

## Trends

### Sobering drunk driving statistics:

- ☛ 50-75% of convicted drunk drivers continue to drive while license suspended.
- ☛ Only time sobers a person, not coffee, exercising or a cold shower.
- ☛ Every two minutes a person is injured in a drunk driving crash.
- ☛ 2 of 3 people will be involved in a drunk driving crash in their lifetime.
- ☛ In 2013, 28.7 million people admitted to driving while drunk.
- ☛ The rate of drunk driving is highest among 26 to 29 year olds.
- ☛ Every day in America 27 people die in drunk driving crashes.
- ☛ The average drunk driver drives impaired 80 times before first arrest.
- ☛ In 2015, 10,265 people died (1 every 51 minutes) in drunk driving crashes.

—via MADD

**Proverbs 23:29-32:** "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 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."

## 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! Please pray for Susan Ferrell and her family as she continues to recover from a brain tumor. Please pray for her and her family.

Please pray for Alan Jones. He underwent deep brain stimulation to hopefully relieve severe facial pain. Alan held a gospel meeting for us in October 2014. He's been unable to preach for several months due to his affliction. Pray for him and his family.

Sister Virginia Brown's hip replacement surgery was a success! Pray for a fast and complete recovery!

Pray for Larry Hafley as he recovers from major surgery to replace a heart valve.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many temptations in today's school environment.

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!

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# Words of Life

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

John 6:68

Symbol of Cross Too Violent

Larry Ray Hafley



Or so said the headline in *The Dallas Morning News*, April 1, 1995, p. G1. Some doubt that "the cross is an appropriate symbol of the faith." Professor Delores Williams does not "think" that the cross and its "violence" is "the message for Christians to be giving when there's so much destructive violence in this world....We...need to consider the violence that the symbols of our religion have been used to support."

Well, bless your condescending, professorial heart, Delores. Would you rather that Christians glory in a pink, Mary K powder puff? "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Delores, dear, our Lord was not exactly "put to sleep" with his head resting on a pillow. The evidence shows that a man was severely beaten with the lacerating lashes of a torturous whip. There was hitting and spitting. There was a crown of thorns and there were sharp blows upon the head (Matt. 27:26-30). We are not talking about mud wrestling here.

Said "Ms. Keller, a feminist theologian...the thinking that we are redeemed by blood is pervasive and hard to change. The trouble is that it numbs us to violence." Miss Keller, should Scripture say, "For God was so violent that He gave His only begotten Son"? Or, how about, "But God commendeth His violence toward us in that, while we were not being nice little boys and girls, Christ passed away for us"? Was Jesus made a little lower than the angels that "He by the violence of God should taste death for every man"? Or, "In this was manifested the violence of God toward us....Herein is violence, not that we were violent toward God, but that He was violent toward us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Mrs. Keller, should the Bible say that we are "reconciled to God by the violence of His Son"? (The cross offends her. "Ms." offends me. Hope my use of "Miss" and "Mrs." does not cause her to feel "cross" towards me and incite her to "violence" against my peace loving person.)

Consider Keller's conclusion that "the thinking that we are redeemed by blood is pervasive and hard to change." Imagine that! By reading the Bible, how would anyone ever get the wild and crazy notion "that we are redeemed by blood"? "In whom (Christ) we have redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved" (Rom. 5:9). "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible

things...but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). "The blood of Jesus Christ...cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7). Keller's correct. The thinking "that we are redeemed by blood" is indeed "pervasive." It pervades and permeates the prophets, and it is not simply "hard," but it is impossible "to change," for "without shedding of blood (there) is no remission" of sins (Heb. 9:22).

"Duane Ediger, a Dallas peace activist," said, "Jesus did not die for our sins, but because of them." Did you catch that? "Jesus did not die for our sins." Compare and contrast that with the following: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "Grace be to you...from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins" Gal. 1:3, 4). "Jesus our Lord...was delivered for our offences" (Rom. 4:24, 25). "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "I live by the faith of the Son of God...who gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Jesus Christ...is the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 2:1, 2).

It might be fair to say that because of our sins Jesus died for our sins, but it is not correct to say, as did Duane, a Dallas doctrinal deviant, that "Jesus did not die for our sins." Duane should spend more time reading the words of the Prince of Peace before he leads any more marches for peace. Any time he so violently misrepresents and perverts the truth of the Captain of our salvation, we shall declare war upon his peace (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Such spiritual warfare is not a pretty sight. The squeamish should close their eyes and hide in the basement with the children.

### "Stop Using The Cross"

Lest any should find this article too harsh, let us close with the soft, kind, loving and totally inoffensive words of our peace professor, Delores Williams. "Theologian Williams insists that one of the strongest acts against violence Christians can make is to stop using the cross as a symbol of the religion...It's destructive to use the cross as a symbol," she said. "I don't think that's what Jesus is about." Are words strong enough to condemn such arrogant audacity and brazen blasphemy?

Jesus used "the cross as a symbol of religion." "If any man will come after me, let him...take up his cross daily" (Lk. 9:23). Delores, was Jesus guilty of "destructive" behavior? The Spirit used the cross "as a symbol" of religion" when he said that worldly people "are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). Paul used the cross "as the symbol" for the gospel itself when he said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness (that includes you, Miss Williams); but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Furthermore, like Paul, "God forbid" that we should glory in anything, except "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

These pseudo-purveyors of peace are wolves wrapped in fleece. They are mutant "ministers of righteousness," angels in the army of our Adversary. Christ "made peace (not violence) through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). Paul was not "ashamed" of that gospel, of that bloody, yes, violent "testimony," and neither must we be (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8)! With their feigned words of "peace" they will deceive the hearts of silly, sensual, sentimental simpletons (Rom. 16:18). However, Enoch warns against all such people. Through the prophet, Jude, he said that God would "execute judgment upon all," for all their ungodly words and deeds. Duane, Delores, and Keller are "mockers," walking "after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 14-19). These are the very folks and the very philosophies Paul was talking about when he said, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty

deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

There is a spirit afoot today that would apologize for such people, contending that they are "well meaning" but merely "misguided." Therefore, it is urged, "We should not 'come down' too strongly against them." If so, I read about some people in Matthew 15 who were also "well meaning" and who were "misguided". Jesus said, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:8, 9, 13-15). That is harsh language, but when men and women spout doctrines and philosophies that lead men to hell, is it not time to "cry aloud, and spare not" (Isa. 58:1)? "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

### Did We Exist Before Life?

Mike Thomas

Among the radical ideas promoted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (i.e. the Mormons) is the belief that everyone existed in another world before coming to earth. This idea permeates much of their literature. "Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal (physical) body" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [1998], 335). Thus, all men and women are literally the physical offspring of God the Father and pre-existed in another realm before coming to earth.

In studying with the Mormons, I was told we each chose to come to earth to do God's work and that our knowledge of pre-existence gradually departs after birth. The passage they turn to for biblical evidence of this notion was Jeremiah 1:5, which states, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..." They say this is proof God literally knew Jeremiah in person before sending him to the womb. But that is a faulty interpretation. When God told Jeremiah that He knew him before birth, He was referring to Jeremiah's calling as a prophet. That verse further states as much: "before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." He had already devised the plan to send Jeremiah before he was born, in the same way He foretold of John the Baptist's ministry centuries before it occurred (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:10). These prophecies did not demand prior existence of either man, and are no different than a couple naming their children before they are born. God is unique. He can see the future before it unfolds and is able to call "those things which do not exist as though they did" (Romans 4:17).

The only human to exist in a life before this one was Jesus, who occupied heaven before coming to earth to become a man (Philippians 2:6-7). But no one else made this transition. Every other human received his beginning in this life by the One who "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1). Hence, Jesus told His opponents, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). That statement would have no meaning if everyone has a prior existence.

Friends, we are on this planet because our Creator placed us here. The only hope we have of experiencing eternal life is through His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11). We did not have it before Jesus, nor will we have it apart from Him. And we certainly have no hope of reincarnation and returning to this world until we advance to enlightenment. If we want to find heaven, we must follow Jesus now (Hebrews 5:9) by obeying His gospel (Acts 2:37-41) and living in holiness (1 John 3:1-3). Only then will we reach God's dwelling place, which will be an original, first-time experience for us (Matthew 25:34).