

## Trends

Data confirms the demise of the traditional family in America. For instance:

- Only 10% of U.S. households consist of a bread-winning father and a stay-at-home mother.
- Households headed by single parents doubled from 1960 to 2010.
- About one-third of U.S. children grow up in a home without a father.
- One out of every three Americans is a step-parent, a step-child, or a step-sibling.

Gay and lesbian households increased over 80% between 2000 and 2010.

- via U.S. Census

**Ephesians 5:33:** "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

## Sentence Sermons

"The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time."  
—Mark Twain

**2 Timothy 4:7:** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness..."

## News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Please be sure to pray for all the needy saints. *Be sure to pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for the Ferrell family in Michigan. In previous Words of Life I informed the brethren about Susan Ferrell and her illness with a brain tumor. Shawn, Susan's husband, informed me Susan recently had very "clean" scan and resumed chemo on 3/11. She is having difficulties with the chemo, therefore, they are using a special regimen. Please continue to pray for Susan, Shawn and their three boys: Samuel, Micah, and Eli.*

*Let us keep Virginia, Lana, Trudy and Phil in our prayers as they grieve over the passing of Bill McGinnis. Check in and see if you can provide any assistance.*

*"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)*

If you know of any in need of our prayers please let us know so we can include them in the announcements and/or put their name on the bulletin board.

Please continue to remember Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Also, remember all the faithful preachers and brethren laboring in difficult places (e.g., Philippines, India, Zimbabwe). **There are many needy saints! Can you help? Let me know.**

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

# Words of Life

Westside  
church of Christ

**"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."**

John 6:68



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## Which Church Is Best?

Craig Thomas

Recently I had a conversation with a man who lamented that various denominations (he specifically mentioned Lutheran, Episcopal, and Catholic) all say, "Our church is the best." I imagine many share his frustration. However, the answer to the dilemma is easily found if we simply look to the Bible rather than our own wisdom. When it comes to the church, or any Bible subject, my opinion or your opinion simply do not matter. What matters is, *"what saith the scripture"* (Rom. 4:3). If any man speak on this or any Bible subject *"let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Pet. 4:11).

1) **How Many Churches?** Note that the *"oracles of God"* state that Jesus never promised to build the multiplicity of denominational churches. Rather, Jesus said, *"I will build My church"* (Matt. 16:18). How many churches did Jesus promise to build? Unless grammar has changed since I was in school "My" is a singular pronoun. So Jesus promised to build one church. "One" is more than zero, but less than two! The Bible describes Jesus' church as *"his [Jesus'] body"* (Eph. 1:22-23). Denominational people decry the division existent in "Christendom" yet they promote the very division they vilify by being members of "bodies" not mentioned in the Bible. To achieve the *"unity of the Spirit"* (Eph. 4:2) we must forsake the multiplicity of denominational bodies for what the Spirit reveals in the *"oracles of God"* or *"scriptures"* and rightly teach there is but *"one body"* (Eph. 4:4). Surely many will claim this teaching is offensive and slanderous. However, *"what saith the scripture?"* If we are going to speak only as *"the oracles of God"* how many churches will we teach Jesus built? Two? Two hundred? Or just one?

2) **Which Church Is Best?** This question is easily answered if we ignore the creeds, catechisms and councils of men and simply ask *"what saith the scriptures"*; if we simply *"speak as the oracles of God."* Again, Jesus built only one church (Matt. 16:18), the church is *"his body"* (Eph. 1:22-23) and there is only *"one body"* (Eph. 4:4). Isn't that simple! Further, Christ has *"reconcile[d] them both [Jew and Gentile] to God in one body"* (Eph. 2:16). As the Spirit reveals, *"it pleased the Father...to reconcile all things...in the body of His [Jesus'] flesh through death"* (Col 1:19-22). So, *"What saith the scriptures?"* Where are we reconciled to God? If we are going to *"speak as the oracles of God"* there is only one answer: We are reconciled to God

in the “one body”, the one church Jesus built. So, which church is best? The multiplicity of denominational churches or the one church Jesus promised to build? The “one body” where God “reconcile[s] all things”; the “one body” where God has “reconcile[d] them both [Jew and Gentile]”? Or, the multiplicity of denominational bodies not found in scripture?

Many will denigrate, castigate and malign this teaching, but, “*what saith the scriptures*”? How speaketh “*the oracles of God*”? Why not join with us as we seek to imitate the pure practice of Christianity as revealed in New Testament!

### **Should Christians Vote Or Speak Out On Government Issues?**

David E. Pratte

Surely local churches should not endorse candidates, nor sponsor or finance their campaigns. And individual Christians should not become so involved in politics that they neglect other God-given duties. But should Christians refuse all involvement in any issues that surround modern politics and elections?

Consider some of the practices that government officials currently debate, legalize, or even finance with our taxes: abortion, gambling, divorce, pornography, homosexuality, drug abuse, contraceptives for unmarried teens, and “education” that justifies some or all of these. Should Christians, gospel preachers, and even churches speak out about such issues, or should we remain silent? If we do not speak out, how do we fulfill our God-given duty to preach the truth and rebuke error? See Revelation 3:19; Galatians 6:1, 2; James 5:19, 20; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2-4.

Does the Bible contain examples of faithful servants of God speaking out when government officials practiced or encouraged moral or religious evils? The following passages show that we may and should do so: Matthew 14:1-4; 2 Samuel 12:1-15; 1 Kings 13:1-9; Acts 24:25. In our society individual citizens have several ways to tell rulers we agree or disagree with their practices. One way we may speak out is by voting for or against the rulers in elections.

Many current government decisions will have major impact on our families. Men are responsible to provide for their families, including protecting them from harm (1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 5:28, 29). Parents are responsible to provide a wholesome upbringing for our children (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6). If my vote can help protect my family from evil government decisions and can help provide a more wholesome environment in which to raise my children, why should I refuse to vote?

The apostle Paul often used his rights as a Roman citizen to work for his own protection from evil and to help further the gospel. See Acts 22:24-29; 23:12-33; 25:10-12; 16:35-40; Esther 7:1-6. Our government gives citizens the right to voice their views about who should govern us. If Paul used his rights to protect himself and help further the gospel, why should we not use the right to vote given us by our government? Can we not thereby help protect ourselves and our families from harm, while also helping maintain our freedom to preach and practice the truth?

1 Timothy 2:1, 2 shows that we should pray for rulers. Some claim we should not vote because we might be working against God's power to choose

rulers according to His will. Yet God also tells us to pray for our daily bread (Matthew 6:11). Does this mean we should just sit back and let God do it all, or should we try to find a job and let God use us as the means to answer the prayer? Should we avoid looking for a job because we might take a job other than the one God in His providence wanted us to take?

3 John 2 shows that we should pray for good health. Some people mistakenly believe that going to a doctor shows a lack of faith in God's power to answer prayer. Yet Christians know that the doctor may be the very means God uses to answer the prayer! We all realize that there may be situations in which God does not will for us to get better, but that does not prevent us from going to the doctor. If God has not revealed His will in such specific cases, then we must do what we believe to be best, while yet being willing to submit to a different outcome if that is what results.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul prayed three times for God to remove his thorn in the flesh. Later he learned that God did not will to remove it, but did that mean Paul did wrong in praying the prayer? Would Paul have sinned if he had gone to the physician Luke to help remove the thorn before God revealed His will in the matter?

God does not impute sin to men when they act with good intention in matters regarding which God has not revealed His will (Rom. 4:15; 5:13). When God has not revealed His specific will regarding affairs on earth, we must pray to Him, but we should also do what we can to bring about the answer to our prayer. We should act according to what we believe is best, acting in harmony with the general principles God has revealed. If we do, God will not be displeased with us, even if He does choose some other outcome of events, because He did not reveal His will in these matters. Nevertheless, we should pray for His will to prevail, even if it turns out to differ from our own (Matthew 26:36-46). Consider Esther 4:13-16.

When Christians become active in speaking out against evil in government and voting accordingly, some people claim we should keep our religion out of politics. I deny the premise on which that view is based, but my main point here is that such a view is not a proper statement of the issue. Christians are not the ones who have left our sphere of interest. The problem is that politicians have made a full-scale invasion into the realm of religion and morals! In that realm Christians are not only permitted but obligated to act. I believe this includes the right to vote. But whether or not an individual Christian chooses to vote, we must all find some means to speak out for decency and Divine truth.

And regardless of how the government responds to our efforts, we must continue to live faithfully before God, even if we must suffer at the hands of government officials.

***“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”***

***1 John 3:17***