

Trends

63% of Americans say that gambling is morally acceptable, while only 28% say it is morally wrong . . . Nearly eight in ten (79%) religiously unaffiliated Americans, three-quarters (75%) of white mainline Protestants, and two-thirds (67%) of Catholics say gambling is morally acceptable.

- via Public Religion Research Institute, 1/28/16

Luke 12:15: "Jesus said unto them, 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'"

Sentence Sermons

"If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything."

—Mark Twain

Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."

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 had to stop chemo because her bone marrow "shut down." She was gravely ill with a very low platelet count. She is recovering from that episode and will begin another round of chemo on 3/11/16. 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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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You
have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



The Sower and the Seed

Craig Thomas

In Luke 8:4-15 Jesus spoke a parable concerning "a sower" who "went out to sow his seed" (v. 5). Let's examine some key points from this parable.

1) **The seed.** In verse 11 Jesus very plainly identifies "the seed is the word of God." Contrary to what many teach there is only one way men and women will ever develop faith in God: by hearing God's word. For Paul tells us that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 we find that God "called" the Thessalonian saints to "salvation" "by the gospel" (cf. Mk. 16:15-16). They were saved when they heard, believed and obeyed the truth (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). In Romans 1:16-17 Paul describes the "gospel" as the "power of God unto salvation" (v. 16). The gospel contains this power because it reveals to man what one must do to be 'right' with God (v. 17). God's word alone "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." (2 Tim. 3:16-17) God has not placed His "power...unto salvation" in the creeds and catechisms of man. Nor has He placed it in carnal attractions (e.g., chili suppers, ball games, Las Vegas nights) so popular today among denominations and, unfortunately, some of our own brethren. Such methods are doomed to fail since they ignore that the Word is "the power God unto salvation"!

2) **The soil.** Jesus identifies the "soil" in Luke 8:12 as the "hearts" of men and women. Just as corn will not grow in poor soil, the word of God will not produce faith in unreceptive hearts. In Matthew 13:10-17 Jesus described the hearts of those who will not accept the Word. Unfortunately such folks close their minds to the gospel. Jesus describes them as the wayside, rocky and thorny soils in Luke 8. Such hearts are either totally unreceptive to the Word or they only accept it temporarily then allow earthly, worldly things to crowd it out. We must be ever vigilant to "Keep [y]our heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23)

3) **The results.** God's word always achieves results (Isa. 55:11). Some-

times those results are negative. The wayside, rocky, and thorny soils did not produce positive results, but they produced results. Other times the results are positive. For, the “good ground” (Lk. 8:15) produced fruit; “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt. 13:23). The “good ground” was fertile because it represented “those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” (Lk. 8:15) Which soil represents your heart?

Even though we may not always see or fully appreciate the results: Every time the gospel is preached it produces God’s desired effect. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isa. 55:11). Most will reject it, many will only receive it temporarily and half-heartedly, but a precious few will “having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” (Lk. 8:15) Let us busy ourselves sowing the seed and relying on God for the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-8).

A Dozen Ways to Murder a Church

Mark White

If you would like to kill the work of your local congregation, then I have the perfect plan:

1. Skip services often and encourage others to skip, too.
2. When you do attend, come in late and cause a little disturbance. While there, take a good nap.
3. Always be critical and nit-picky.
4. Never volunteer to help, but always complain about the way the volunteers are doing things.
5. Even though you don’t want to volunteer, still act annoyed and put out when you don’t get an important job.
6. If asked directly to give your opinion, act like you don’t have one. Later, get on the phone and tell others how things should have been done in the first place.
7. Never do more than absolutely necessary, then accuse those who are doing the work of being a clique.
8. Withhold your contribution and tell others why you don’t think they should support the work either.
9. When you do volunteer for a job, just do a half-hearted mediocre job.
10. Never compliment or encourage any of the members.
11. Don’t bother with converting anyone, but if you do, then make sure that they are as negative and disruptive as you.
12. Every time you hear some juicy gossip be sure to tell everyone you can. After all, it is your duty to proclaim the truth. Your brethren have a right to know.

A Good, Lost Man

Rick Duggin

I know a man who is unquestionably honest; he is very diligent to seek the right course in life; he has the courage to stand for the Lord in the face of all opposition; he has experienced a genuine encounter with Jesus; yet, he is lost! Before you call me a bigot, listen to what Jesus said to this man: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Nicodemus was a very religious man. Unlike other religious leaders who stubbornly refused to accept the evidence for the deity of Christ, Nicodemus wisely and honestly confessed that Jesus came from God. He courageously pleaded with the hard-hearted rulers to investigate His claims (Jn. 7:50-52). Though some rulers believed on Jesus, they were afraid to confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue (Jn. 12:42, 43). Nicodemus, on the other hand, assisted Joseph in the Lord’s burial (Jn. 19:38ff). In spite of all these sterling qualities, however, Nicodemus needed to be born again before he could enter the kingdom of God.

If you think you are headed for heaven simply because you are religious, or because you do some things that are right, or because of your sacrifice for Jesus, you had better read John 3:1-8. And then turn to Acts 10:34, 35. Those who have not been born again are not in the kingdom of God, no matter how religious they appear to be. Do you need to be born again?

Needs

There remain many brethren in need of your help. For example, faithful gospel preachers in the U.S. and foreign lands are in dire need of financial support. They and their families faithfully labor in the gospel and suffer from material deprivations due to their stand for the truth, concern for the soul’s of men and love for the Lord and His Christ. Other brethren are in acute need of the basics of life (food, clothing, shelter, medical attention). On the other hand many members of the Lord’s church enjoy all the economic advantages offered by America: a lavish lifestyle with large, well-furnished, well-heated/cooled and comfortable homes; vacations; recreational vehicles; widescreen HD/satellite TV; the latest iPads/iPods/PDA’s/smartphones, a trendy wardrobe, and a new, shiny SUV in the driveway. Meanwhile these brethren make sacrifices many of us cannot even imagine. Judgment is coming! 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Please don’t sit idly by and not help these dedicated brethren as they seek to save the lost! If we ignore them, how will we answer the Lord on that Great Day? If you would like to help please send me an e-mail (craigthomas82000@gmail.com) and I’ll put you in contact with a needy brother. Remember 1 John 3:17: “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?”