were announced.

That evening, May 15, 1850, would be no different. What had Semmelweis discovered that would surprisingly go unheeded for several more decades? His life saving advice to this august company of Physicians was summed up in three words.

Wash your hands.

When Semmelweis ordered all doctors and medical students working the maternity ward of Vienna General Hospital to wash their hands in a chlorinated-lime wash before treating patients the death rate fell from about 10% to 1%. It was reported that during the following 12 months the lives of over 300 mothers and 250 babies were saved—just in one single maternity ward.

While hand washing is a well-known practice and procedure today, recent studies have shown that “hospital personnel wash or disinfect their hands in fewer than half the instances they should.” And guess who are the worse offenders? Doctors!

No doubt first year medical students are told to “wash your hands.” However, it is easy to become lax in performing a single, routine practice so many times a day. It's not a lack of knowledge. It's failure to be consistent. And to do what ought to be done. Every time.

The Bible uses the metaphor of clean hands to speak to the spiritual health of Christians. The Psalmist raised these questions: “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?

His answer? “He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Ps. 24:3-4)

As Job prayed for relief from his afflictions he said, “Yet the righteous will hold to his way, And he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger.” (Job 17:9). Conversely the prophet Isaiah warned sinful Judah whose “hands are full of blood” (Isa 1:15-16). They are commanded: “Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean.”

Pontius Pilate employed this metaphor at the trial of Jesus when he took a basin of water, washed his hands and cowardly proclaimed: “I am innocent of the blood of this Just person” (Matt 27:24). But he wasn't. The ritualistic symbolism was not enough to cleanse him of guilt.

This analogy is fitting for our work today in ministry. As preachers, pastors and all Christians engage in the vital work of saving souls, it is possible to spread illness with unclean hands. No, not physically. But spiritually.

While we may teach the Truth of faith, repentance and baptism, we may spread spiritual illness by our ugly attitudes, corrupt speech or hypocritical behavior. Of course, it doesn't have to be conduct that is egregious.

A failure to cleanse our hands of lethargy, covetousness, or pride can affect the spiritual health of the church family, as well as those we're trying to convert to Christ. It's good to ask ourselves if we've

washed our hands of worldliness? Gossip? Dissension? Selfishness? Anger? Envy? Jealousy?

Like the hurried physician, we may fail to wash our hands due to a simple neglect of our duty and daily consciousness of our habits. And just like the doctor, our hands need to be washed regularly. They get dirty. And they require constant attention.

Be careful not to spread illness in your ministry.

"Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (Jas. 4:8)

Attending Bible Classes

By Barney Keith

There is one fact that is undeniable about the life of every Christian - he is saying something to those around him by every action of his life. Without any vocal sounds he speaks volumes by his conduct. In this way many a Godly wife has won her husband to the Lord (1 Peter 3:1-2). In this way the shining light of a good life has caused onlookers to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). And even after a righteous person has departed from this life, "he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). So, it is with reference to our attitudes and actions in the work and worship of the Lord in His church. When a person who loves to attend the Bible classes in the local congregation does so faithfully, that Christian is saying something loud and clear. Think about it for a moment. What is he saying?

(1) He is saying to any who observe him, "I love the word of God to the extent that I will take the time to attend classes where my knowledge of it can increase."

(2) He is saying to others, "I realize my need of stronger faith as I strive to please the Lord. I know that it cannot be strengthened without the word of God (Romans 10:17). Being present for Bible study helps me build on the right foundation."

(3) He is saying by his regular attendance, "I appreciate good and faithful Christians who spend hours studying so that they may teach me. I know that it takes much real dedication on their part to do this good work. I certainly want to be there to hold up their hands and to benefit from the study they have put into each lesson. If they devote so much effort in preparing lessons, I surely want to be present in the classes to listen to their instruction."

(4) He is saying, "I find great value and help from spending time with brothers and sisters in Christ in searching God's word together. I have all too little time as it is with my spiritual family in the local church. This extra hour or so means much to me in building stronger ties with them. I know that we all share a deep concern for our souls. And quite often I am helped by the comments of others in the class."

(5) He is saying, by his consistent presence in the classes, "I appreciate what the elders of the congregation are doing for my benefit as they plan and arrange classes for the edification of the church. I am cooperating with them to accomplish their objective - MY increased knowledge of the truth."

In nearly every place attendance at Bible study needs some improvement. That improvement will come from Christians who have opened their eyes to the grave importance of doing all they can to ensure their soul's salvation in the world to come. That improvement will be accomplished by good men and women who have their hearts set on things above more than on things of the earth (Colossians 3:1-2). Let me appeal to ALL members to make a careful appraisal of your commitment to the Lord, His word, and His kingdom. Let all of us make SURE that we all "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33). Without doubt, when this is done carefully and prayerfully, the attendance question will be properly answered, and all other questions as well.