

## Trends

A recent survey concludes that gossip accounts for 55% of men's conversation time and 67% of women's . . . Mobile phones have increased this activity, by allowing us to gossip 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere' and to text as well as talk.

- via Social Issues Research Centre

**1 Thessalonians 4:11:** "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,"

## Sentence Sermons

"It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog."

—Mark Twain

**1 Timothy 6:12:** "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

## 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.

Pray for all the members at Westside! Susan Ferrell, a friend of the Thomas family from Michigan, had great news! Commenting on the latest MRI, the oncologist said, "it could not look better"! They've also been able to increase the chemotherapy dosage. Please continue to pray for Susan, her husband Shawn and their three boys: Samuel, Micah, and Eli.

Jennifer Shorter (Garner) a member at Knightsville is reported to be recovering well from her brain tumors; keep her in your prayers. She still has more tumors that may be problematic in the future. Also, please pray for Elias Dispennett (age 8). He is the son of Rob Dispennett, Knightsville's preacher, and has been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

It is with great sadness that I report that Christian Shadburne passed away this week. He was a great example of a true Christian! Please pray for his family in their grief.

Pray for the college students as they are now on summer break. Jonathan will be attending IUPUI law school this fall and Rachel plans to return to IU.

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.

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

# Words of Life

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

John 6:68



## Are You Really Religious?

Craig Thomas

What mental picture comes to mind when you think of someone who's religious? A Catholic may picture someone devoted to praying the rosary several times a day. Perhaps to you it's a person who always seems to be in a state of deep meditation. But, how does scripture define someone who is "religious"?

1) **Scriptural Definition.** Scripture defines "religious" as: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1:27) Bible spirituality centers on acts of kindness, charity and benevolence toward our fellow man and an obedient walk with God that places our life's emphasis on the eternal, not the temporal (Col. 3:1ff; Phil. 3:20).

2) **Two Greatest Commandments.** The definition of "pure and undefiled religion" in James 1:27 is really no different than the two great commandments described by Jesus, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37-39) You see "religion" is shown, not by great acts of devotion to a religious or doctrinal "system," but by our obedience to God and through our deeds toward our fellow man. First, our closeness to God is not measured, for example, by our "faith" to see the virgin Mary in a salt stain on a highway overpass. But, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 Jn. 2:3) Since God only reveals His will in His word, only those obeying His word can truly lay claim to loving and knowing Him (cf. 1 Jn. 2:4-5; 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:4-13). Second, in regards to our neighbor, recall that James said, "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:26) and he offered the following to illustrate: "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (Jas. 2:15-16) Thus, to engage in true religion, a "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless" (NIV), we must take the Bible principles of love and com-

passion and put them into **action** in regards to our fellow man. Otherwise our claims to “religiousness” are empty and vain and we have a “dead” faith.

3) **Basis of Judgment.** Our judgment will be upon this same basis: whether we’ve kept God’s commandments and whether we’ve shown love and compassion to our fellow man by our deeds (cf. Rom. 2:5-10). For example, Jesus described “religious” people who were lost, not necessarily because they didn’t do good deeds, but because they practiced “lawlessness” (Matt. 7:21-23). They were disobedient to the Father’s “will.” Also, in the great judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus emphasizes the importance of good deeds towards our fellows. Those who “inherit the kingdom” perform good deeds towards others so regularly that it becomes their “second nature” (vss. 34-40). Jesus also lays out the other side of the coin by describing those who did not do things like “visit the orphans and widows in their trouble.” He does not say why they failed in this regard. They may have simply been callous or they may have had the best of intentions, but nonetheless they never carried through and as a result they heard these terrible words, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

What about you dear friend? Do you practice “pure and undefiled religion”? If you answered “yes,” are you obedient to God’s word? Do you “keep His commandments”? And, what are you doing to relieve the needs of your fellow man?

### **The Truth about Capital Punishment**

Don Martin

The subject of capital punishment or the death penalty is often an emotionally charged subject. Much of the religious opposition to the death penalty is based on the argument that capital punishment is not pleasing to God and is itself murder. The burden of this material is to establish the truth of the Bible on this controversial subject.

**The nature of God.** It is contended by the opposers of the right of civil government to take the life of one convicted of capital offence that God is love. God does love man, all men (Jn. 3: 16). In fact, not only does God love man, but God himself is love (1 Jn. 4: 8). However, does love preclude God from being strict and just? Man seems to forget or deny the harmonious duality of the nature of God: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God...” (Rom. 11: 22). The writer of Hebrews is motivating those to whom he wrote (by implication, Christians today) to not forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10: 25). He warns of the “fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (those who disobey God, vs. 27). He then cites those who despised Moses’ Law, “died without mercy under two or three witnesses” (vs. 28). Arguing from the lesser to the greater, he then shows how those who disobey Christ shall have “sorer punishment” (vss. 29). He concludes by enunciating, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (vs. 31). The God of the New Testament is the same God of the Hebrew

Scriptures who himself on many occasions exercised capital punishment (Numb. 25: 1-9, 1 Cor. 10: 8).

**The origin of capital punishment.** To hear many today talk about how horrible and inhumane the death penalty is you would think it surely originated with some barbaric, savage people or tyrant. “Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed,” God says, “for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9: 6). God is the author of capital punishment. Any man who commits murder (“sheddeth man’s blood”), man is authorized to take his life. The New Testament makes it plain regarding civil government’s right to take the life of the offender (Rom. 13: 1 ff., more later).

**Capital punishment viewed under the three dispensations.** There are three dispensations generally recognized in the Bible: *Patriarchal* (Gen. 3 - Ex. 20), *Mosaic* (Ex. 20 - Acts 2), and the age of the *Gospel* (Acts 2 - judgment). We have already seen that God instituted the death penalty under or during the *Patriarchal Age* (Gen. 9: 6). Notice why the murderer’s life is to be taken: “...for in the image of God made he man.” Hence, the reason for the introduction of the death penalty was not dispensational.

The *Mosaic Age* is explicit in its teaching regarding the death penalty. Commandment number six (of the Ten Commandments) was, “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20: 13). The “kill” is murder (see New King James Version). The punishment for murder was, “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death” (Ex. 21: 12). There were about eight capital offences under the *Mosaic* system which demanded the death penalty (see Ex. 21: 15, 16, 17, 22: 18, 19, 20). Of course, the *Mosaic* system was a theocracy, a combination of the spiritual and state.

The death penalty is also taught in the final age, the New Testament. Paul plainly teaches the right of civil government to exist and to demand subjection (Rom. 13: 1-7, see Acts 5: 29 as to exceptions). Regarding the executioner for the state he wrote, “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain...” (vs. 4). The sword is emblematic of capital punishment. Paul himself was freely willing to subject himself to the death penalty, were he guilty of capital offence (Acts 25: 11).

In conclusion, this material does not address due process of law, what evidence should be recognized, and what should today constitute capital offences. However, the Bible incontrovertibly teaches the death penalty. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,” the Bible says, “therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8: 11). Alas, we are seeing the truth stated in Ecclesiastes 8: 11 illustrated on every hand today.

**“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 Jn. 3:17**