

Trends

A 2013 Harris poll concerning "religion" found:

- Belief in soul surviving death: 64% down from 69% in 2005.
- Belief in hell and Satan: 58% down from 62% in 2005.
- Belief in ghosts: 42%.
- Belief in UFOs: 29%.
- Belief in reincarnation: 24%.
- The survey found that the number of Americans who say they are not religious at all has nearly doubled from 12% to 23%.

- via CNSNews.com

Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..."

Sentence Sermons

"The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year."
—Mark Twain

Ephesians 5:15-16: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

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.*

Christian Shadburne the young Christian brother in Bowling Green, KY has suffered a setback. His cancer has returned and is spreading. He resumed chemotherapy and will need more radiation treatments, so please keep him and his family in your prayers.

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

Congratulate sister Wilma as she turned 92 years young! She is gives us so much encouragement! God bless her and Virginia! Remember them in your prayers.

There are many needy saints! Can you help?! Let me know.

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.

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

John 6:68



The Precious Faith

Craig Thomas

2 Peter 1:1 reads: "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." Here Peter describes the faith of Christians as a "precious faith." Webster defines things precious as having "great value or high price," "highly esteemed or cherished," or something that is "highly refined." I submit to you that each of these definitions apply to our "like precious faith."

1) **Great Value or High Price.** To understand that our "like precious faith" is of "great value or high price" we only need look at its object, its cost, and its result. The objects of our faith are God and His Son (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 3:22). It is through the "precious faith" that we "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). And, it is through the "precious faith" that we, as did the Ethiopian eunuch, "believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37) and "that believing" we "may have life in His name" (Jn. 20:31).

Mankind counts many things precious: jewels, works of art, antiques, etc. And, we measure the value of those precious things by their cost. That being true, then surely nothing is of greater value than our "precious faith" because it was only made possible at the greatest of all costs! Our "precious faith" cost Jesus, as Lincoln eloquently stated, "the last full measure of devotion"; for He "died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3); His "own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"; and He "purchased" us "with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). No other cost could possibly have satisfied God's wrath (Rom. 3:25) while simultaneously demonstrating the unfathomable depths of His love for us! (Rom. 5:8) Truly, man's most valuable possession (Matt. 16:26) was secured with God's most treasured asset... "His only begotten Son"! (Jn. 3:16)

But, Oh! The results of our "precious faith" are so very extraordinary! Consider, we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 3:28); we are "sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18); we receive the "righteousness of God...through faith in Christ" (Rom. 3); we are made "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26); and Christ dwells in our hearts "through faith" (Eph. 3:17). And, ultimately can anything be more "precious" than "receiving the end of [our] faith-the salvation of [your] souls"? (1 Pet. 1:9)

2) **Highly Esteemed or Cherished.** I own an original three foot by two foot panoramic photograph of the start of the very first Indianapolis 500 Mile

Race in 1911. I cherish that photograph and highly esteem and show it by the extreme care I give it. But that photograph's value in comparison to the "precious faith" is nothing! The "precious faith's" value emanates from its object, its cost, and its result. You see, our "precious faith" could have no greater object than God and His Son; it could have no greater cost than "His only begotten Son"; and it could have no greater result than "the salvation of [our] souls." For all of those reasons it is worthy of our highest esteem and should be cherished with every resolve of our being!

3) **Highly Refined.** Would you buy a diamond or gold ring that had not been tested for purity? Surely not! Likewise, our "precious faith" is of little value until it has been thoroughly tested and purified by the trials and tribulations of life (1 Pet. 1:6-9). Instead of dreading such, let us rather "count [them] all joy...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (Jas. 1:2-3). For only then will we be "found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Teaching Children About Fornication

Mark Roberts

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Perhaps no precept of scripture is as widely ignored as this one. Our society is absolutely obsessed with sex. Advertising, movies and television, printed material, popular music -- it all is filled to the brim with sex, lust, fornication, and adultery. Unfortunately, our young people are deeply affected by their environment. A *Center for Disease Control* study found that among ninth graders 40% had committed fornication, with the numbers rising to 72% by the time children had reached the twelfth grade. The consequences of this behavior are staggering. Every year 3 million teens acquire a sexually transmitted disease. Every year more than one million teens become pregnant (that is 1 out of every 9 women aged 15-19).

If you are thinking "our" kids escape these statistics by virtue of their association with the Lord's church you can quit fooling yourself. Studies indicate that while "our" kids do not participate in sexual activity at quite the rate worldly children do, "our" children only lag about 20 points behind national averages. Satan is preaching a sermon about sex that kids want to hear, and they are willingly falling into his trap of lies and deception. What can be done?

With children it is very important that we help them focus on the consequences of their behavior. Kids simply are not mature enough to always be obedient simply because they know they should do right, or out of love for mom and dad. Punishment works as a means to help children discipline themselves because it is a clearly spelled out consequence that they can understand and think about before they act (see Proverbs 23:13-14; 29:15). Unfortunately, some parents seem to think the only punishment applicable to premarital sex is hellfire. While fornicators will be so punished (Heb. 13:4), it is not the only consequence of this sin. Solomon tells us the way of transgressors is hard (Prov. 13:15) and never has this been more true than with sexual sin. As we help our children understand the painful consequences of fornication in the here and now, we help them stand strong for abstinence until they are old enough to trust God and submit to His will simply because "God said so."

What kind of consequences are there to premarital sex? Plenty! For exam-

ple, children need to be told how sex before marriage can cause them to have false feelings of "love." One expert remarked "Sexual encounters outside of marriage . . . give an illusion of intimacy that can be mistaken for the lasting commitment that makes marriage work." How many teens have gotten involved sexually, thought they had something great and so they married. Then they awaken in a nightmare -- trying to make a marriage work that has no foundation at all. See how God's law protects us?

Children also need to be told how sexual involvement before marriage will wreck their future relationships. Sex is such a powerful experience it cannot be forgotten. Then, once a person is married, it is inevitable that there will be comparison to past relationships. Making matters worse, past memories have a tendency to become idealized. This results in young people who have frustration in their marriage because the physical relationship cannot possibly be as "good" as their romanticized past experiences. Now, one partner feels inadequate or haunted by the ghosts of the past -- does that sound like a solid, strong marriage? Hebrews 13:4 warns us not to defile the marriage bed, and that would include not defiling it with past relationships.

Another consequence of fornication is that it destroys our ability to be an influence for good. When we commit fornication we have compromised all that Christianity stands for. How is it possible for us to influence our boyfriend or girlfriend for Christ when we have shown that we are nothing but a hypocrite? What shame, humiliation, guilt and problems fornication always brings. Your child may think he or she is a long way from hell's fires but these problems are here and now and can be understood. Use them to help your child understand why he or she should say "No!" to sex before marriage.

Clearly a focus on consequence is the keystone of our defense against fornication. However, let me point out several other areas that need our attention as well. You need to love your child in a way that your child understands and can relate to. Ninety-three percent of teen girls said having loving parents reduced the risks they'd have sex. Kids need love, acceptance and understanding. If you don't give it to them they will find it elsewhere, even if it means trading sex for "love." You need to expect purity. The world is constantly preaching that children cannot possibly restrain themselves and that sex is inevitable. Stand out from that crowd. Be frank, be honest and be real -- but be clear that you expect that your child can do this and will do this.

My stomach still turns when I recall a conversation with a Christian who admitted he had given his boys contraceptives because he "just knew boys would be boys." What kind of attitude is this? How can we expect to win this battle when we have already thrown in the towel? You need to keep talking, keep trying, and keep loving your kids. Study after study reveals that parents have a powerful impact on their children, even when parents think they aren't "getting through." But just as you didn't teach table manners in one sitting, so you can't train in sexual purity in one talk either. Don't give up. Keep praying, keep talking and keep working. You can do it -- because God will bless you when you teach your children to stand for righteousness and holiness.

Needs

There remain many brethren in need of our help: severe droughts, health problems, etc. Let me know if you want to help. Remember 1 John 3:17!