

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“The Home Place”

by Jefferson David Tant

The scene comes clearly to my mind’s eye even now. After crossing the mighty Mississippi at Vicksburg, we knew there were only 150 miles to the little town of Haynesville, Louisiana, and “the old home place.”



“Home” is one of the sweet and dear words from the heart. This home was one of those that give true meaning to the word. It was the earthly dwelling place of S. B. and Nicie Hartsell. It was here that most of their ten children were born, where they learned to work, to live, to love, and where they learned about their Heavenly Father and his home.

As I think of the old home place, where my wife lived her first 19 years, many memories flood my soul and bring tears to my eyes. These are memories of what a home should be, surely memories of what God intended when he decreed that man and woman should be husband and wife, raise a family, and have a home.

Bear with me as I write of some of these memories.

A Place of Love

The Hartsell family was a large family and one that showed love as children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and many other loved ones gathered from time to time. It brings to mind the great and glorious reunion God’s children will have when we gather in our final home in the presence of our Father.

A Place of Worship

Few family gatherings took place without the songbooks being passed out for a family singing. Thirty or forty people sitting on chairs, the floor, the sofa, or on the ever-present beds in the living room blended their voices together to edify one another and praise God. Often others came to be with us and enjoy this time together. The Scriptures were read, and prayers were offered. Do you remember the apostle John’s description of the scenes around the great throne of God, with the multiplied thousands of God’s creation singing praise? I believe we had a foretaste of this at the old home place.

A Place of Hospitality

The doors were open to friends and strangers alike. Sunday dinner, a traveler needing a place to stay, a child or an aged person needing a refuge for a time — these all provided an opportunity for this home to offer its heart. And can't you image Christ and his angels standing at the gate of that eternal city, bidding us come in and partake forever of the delights of the home he has prepared for us? He said, "Come, and I will give you rest."

A Place of Joy

It would have been enough — just being together. But there was more. The children enjoyed the swings hung from the huge trees, walking through the pastures and woods, fishing with Papaw in the pond, helping with the animals, gathering in the fruit of the garden. Working in the kitchen with Grandmother could be fun, too. And there were the stories that Papaw would tell that would both amuse and edify. And Grandmother had a few stories of her own.

These were great times, and shouldn't home be a place of joy? Isn't that what God has arranged for us? *"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isaiah 35:10).

Papaw left us in April 1982 at the age of 84. Grandmother departed a year later at the age of 86. And now the old home place is gone. It was home to five generations of Hartsells from 1926 to 1983 — 57 years. Its boards and bricks may be gone from the land, but not from the heart. "Home is where the heart is."

Thanks for the memories. May we all strive to make our earthly homes such a place.

"An Ordinary Christian"

by Jefferson David Tant

Do you know any "ordinary" Christians? Let's define the word before you answer. As an adjective — "With no special or distinctive features; normal." As a noun — "What is commonplace or standard." Synonyms include — "common, usual, regular, normal, habitual, customary."

One man was told his name had been mentioned as a possible elder. He declined the honor, stating that "I just want to be an ordinary Christian." So, just what is "an ordinary Christian?" We might define him or her as one who lives a good moral life, who is kind to people, who attends church regularly, who will help someone if called upon, who contributes willingly when the basket is passed, who is honest in dealing with others and who fulfills family responsibilities. In other words, this ordinary Christian is a good person.

Question: **Is that enough?** Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their behavior, and asked, *"are you... behaving like ordinary men?"* (I Corinthians 3:3 RSV). I am aware that the context refers to their sinful behavior, but I believe the question can also have other applications. My own conviction is that "ordinary" should not be in the Christian's vocabulary to describe life in Christ.

Consider some words used to describe the Christian's life in Scripture. *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:13-16). What does salt do? It affects everything it comes in touch with. What good is it if it just sits in the salt-shaker? What good does light do when under a basket?

Consider Paul's words to Philippi, as he admonished them to be *"...children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life..."* (Philippians 2:15-16). Question: How involved is the "ordinary Christian" in influencing those they come in contact with? Do others see us as a lighthouse in a world

of darkness? How often do we talk to others about spiritual things — neighbors, friends, co-workers, store clerks, strangers, anyone?

We call ourselves disciples of Christ. A disciple is a pupil, a learner, a follower. We remember Christ's description of his mission in the world — "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). What does a carpenter's apprentice do? He watches and learns so he can be a carpenter. What should a "soul seeker" apprentice do? Watch and learn in order to also be a soul seeker. If we do not seek to emulate our teacher, how can we truly call ourselves his disciples?

Our church buildings and homes are filled with Bibles — food for the soul. But it seems many are starving for this food, while so many "ordinary Christians" keep the food stored up out of reach. I must say I admire Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. Do not misunderstand. I believe their doctrines are of Satan but multiplied thousands of them go all over the world knocking on doors teaching the doctrines of Russell and Smith. I have read that there may be 50,000 Mormon missionaries around the world. They are mostly young people, but I see retired and older people who also devote their time to this. They normally spend about two years doing this work. And Jehovah's Witnesses are not paid workers. They are simply members who believe in their doctrine and spend so many hours a month going from door to door.

As Christ urged his followers to be different than the world, he asked, "*If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matthew 5:47-48). That's a good question for us. "What more are you doing than others?"

I haven't found any Bible verses that imply that God will approve "ordinary Christians." Consider: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 15:58). "Abounding" is not "ordinary." "*Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able*" (Luke 13:24). "Strive" is not an "ordinary" effort. We remember the Laodiceans, the "lukewarm" Christians, whom God will spit out (Revelation 3:15-16). Would that also be the "ordinary" Christians?

Brethren, we must not be content to be ordinary.

This Sunday's Lesson:

"What Does Religion Mean To You?"

Some look at religion as:

- (1) A Foolish and ignorant Hindrance (Atheist).
- (2) A Means to Control People (The Dark Ages).
- (3) A Means to Power and Prestige (Matthew 23:5-7).
- (4) A Means To Financial Prosperity (Prosperity Gospel).
- (5) A Means To Be Sociable (Make Friends/Contacts).
- (6) Something You Can Make Yourself (WikiHow: Start Your Own Religion)
- (7) The World View Today (Huffington Post Article, "*What Does Religion Mean?*")

1. Religion Ought To Mean Others Can See We're Different.

A. People Can See A Big Change In Us:

- Faith **Mark 2:1-5.**
- Conduct **1 Peter 3:1-2.**
- Speech **James 1:26-27; Colossians 4:6.**
- Growth Should be Apparent **2 Peter 3:18; 1 Timothy 4:13-16.**

- The Bible More Than Just Any Common Book to Us- **2 Tim 3:16-17.**
 - (1) It Filters Every Decision We Make! (**Psalm 119:105; Matt. 4:4.**)
 - (2) It Shapes Our Attitudes About Life, Sin, & Eternity **John 16:7-8;**
Luke 19:8; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Philippians 1:21.

2. Religion Ought To Be What We Live Everyday.

- A.** Not A Sunday or Wednesday Only Christian—Not Part-Time!
- B.** We Are To Be A Christian Every Day:
 - Everyday Devotion **Acts 2:42**
 - Everyday Prayers **Luke 11:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.**
 - Everyday Work **1 Corinthians 15:58.**
 - Everyday Watching & Waiting **Mark 13:32-37.**

3. Religion Ought To Be Our Shelter & Refuge In God.

- A.** Where Else Could We Go? **John 6:66-68.**
- B.** Where David Went- **2 Samuel 22:1-7.**
- C.** Where We Go Too- **Hebrews 6:18-20.**

5. Religion Ought To Be Challenging— Yet Rewarding.

- A.** Is It A Challenge To Live Godly?
- B.** To Be In The World, Yet Not Of The World? **John 15:19; James 1:27b.**
- C.** To live Godly in an UnGodly World? **Titus 2:11-12—1 Cor. 10:12.**
- D.** To Fight Discouragement And Weariness? **2 Cor. 4:8-11; Gal. 6:9.**
- E.** We Cannot Quit Until The Fight Is Over! **2 Timothy 4:6-8.**



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And Our Facebook Page.

For sermon videos, articles, and announcements.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Gary Doles, Joe Felks, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Roy Robinson, Lee Busby, Paul and Lisa Busby.

Martha Norvell passed away last Sunday night. Funeral services will be held at the McPeters Funeral Home Monday (January 4th) at 11:00 AM. Visitation will begin at 10:00 AM (Masks required).

Those Who Serve:

Announcements:	Fred Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Dan Cottrell <i>James 1:26-27</i>
Song Leader:	Jerry Kennemur
Lord's Supper:	Sam Johnson
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon:	<i>"What Does Religion Mean To You?"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Tim Harris Jr