

Trends

Alcohol is used by more young people in the U.S. than tobacco or illegal drugs. The statistics show that 3.1% of 12-13 year olds; 12.4% of 14-15 year olds; 24.6% of 16-17 year olds; and 48.9% of 18-20 year olds had at least one drink within the last month. By grade level, 72% of students have had alcohol by the end of high school, and 37% of students have had alcohol by eighth grade.

- via TeenCentral.net

Proverbs 23:31-32: "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper."

Sentence Sermons

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect."

—Mark Twain

Exodus 23:2: "You shall not follow a crowd to do 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 returned home after a 21 day stay in the hospital. He is scheduled to undergo more radiation treatments. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

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

Please keep sister Wilma in your prayers! She gives all of us so much encouragement! God bless her and Virginia! Remember both of 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



What Does It Mean To "Know" God?

Craig Thomas

French philosopher Albert Camus said, "Life is a bad joke." Most of us, at some point in our lives, have had similar thoughts. All have wrestled with the questions - "Why was I born?" and "What is the purpose of (my) life?" Thankfully, life is not a bad joke and these questions have definite answers: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me," (Jer. 9:23-24; cf. Eccl. 12:13).

In order for our lives to be worthwhile, satisfying, and meaningful they must have a big enough goal. Something "large" enough to catch and hold our imagination; something with enough substance to completely and permanently engage our allegiance. Worldly goals are inherently unsatisfying (Eccl. 3:11; 5:10; Matt. 6:19ff). "Knowing" God is the highest, most exalting, most compelling goal of all! (Phil. 1:21) But, what is involved in "knowing" God? I certainly cannot exhaust the subject in this short article, but let me offer three thoughts. Knowing God is...

1) **A matter of grace.** Through sin we've forfeited all claim on His favor (Rom. 3:10, 23). Recognizing this is a must at ALL times, before and after our baptism. The "heart of the gospel" is God satisfying His rightful wrath toward us through Christ's sacrifice (1 Jn. 4:10). We don't make friends with God, He makes friends with us! (Col. 1:21-22) The message of reconciliation is the message of God's unfathomable love for us (Rom. 5:8) made available and made known via His grace (Eph. 2:4-10). Only through "the word of His grace" (Acts 20:32) can we come to know His nature, character, will, and this wonderful news of reconciliation! (1 Cor. 2:9-13)

2) **A matter of personal dealing.** "Knowing" God transcends "knowing about Him." Rather, it is a matter of personally dealing with Him through faith (Heb. 11:6). We must deal with our condition (Rom. 3:10, 23; 6:23), with God's desire for us (Jn. 3:16; Acts 17:30-31; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), with God's call (2 Thess. 2:13-14), with God's plan (Eph. 4:1-24), and with God's ability (Eph. 3:20). Each of these things can only be "dealt with" through faith

- a faith based upon God's sole communication with each of us...His word! (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 2:1-13)

3) **A matter of personal involvement.** To get to know someone we must commit ourselves to their company, their interests, and be always ready to identify with their concerns. In regards to God, first and foremost, this involves our obedience to His word! *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."* (1 Jn. 2:3-4) But "rote" obedience is useless! Our obedience must be from the heart! (Matt. 15:8; Rom. 6:16-17) Obedience involves our mind, our will, our feelings, and our actions (Rom. 12:1-2). We must reshape our priorities to His (Lk. 9:23-24; Rom. 8:29). We must realize just how close God wants to get to us and respond! (1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rom. 8:16-17)

Do you "know" God? The stakes are exceptionally high (2 Thess. 1:7-9) and the rewards are unimaginably great (Jn. 17:3). The path to the goal is clear (1 Jn. 2:3-4). Do you merely "know ABOUT God"? Or, do you really "KNOW" Him?

Sour Grapes

Stacy Crim

The children of Israel had a proverb in the days of the prophets. "...*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?*" (Ezekiel 18:2) This of course is simply not true. A father does not eat a sour grape and a child's face is puckered from the tartness of the fruit. God would set the record straight and no longer allow Israel to cite such foolishness (Ezekiel 18:3).

We learn in the text of Ezekiel 18 that *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"* (verse 20).

This passage teaches us that we do not have to fall victim to our circumstances. If we have a wicked family we do not have to fall prey to their wickedness. We can rise above their lawlessness, and be rewarded for our own obedience. The opposite is also true. If we have a good family, that goodness does not preserve us in our wickedness. *"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."* (Romans 14:10-12) Truly this is the only way it can be for God to be just and fair. *"Is not My way equal?"* (Ezekiel 18:25)

Diligence

Larry Hafley

In the Bible, "diligence" refers to "haste," (being quick to act), "earnest care," being eager and desirous of achieving a goal or result. Thus, we are to "study" (give diligence) to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim.

2:15). Giving all diligence, we are to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Christians must *"give diligence to make (their) calling and election sure"* (2 Pet. 1:10).

"Cursed be the one who does the Lord's work negligently"--that is, without diligence (Jer. 48:10)! *"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently"* (Psa. 119:4). Of Hezekiah it was said, *"And in every work that he began in the service of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered"* (2 Chron. 31:21). The Lord rewards those *"who diligently seek him"* (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, *"whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men"* (Col. 3:23).

We earnestly endeavor to attain educational and career goals. We "give diligence" to succeed in athletics. Such diligence in the affairs of life is to be admired, commended, and imitated, for *"he becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich"* (Prov. 10:4).

How many of us, though, display diligence in spiritual matters? Are we as eager to be on time at worship as we are to work or school? Are we as earnestly determined to develop ourselves in the grace and knowledge of the Lord as we are in the classroom or on the job?

One can aimlessly wander into hell with a lackadaisical attitude, but he cannot go to heaven without *"giving all diligence"* (Heb. 11:6; 2 Pet. 1:5-10). Which way are you headed?

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?"*