

# Words of Life

Westside church of Christ

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

John 6:68



## How Inclusive Shall We Be?

Larry Hafley

According to an Episcopal preacheress, "the Reverend Patricia Ackerman,...' Biblical directives to be inclusive and loving toward all people far exceed the few negative statements about homosexuality" (*Houston Chronicle*, 3/22/99).

Just how "inclusive" shall we be? Let us take the Reverend's remarks and see. Since "biblical directives to be inclusive and loving toward all people far exceed the few negative statements about" polygamy, will Patricia Ackerman "be inclusive" and accept into her church a man (her father, for instance) if he has a plurality of wives?

Since "biblical directives to be inclusive and loving toward all people far exceed the few negative statements about" prostitutes, will Episcopal churches "be inclusive" and accept harlots into their churches?

Since "biblical directives to be inclusive and loving toward all people far exceed the few negative statements about" pedophiles, will the Reverend "be inclusive" and accept impenitent child molesters into her fellowship?

Since "biblical directives to be inclusive and loving toward all people far exceed the few negative statements about" bestiality (sex with animals-- "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death."--Ex. 22:19), will Ms. Ackerman "be inclusive" and accept a man into her church who is in love with his billy goat?

## And What Of Us?

Brethren, similar statements are coming from among us. We are told that we must show mercy and receive those who are living in adulterous marriages. We must not be so rigid and "exclusive," and we must tear down the fences built by our Restoration heritage. Translation? We must not allow musical instruments in worship and "every Sunday" communion to shut others out of the church. We must be less judgmental and condemnatory of those whose "church traditions" do not match our own. In other words, let us celebrate Christmas and Easter and show others how inclusive and loving we are!

## Trends

Some sobering statistics on suicide in America:

- ☛ Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S.
- ☛ 44,193 Americans die each year from suicide.
- ☛ Every 12 minutes someone in the U.S. commits suicide.
- ☛ For every suicide there are 25 attempted suicides.
- ☛ Suicide costs the U.S. \$44 billion annually.

—via American Foundation For Suicide Prevention

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18:** "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## Sentence Sermons

**"Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem."**

—Phil Donahue

## 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 that much fruit will come from the seed planted during our gospel meeting last week with Jesse Flowers. If you would like to contact Jesse his e-mail address is: jafopie@hotmail.com.

Please pray for Susan Ferrell and her family as she continues to recover from a brain tumor. Her chemo treatment is completed and so far everything is clear! Please continue 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.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets such a good example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for Larry Hafley; his heart valve replacement surgery was a success!

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

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Already, baptism is denied as being essential to salvation. The days of Genesis one are long, periods of time, not literal days. Pulpits are exchanged with Baptist and Methodist preachers, and the end is not yet. Pentecostalism, with its above the word appeal to emotionalism and intense, subjective “feelings,” is replacing true worship and spirituality (Matt. 7:21-23; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 4:24).

Book, chapter, and verse preaching has been replaced by smiling, sunshine boys with “dynamic appeal.” These men specialize in stories gleaned from the positive mental attitude gurus of “feel-goodism.” Little is heard about sin and salvation in Christ through gospel obedience (Acts 2:36-41; 8:5, 12; 35-39). Hell is “too negative” and is never mentioned. The demand that a sinner repent or perish, turn or burn, is too crude for these sweet spirited men to mention (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 24:25). One true church? Forget about it. They do not believe it anymore.

So, before we ridicule the Episcopal clergy lady, perhaps we need to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Thess. 5:21).

### “Are We Blind Also?”

John 9

Kevin Kay

That was the question that the Pharisees asked Jesus after He healed the blind man (Jn. 9:40). A careful study of John 9 reveals that there were several “blind” people in this story.

**The blind man was physically blind.** However, he moves from physical blindness to physical sight to spiritual insight. In the beginning he knew that “*a man called Jesus*” had healed him (v. 11). When the Pharisees questioned him, he declared his belief that Jesus must be “*a prophet*” (v. 17). Later on he implies that Jesus must be a man from God (vv. 31-33). Finally he comes to see Jesus as “*the Son of God*” and as “*Lord*” (vv. 35-38), and he worships Jesus. What about you? Have you come to see Jesus as, not just a prophet or a man from God, but as the Son of God and Lord?

**The apostles were blinded by their own preconceived ideas.** When they saw the blind man, they didn’t ask “Why was this man born blind?” Instead they asked “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” (v. 2). Their question was based on the presupposition that all suffering is the direct result of sin. Now, it is certainly true that all suffering is the indirect result of sin (i.e. Adam and Eve’s sin in the very beginning). It is also true that much of the suffering in this world is the direct result of sin (cf. Pr. 23:29-35). However, it is not true that all suffering is the direct result of sin, and Jesus’ response, “*Neither this man nor his parents sinned...*” (v. 3), confirms this truth. It is perhaps impossible for us to be completely unbiased, but we all need to recognize the fact that preconceived ideas can blind us to the truth. “ARE WE BLIND ALSO?”

**Some of the neighbors were blinded by an anti-supernatural bias.** Even though they had seen the blind man countless times, some had trouble recognizing him after he was healed (Jn. 9:8-9). Why? Evidently they didn’t believe in miracles. This is still a problem today. The British evolutionist, Sir Arthur Keith admitted perhaps more than he realized when he said: “Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is special creation, and that is unthinkable!” What about you? Have you thrown the miraculous out the window before you even begin to investigate the claims of Jesus? “ARE WE BLIND ALSO?”

**The Pharisees were blinded by their own man-made traditions (Jn. 9:13-34).** Because Jesus had healed the blind man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees just knew He couldn’t be from God. However, it was not God’s law concerning the Sabbath that Jesus had broken, but their man-made traditions. Yes, God had forbidden work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-10), but the Pharisees went to ridiculous extremes in defining just what activities constituted work. Yet even they believed that some activity was permitted on the Sabbath, like rescuing an animal from a pit (Mt. 12:11-12; Lk. 14:5) or circumcising a male baby (Jn. 7:22-23). Furthermore, it was certainly right to do good on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:12). What about you? Do you have religious traditions that come from men and not God? “ARE WE BLIND ALSO?”

**The parents were blinded by fear (Jn. 9:19-23).** When the Pharisees interviewed the blind man’s parents, they admitted that he was their son and that he had been born blind, but they refused to admit anything about his healing. John explains that they did this because they were afraid of being “*put out of the synagogue.*” What about you? Are you ever blinded by fear? Do you ever do things (that you really don’t want to do) or fail to do things (that you know you really should do), because you’re afraid of being “kicked out of the church”? “ARE WE BLIND ALSO?”

**The Pharisees were further blinded by arrogant certainty.** They refused to believe that the blind man had been healed, simply because it didn’t fit their man-made traditions (Jn. 9:13-16a), and they interviewed the blind man’s parents and the blind man once again (Jn. 9:18-34), hoping to find some plausible way to explain away an obvious miracle. Their arrogant certainty is evidenced by the following statements: “*We know that this Man is a sinner!*” (Jn. 9:24b); “*You are His disciple, but we are Moses disciples*” (Jn. 9:28); “*We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from*” (Jn. 9:29); “*You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?*” (Jn. 9:34). What about you? Could you be blinded by arrogant certainty? Do you ever dismiss the teaching of others without even giving it a fair hearing, because you know that you’re right and you couldn’t possibly be wrong? “ARE WE BLIND ALSO?”

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