

Trends

Researchers found that the percentage of Americans who claim they never pray reached an all-time high in 2014, up five-fold since the 1980s. Over the same time period, belief in God and interest in spirituality appears to have similarly declined, especially among young adults. In 2014, the number of 18 to 22-year-olds who reported no religious affiliation rose from 11% in the 1970s to 36%; the percentage who said they never pray rose from 4% to 28%. Belief in God and attendance at religious services declined by half while self-reported spirituality declined five-fold.

- via *Vocativ.com*

Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head, so that they are without excuse,"

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 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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Times of Service: Bible Study, Sunday 9:30 AM and Wednesday 7:00 PM; Worship, Sunday 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

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

John 6:68



Just Christians

Craig Thomas

In a world filled with denominations the concept of being **just a Christian** is difficult to communicate. But careful and honest readers of the New Testament find that Jesus did not die so His followers could divide into sects. Jesus died to reconcile all men to God in "one body" (Eph. 2:16). Belonging to Christ, being baptized into the "one body" of which He is Savior, is entirely different than belonging to any of the hundreds of religious bodies in this country (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23).

1) **There is only one body or church.** The Bible is very clear, there is only "one body" and "one faith," just as there is only "one God, one Lord, one baptism, and one hope" (Eph. 4:4-6). The "one body" is Christ's church (Eph. 1:22-23) built by Jesus (Matt. 16:18), not men (Heb. 8:1-2). This spiritual house consists of Christians (1 Pet. 2:5), citizens of God's kingdom (Col. 1:13), saints (Col. 1:2); those born again into God's family (Jn. 3:5; Eph. 2:19). Christ is the "foundation" upon which His church is built (1 Cor. 3:11), not the sands of denominational creeds or traditions. Jesus is its head (Eph. 1:22) and all authority rests in Him (Matt. 28:18), leaving no room for Popes, Presidents, councils, or conventions. Jesus built His church according to the divine pattern. A house built by any other (Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc.) is not recognized by the Lord, for "Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalms 127:1; cf. Matt. 15:13). Jesus condemned the various sects and parties of His day (Mk. 7:6-9, 13) greatly offending them (Matt. 15:12). Does the New Testament's appeal to be **just a Christian** interest or offend you?

2) **Simply Christians.** When folks complied with God's conditions of grace (Acts 2:38-41) "...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47). To which "church" did the Lord add them? Were they added to the Lutheran Church? or was it the Baptist Church? Was Peter a member of one denomination and John another? When Saul

was baptized (Acts 22:16) did he become an Episcopalian or a Methodist? Are these absurd questions? Certainly, because no one would claim those baptized in Acts 2 or any of the apostles were anything other than **simply Christians!** If they were alive today no denomination could claim them, for the apostles' teaching made men and women **just Christians**, not Protestants or Catholics.

3) The **"Seed" Principle**. Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15:13) To get plants you must first sow seed. All know if you sow corn seed you get corn plants, if you sow tomato seed you get tomato plants. The Bible says the seed producing Christians "*is the word of God*" (Lk. 8:4-15). Paul's duty was to go about sowing this seed (1 Cor. 3:5-7). Fair reader, "What did the seed Paul planted produce?" Methodists? Baptists? Catholics? No, it produced **just Christians**, because the seed he planted was "*the word of God*" and seed always produces after its kind! Recall, to get corn one must plant corn, to get tomatoes one must plant tomatoes. Thus, to get Methodists one must plant the *Methodist Discipline*, to get Catholics one must plant the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to get Baptists one must plant the *Baptist Manual*. Why can we understand this simple and inviolable principle when it comes to tending our farms and gardens, yet so many reject these principles when it comes to God's word?

Let's abandon sectarianism, which is condemned by God's word (1 Cor. 3:1-4), return to the Bible and be **just Christians**.

Commandment Keeping

Jesse Flowers

I grow tired of pious religious people who cast aspersions on those who emphasize commandment keeping. They seem convinced that those who stress commandment keeping (i.e., Bible authority; book, chapter, and verse teaching) fail to possess and understand God's love. They conclude that if a Christian is always "harping on" that a specific doctrine must be taught, then such a person has lost sight of God's grace.

I must admit that I am one of those who is "guilty" of harping on the necessity of commandment keeping. But here are a few reasons why I do so. Jesus declared: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). The apostle John penned: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3; cf. 2 John 9-11).

The author of Hebrews wrote concerning Jesus: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (5:9). The last chapter of the last Book of the Bible records:

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). The Bible undeniably teaches that commandment keeping is directly connected to our love for God and Christ, as well as to our eternal salvation. I do not deny that I need to continue to grow in my understanding, appreciation, and application of God's love and grace in my life (Titus 2:11-14). And I always need to remember what Jesus stated in Luke 17:10: "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" God is love (1 John 4:8). We are saved by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8). But without commandment keeping we will NOT be saved! (Matt. 7:21-23; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 6:46)

Needs

There remain many brethren in need of your help. There are faithful gospel preachers in the U.S. and foreign lands in dire need of financial support. Brethren in Zimbabwe are still suffering through another year of drought. There is also a severe drought in the Philippines. Brethren

are suffering! 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). If you would like to help please send me an e-mail (craigthomas82000@gmail.com) and I'll put you in direct 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?"

