

Trends

Is marijuana a harmless drug? It may have some medicinal benefits, but recreational use is dangerous. It can cause memory difficulties, learning problems, increased heart rate, anxiety and most problems associated with tobacco smokers. According to the *National Institute on Drug Abuse* it causes important negative changes in brain chemistry which can take days or weeks to wear off. Long-term users may also develop a dependency that interferes with family life, career, school and social functioning.

—via *Partnership for a Drug-Free America*

I Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour...”

Sentence Sermons

“I think people need to be educated to the fact that marijuana is not a drug. Marijuana is a flower. God put it here.” —Willie Nelson

Editor: Isn't it interesting that people who pretty much ignore God suddenly conjure Him when they need to justify or rationalize their behavior? Funny how that works.

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 pray for my son and his wife as they seek to start a new congregation in northern Michigan. Please pray Ryan can raise enough support to do this important work.

Please pray for Dawne. She is slowly, but surely, recovering from her eye surgery.

Please pray for Alan Jones. Alan's deep brain stimulation treatment to relieve severe facial pain was unsuccessful. He continues to suffer; 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 Hatti and her “new life” in Texas! We wish her only the very best and will miss her “something fierce”!

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people are now back to school. Pray for Zach as he goes away to basic training in the U.S. Army.

There are many needy saints! Can you help?! Let me know.

Words of Life is published by the **Westside Church of Christ** meeting at 1301 N. Enterprise, Bloomington, IN 47404

Times of Service: Bible Study, Sunday 9:30 AM and Wednesday 7:00 PM; Worship, Sunday 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM

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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



Sep. 3,
2017

Vol. 9,
No. 29

A report from John Isaac Edwards

August 25, 2017

In February 2014, Ryan Thomas (his wife Jennifer) began working with the church in Grayling, MI in preaching the gospel as they endeavored to patiently bring them back to the old paths. This area of Michigan has been a stronghold of liberalism. The closest sound congregation known to us is more than 2 hours away.

Two different mindsets exist in this congregation. These came to a head as I was invited to come preach three nights in a gospel meeting August 22-24, with the request to speak one evening on institutionalism. To help lay the groundwork, I preached the first night on Bible Authority. I pointed out our need for authority, the source of it, generic and specific authority, expediency, silence, and how authority is established. As I began, I mentioned that my appeal was to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord is right (Ps. 33:4). If what we believe, teach and practice is according to the Lord's word then it is right and cannot be wrong. But if it is not according to His word then it is wrong and can't be right. If you hear something said tonight that you believe to be in error, please do not leave without bringing that to my attention that we might sit down together and look into the matter, and if it be that I have taught error I will make the proper correction. However, should you find that you need to make changes, it is my prayer that you will have the courage and conviction to do so. I'll be at the door as you leave should you have any question or would like to discuss the lesson further after the service.

In the midst of my preaching, one in the audience (who I later learned was one of the members, the treasurer), interrupted me trying to ask questions. He indicated that he wanted to have a back and forth public discussion. I let him know that this was not designed to be a public discussion, but would be happy to talk with him about his questions after the service. Then, I continued on with the lesson. After the service, as he approached me, I asked him, “What is your question?” He said he didn't want to just ask me personally, but wanted to ask it publicly and have a back and forth discussion (like a debate). I told him it was not my place to decide that, but if the men wanted to have a q & a session or provide an occasion for such, I would be happy to do that, but that is up to them. He left in a huff without asking or discussing his question with me.

Another gentleman on his way out asked for clarification on a point, and I was able to spend time answering his question. The next night I began preaching as I did the

night before with an added explanation as to why I chose not to take questions during the preaching - so as to maintain the continuity and flow of the lesson, so the audience would not become distracted from the points being made, to let all things be done unto edifying and to let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14). I wanted to make it clear to them to know that I was not trying to avoid any questions. I mentioned that I was a guest invited by the men of the church to preach, and that one indicated he wanted to have a public discussion, that if the men wanted to have an occasion for that after the service, I would be happy to do that, but it is up to them and they can let me know. I mentioned that I would again be available after the service to answer or discuss with them any question they might have. I briefly reviewed the previous night's lesson on Authority, made application to the music question, and then began preaching on The Work Of The Church and Institutionalism. I talked about the difference between the individual and the church, the spiritual nature of the work, the fact that the work is Christ-directed, and had just finished talking about the threefold work of the church, when one of the men stood up and abruptly interrupted the service, saying that I had preached for 45 minutes and had not yet preached the gospel, he wasn't going to allow it to continue. I tried to reason with him, but he closed the service with prayer.

In the midst of the sermon the treasurer who caused a disturbance the night before got up and walked out. It was obvious that there were two completely different reactions. Those in opposition were quite upset with me and my preaching. Those in agreement were very supportive, and greatly disturbed by what had taken place. One lady said, "I am ashamed and embarrassed." She indicated that they were going to stand for the truth. One brother asked about sending money to the Schultz-Lewis home. I asked him what is the Schultz-Lewis home. I wanted to see what his knowledge was of it. I simply asked, Where is the Scripture that authorizes the church to make a donation to an institution like that. He looked up and around, as if he was dumbfounded, and walked off.

The brother who ended the service was in another room of the building eating an ice cream cone with some his family and a couple of other members. I told him that I was very disappointed that he acted as he did without giving occasion for folks to respond to the Lord's invitation. I asked if I have taught error to please let me know what that is. He said come back Sunday that one would be here from the Shultz-Lewis home to talk about it. I informed him that I regret that I can't be here Sunday as I already am committed to preach in a meeting in Deckerville, MI, that I am here now and why doesn't he tell me. He said that I had condemned everything they were doing. I hadn't brought any accusations against the church or mentioned the Schultz Lewis home by name. He had made the application. I asked for the Scripture that authorized the church to make a donation to any kind of human institution. The only Scripture he cited was Galatians 6:10. I had covered that in the lesson, but went through it again with him.

The only other arguments offered were we've been doing it this way for 40 years, all the other churches around here are doing it and they have elders, and all the good that comes from it. He tried to make an emotional appeal about the folks in Africa that are jumping up and down praising God for the wells they are drilling. I recognize there are many around the world in dire

need and that drilling wells for folks to have water is a good work, but where is the Scripture that authorized the church to engage in the work of drilling wells? I mentioned that we could provide pure water, clean clothes and a comfortable home, but without preaching the gospel we haven't done one thing to save their soul.

One said they sure hoped that the church didn't pay me. I made it known that should not be a concern as they could keep it, that I wouldn't be taking it. I asked if I would be allowed to preach again the next night, as the meeting was scheduled to go another night. He said he would. I asked if I would be allowed to finish and give folks an opportunity to respond to the gospel invitation. It was said as long as I didn't go overtime. I said I didn't know there was an end time, that no one informed me of it. I asked for the end time and he stormed out the door. Craig Thomas, Ryan's father, a dear brother, friend, and faithful gospel preacher, who came up from Bloomington, IN to support the meeting, and I followed him to the parking lot letting him know that we are not his enemy. We hugged him and let him know that we love him.

One showed me a post one of the ladies of the church put on social media in which she referred to me as Satan and urged the men to stop these false teachers of Satan from infesting the Lord's church. The conservative brethren made it know they would plan to come back the next night. I went prepared to preach, not knowing what I would find. None of the liberal brethren who were opposing the truth were present. All of those interested in holding fast the pattern came, including one who was weak physically unable to come the night before. I preached, "Ask For The Old Paths" from Jeremiah 6:16. It was the best service of the meeting. There was a completely different spirit and atmosphere, one of great reverence and respect for the Lord and His word. Ryan, the preacher, responded to the invitation asking for prayers of forgiveness for taking support from the church as the church was receiving and sending funds contrary to the New Testament pattern. It is obvious that the brethren present this night love Ryan and Jennifer, are very supportive of them and their work, want to hold the pattern, even if that means starting anew with a few.

"Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it."

Psalm 141:5

Editor's Note: I recognize that I have a "father's concern" over these matters. However, I sincerely love the truth and men's souls. I lived and preached in Michigan for 20 years and can testify it is difficult soil for the gospel. To my knowledge, there are less than 10 faithful churches in the entire state (population ~10 million). Those faithful churches are small and many of the brethren drive great distances just to meet together on the Lord's Day or Wednesday evening. I commend them greatly for sticking with it! If you would like to further the cause of Christ in Michigan, you may want to help support Ryan financially as he and a handful of faithful saints from Graying start a new work. They plan to meet for the first time this Lord's Day (9/3/17). If you can help Ryan, or know those that are interested, please contact him at: ryanjthomas1981@gmail.com.

God bless and Godspeed!!!!