

Trends

The vast majority of households own at least one Bible (87%), a proportion that has stayed relatively consistent since 2011. Even the majority (62%) of Hostile and Skeptic (67%) households own a Bible. Ownership of a Bible is universal among Bible Engaged and nearly so among those who are Bible Friendly (93%) compared to Bible Neutrals, at 86%. Millennials (82%) and Gen-Xers (86%) continue to be the generations least likely to live in a home with a Bible compared to Boomers (90%) and Elders (93%). African-Americans (95%) are significantly more likely than Whites (87%) and Hispanics (88%) to own a Bible.

—via Barna Research

Editor's note: Isn't it amazing the Bible is nearly universally accessible, but so few follow its teachings? How about you and me?! **2 Cor. 13:5; Jas. 1:25**

1 Peter 1:25: "But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."

Sentence Sermons

"The reason you don't like the Bible, you old sinner, is because it knows all about you!" —Billy Sunday

John 12:48: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

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 our gospel meeting October 8-13, Ryan Thomas preaching.

Please pray for Alan Jones. Alan continues to struggle with severe facial pain with little to no relief. Pray his suffering may be minimized, please also pray for 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

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

John 6:68

Will a Name or Signboard Save Us?

Ron Halbrook



The comment is often heard among religious people and their leaders, "A certain name or signboard will not save us." That sounds innocent and true on the surface, but it implies something which is not true. Of course, one implication is that Christ saves us which is true, but another implication is that Christ left his followers free to manufacture and embrace human names in religion—and that is not true.

If we profess to follow Christ, we must submit to him in all things he commanded according to his own instruction in Matthew 28:20, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." He sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Apostles and prophets to receive "all truth" necessary for us to receive salvation by God's grace and to obey him in all things so that we may live and die in a right relationship with God (Jn. 16:13). They received, proclaimed, and wrote this truth for all future generations and God will preserve it in Scripture until the end of time (2 Pet. 1:12-15; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

These Apostles and prophets did not manufacture their own teaching but strictly delivered what Christ revealed to them through the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). This inspired teaching alone was delivered to all the churches everywhere and they were constantly reminded to follow it. Paul reminded the church at Corinth, "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). Peter, John, and Paul did not teach different doctrines and names among the churches, but all the Apostles and prophets taught the same thing everywhere in every church.

"The Disciples Were Called Christians"

Under the guidance of the Spirit, Paul and Barnabas preached in Antioch for one year and revealed that disciples or followers of Christ will be identified by his name: "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Christ did not send the Holy Spirit to give the disciples the names of man-made religions and churches such as Catholic, Methodist, Mormon, Pentecostal, Baptist, Born Again, etc., etc. Man-made names only divide those who profess to follow Christ because one man likes a certain human name and another man likes a different one. Jesus prayed for his true followers to be united under the teaching of his word of truth (John 17:17-21). He never taught or prayed one word in support of the modern mantra, "Join the church of your choice," or, "Thank you, Lord, that we can choose from many denominations and names." Never did such words fall from the lips of our Savior.

When some early Christians began to adopt human names, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to rebuke them through Paul and to teach them to abandon those names in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13. *"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"* Christ does not want his followers to wear human names which divide us such as Paulite Christian, Apollosite Christian, Cephasite Christian, Pentecostal Christian, Alliance Christian, Catholic Christian, Born Again Christian, etc., etc.

"Is Christ divided?" It means the answer is an automatic and emphatic NO! **"Was Paul crucified for you?"** It means the answer is an automatic and emphatic NO! **"Were you baptized in the name of Paul?"** It means the answer is an automatic and emphatic NO! The lesson Christ is driving this: We must wear only the name of our Savior so that we will be united by his name, not divided by human names. We wear the name of Christ because he was crucified for our sins and these other names are not the Savior crucified for us. We wear only the name of the Savior by whose authority we were baptized to wash away our sins and not names of men which have no power to wash away our sins.

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

When Paul was traveling toward Rome, he visited congregations of Christ's people along the way and they were identified by the name of their Savior not by any man-made name: *"The churches of Christ salute you"* (Rom. 16:16). Just as the individual followers of Christ were identified as belonging to him, thus *"Christians,"* their assemblies were also identified as belonging to him, thus *"churches of Christ."* The church he visited in each place belonged exclusively to Christ, not to any human leader or organization, thus it was simply a church of Christ. Individual followers of Christ in the New Testament were never identified by ancient or modern names created by human leaders. Local churches in the New Testament were never identified by such man-made names.

We must be often reminded that the church about which we read in the New Testament was planned by God from eternity (Eph. 3:10-11). God planned that Christ would die on the cross to save us and gather us into His church, and thus it is the only church *"purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). God purposed that Christ would rise from the dead, take his throne at the Father's right hand, and establish his church on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:30-36). All who submit to Christ in water baptism are added by the Lord to this spiritual body of Christ, the church of Christ (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

This New Testament church is the true *"church of God"* because it came from His mind, His purpose, and His power (1 Cor. 1:2). He made Christ alone *"the head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Eph. 1:22-23). Thus, the church planned and purposed by God is the body of Christ, the church of Christ. God did not plan these human denominations and denominational names. The people and the bodies bearing these names are churches planned by men and are not the true church of God. These bodies are purely human bodies, not the body of Christ, the true church of Christ.

Christ alone is our Savior. We belong to him, not to any human leader. We are thus identified by the name, power, and authority of our Savior who alone saves us. Why should we focus upon or identify ourselves by the names, powers, and authorities of human leaders who cannot save us? Peter said concerning Christ, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). If Christ alone can save us, we should be identified as belonging to him alone.

Why Call Me, "Lord," But Refuse to Obey Me?

A signboard alone will not save us because, on the one hand, we might have a true

and biblical signboard but refuse to obey Christ in many ways. We might be womanizing, drinking, gambling, or spreading false doctrines which deceive people. In that case Jesus Christ will ask us the question he asked in Luke 6:46, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* The name or signboard cannot serve as a cover for our sins.

On the other hand, the signboard might be a stumbling block that causes us to disobey Christ. For instance, a name or signboard is a stumbling block if it is not authorized by Christ and it identifies us with some modern leader, movement, or organization not found in the New Testament. If we profess to follow Christ, we must always be identified by his name and not by names created by human leaders. If we use names created by human leaders, we are following what we like instead of following and obeying Christ in all things. In that case he will ask us the question he asked in Luke 6:46, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"*

Let us take seriously the simple but profound words of our Savior in John 14:15 and 15:14, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments,"* and, *"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."* He commanded us to wear his name as the one crucified for us and not to wear additional names created and chosen by human leaders.

Let us always search the Scriptures with a determination to strictly follow what we can read in the Book of God. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"* (1 Pet. 4:11).

Fall Gospel Meeting

October 8-13

Ryan Thomas

Plan to attend every service!

Sunday

"What Is Man, That Thou Art Mindful of Him?"

"The Wise Man"

"The Foolish Man"

Monday

"Characteristics of a Christian"

Tuesday

"Principles of Divine Fellowship"

Wednesday

"Bible Expressions of Unity"

Thursday

"Great Bible Paradoxes"

Friday

"The Church as God Designed It"