

Trends

Analysis of U.S. census data indicate fewer than half (46%) of U.S. kids younger than 18 years of age are living in a home with two married heterosexual parents in their first marriage. This is a marked change from 1960, when 73% of children fit this description, and 1980, when 61% did. The data also show that currently 41% of children born in the U.S. are born outside of marriage, up from just 5% in 1960.

—via Pew Research Center

Malachi 2:16: "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce,"

Matthew 19:9: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Sentence Sermons

"My divorce wasn't fun." —Ann Wojcicki, co-founder of 23andMe

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 Al Cook's family. Recently Al's uncle Theodus passed away. Let's keep the Cook family in our prayers.

Please pray for Dawne. She is scheduled for eye surgery in August 18th. The doctors say it is a simple procedure. But parents are concerned when their child and the words "eye" and "surgery" appear in the same sentence!

Please pray for Alan Jones. Alan's deep brain stimulation treatment to relieve severe facial pain was unsuccessful. He continues to suffer from his condition. Please 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 Eric and Whitney Holk and congratulations on their recent marriage!

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people are now back to school.

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Editor: Craig Thomas (812-320-9569); craigthomas82000@gmail.com

Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

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

John 6:68



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Let's Play Frisbee!

Craig Thomas

While on earth, Christ made it clear His desire and duty was to do God's will (Jn. 6:38). Because of Christ's obedience, the Father gave Him "All authority...in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18). As His disciples, we are to "keep [Jesus'] words" and in doing so we have His assurance He and the Father "will come...and make [their] abode" with us (Jn. 14:23).

God has revealed His Will through His Word in a clear and understandable manner (Eph. 3:1-5). Thus, as Paul writes, the things "God has revealed...to us through His Spirit" (i.e., His Word) are "The things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Hence, everything we teach, preach and practice must have the approval and sanction of our Lord (Col. 3:17). To do otherwise is condemned by Him! "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46; cf. Jn. 14:15)

When man decides to operate outside the realm of divine authority God is not pleased. Just ask Aaron's sons. They used unauthorized fire to burn incense and God burned them (Lev. 10:1-2). Just ask the great deliverer and prophet Moses. Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it and God denied him entrance into the Promised Land (Num. 20:11-12). Uzza was not authorized to touch the ark of the covenant, but did so (BTW: He touched it with seemingly good intentions!). As a result, "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark" (1 Chron. 13:9).

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the use of the church building. All sound and knowledgeable Christians understand the church is not the church building. The "church" Jesus built (Matt. 16:18), and "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28)

"So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them."

Leviticus 10:2

is not bricks and mortar, but people; people who have obeyed the gospel and are "saved" (Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). The "church building" is merely an expedient used by Christians to obey God's will insofar as the work and worship of the local church is concerned. It is no different than songbooks serving as an expedient so Christians may carry out God's command to "sing" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

God's people derive authority to act in religious matters from God's Word (e.g.,

Col. 3:17). Sometimes God's instructions are *specific* and sometimes they are *general* in nature. For example, when God instructed Noah to build an ark in Genesis 6, He *specified* the materials, dimensions, and layout of the ark (Gen. 6:14-16). Therefore, Noah could not, with Divine approval, substitute other materials, use other dimensions, or change the ark's layout. However, God did not *specify* the tools and methods Noah was to use in constructing the ark. Thus, for Noah to obey the command to build the ark he was authorized, in a *general* way, to use the tools and methods (i.e., *expedients*) needed to obey God's will (e.g., saw, axe, block and tackle, etc.).

The same is true regarding the church building. God has *specified* the work and worship of the church. The work of the church falls into one of three realms: 1) *evangelism* (1 Thess. 1:6-8), 2) *edification* (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:15-16), or 3) *benevolence* (Acts 4:34-35; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Some aspects of these works are *specified*. For example, we are *limited* insofar as evangelism is concerned to preaching the gospel (Mk. 16:15; cf. 1 Thess. 1:8). Christ does not authorize the church to preach politics. Regarding benevolence, the New Testament pattern shows the church only extending benevolent aid to "needy saints" (1 Cor. 16:1-2, etc.). It's true individual Christians have a benevolent responsibility that extends to "*all*," and is an important criterion of our judgment (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:31-46; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:17). But the scope of local church benevolence is *limited* (see 1 Tim. 5:16). In the realm of edification, the local church meets to worship on the first day of the week and its activities are *limited* to the five acts of worship *specified* in the New Testament: 1) preaching/teaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7), 2) singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), 3) praying (1 Cor. 14; esp. v. 15), 4) giving of our means (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and the observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:18-26).

Some aspects of these important collective responsibilities of the local church are not *specified* by Scripture, but are nonetheless authorized in a *general* way and require the use of *expedients* to carry them out. For example, as already cited, our Divine duty to sing in worship authorizes the use of song books to carry that out. Similarly, the use of a place to meet for worship is necessary to carry out the Divine duty to worship (also see Heb. 10:25). The local church is not *limited* to owning a building. The church could rent a room, meet in a member's home, meet under an oak tree, etc. The Divine requirement to meet for worship necessarily requires a *place* to meet even though the meeting place is not *specified*.

Is the church building "holy"?

Since faithful brethren refuse to use the church building for secular and common activities some have accused us of believing the church building is "*holy*." This charge is usually made in a derogatory, derisive, and disapproving way. It is usually coupled with the injunction: "The church is not the church building." (see discussion above) So, is the church building "*holy*"?

The word "*holy*" is a prominent word in Scripture. It appears 180 times in the New Testament. The Greek word for "*holy*" is *hagios* and "fundamentally signifies 'separated' ...in its moral and spiritual significance...and therefore consecrated to God, sacred" (Vine). It refers to some thing or person "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his" (Thayer). The word "*saint*" is used to describe Christians and is derived from the same Greek word *hagios*.

Thus, Christians are people "set apart" by God. We are "set apart" from the world to serve and glorify Him (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

The building is authorized only to serve the Divine instructions given to the local church pertaining to its work and worship. So, the building certainly meets the definition of *hagios* as something "set apart" by God since we use it to obey His instructions concerning the work and worship of the church. The building is not "set apart" for the purposes of playing bingo or weaving baskets. It is not "set apart" as a banquet hall or gymnasium. But, it is "set apart" for the divine purposes God requires of the local church. Nothing more and nothing less. So, is the church building "holy"? I believe so.

So, what about playing frisbee? At our church building the local church has purchased a set of four small, round metal plates to pass the unleavened bread as we observe the Lord's Supper. The Scriptures do not *specify* this method as the only way of serving the unleavened bread. The Scriptures just tell us, in a *general* way, to eat the bread and also instructs us in the manner and purpose of eating it. Hence, we use the plates as an authorized *expedient* to aid us in observing the Divine instructions to partake of the Lord's Supper. But, you know, those little



metal disks would make great frisbees! Ridiculous? Yes! Why? Because those plates were purchased from the local church treasury (i.e., from the Lord's money) and are thus "set apart" for divine service (i.e., to partake of the Lord's Supper).

For Christians to play frisbee is not wrong, but it would be wrong to use the communion trays to do so! Surely, we can understand that.

Is the church building any different than the communion trays? Both are purchased from the Lord's money to serve the needs of the local church in the observance of Divine appointed service. What authority then is there to use them for common purposes? None! We have no more authority to use the church building for bingo games, scout meetings, social meals, basketball games, or other common things than we have to use the communion trays to play frisbee.

Hair splitting? Nit picking? Majoring in minors? I don't believe Nadab and Abihu would think so. Neither would Moses or Uzzah. How about you and me? Further, recall the Word of God is that "*which God has prepared for those who love Him*." (1 Cor. 2:9-10). When we do what is not authorized by His Word, no matter how trivial it may seem to us, our claim to "*love Him*" becomes a hollow claim. Do you and I truly love Him? "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*." (Jn. 14:15)