

## Trends

The percentage of U.S. adults who believe that God created humans in their present form at some time within the last 10,000 years or so -- the strict creationist view -- has reached a new low. Thirty-eight percent of U.S. adults now accept creationism, while 57% believe in some form of evolution -- either God-guided or not -- saying man developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life.

—via GALLUP News

**Genesis 1:1:** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

## Sentence Sermons

"Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory the earth goes around the sun."

—Richard Dawkins, scientist and atheist

"Either human intelligence ultimately owes its origin to mindless matter; or there is a Creator. It is strange that some people claim that it is their intelligence that leads them to prefer the first to the second."

—John Lennox, scientist and theist

**Psalms 14:1:** "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

## 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 read his recent report I forwarded to all on my e-mail list.

Please pray for those at Grayling who chose not to follow the truth.

Please pray for Sandy Willis, wife of gospel preacher Mike Willis (Decatur Township). Sandy had successful heart valve replacement surgery and is now home recuperating.

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.

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

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# Words of Life

Westside  
church of Christ

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

John 6:68

Are You Really Religious?

Craig Thomas

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What mental picture comes to mind when you think of someone who's religious? A Catholic may picture someone devoted to praying the rosary several times a day. Perhaps to you it's a person who always seems to be in a state of deep meditation. But, how does scripture define someone who is "religious"?

1) **Scriptural Definition.** Scripture defines "religious" as: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1:27) Bible spirituality centers on acts of kindness, charity and benevolence toward our fellow man and an obedient walk with God that places our life's emphasis on the eternal, not the temporal (Col. 3:1ff; Phil. 3:20).

2) **Two Greatest Commandments.** The definition of "pure and undefiled religion" in James 1:27 is really no different than the two great commandments described by Jesus, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37-39) You see "religion" is shown, not by

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James 1:27

great acts of devotion to a religious or doctrinal "system," but by our obedience to God and through our deeds toward our fellow man. First, our closeness to God is not measured, for example, by our "faith" to see the virgin Mary in a salt stain on a highway overpass. But, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 Jn. 2:3) Since God only reveals His will in His word, only those obeying His word can truly lay claim to loving and knowing Him (cf. 1 Jn. 2:4-5; 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:4-13). Second, in regards to our neighbor, recall that James said, "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:26) and he offered the following to illustrate: "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (Jas. 2:15-16) Thus, to engage in **true** religion, a "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and

*faultless*" (NIV), we must take the Bible principles of love and compassion and put them into **action** in regards to our fellow man. Otherwise our claims to "religiousness" are empty and vain and we have a "dead" faith.

3) **Basis of Judgment.** Our judgment will be upon this same basis: whether we've kept God's commandments and whether we've shown love and compassion to our fellow man by our deeds (cf. Rom. 2:5-10). For example, Jesus described "religious" people who were lost, not necessarily because they didn't do good deeds, but because they practiced "lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23). They were disobedient to the Father's "will." Also, in the great judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus emphasizes the importance of good deeds towards our fellows. Those who "inherit the kingdom" perform good deeds towards others so regularly that it becomes their "second nature" (vss. 34-40). Jesus also lays out the other side of the coin by describing those who did not do things like "visit the orphans and widows in their trouble." He does not say why they failed in this regard. They may have simply been callous or

Those who "inherit the kingdom" perform good deeds towards others so regularly that it becomes their "second nature"...

they may have had the best of intentions, but nonetheless they never carried through and as a result they heard these

terrible words, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

What about you dear friend? Do you practice "pure and undefiled religion"? If you answered "yes," are you obedient to God's word? Do you "keep His commandments"? And, what are you doing to relieve the needs of your fellow man?

### Casual Attire At Worship

Larry Hafley

(Prologue: A deacon in a large midwestern church wrote with respect to the "heat" he was receiving because of his protest against casual, sloppy, intemperate dress worn by some to worship services. My remarks to him follow below.)

I commend your stand. As you noted, we cannot make specific dress code laws, perhaps, for one's economic status must be considered (Jas. 2:1-4). However, when Joseph was called from prison to meet before Pharaoh, "he shaved himself, and changed his raiment" (Gen. 41:14). What does that say about decorum and propriety?

While the story of the centurion who thought himself unworthy to entertain Jesus is not about clothing, it illustrates a principle of modesty with respect to being in the presence of our august Lord (Lk. 7:6, 7). How does sloppy, slovenly, intemperate, immodest dress relate to that principle?

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There is a "former manner of life" which is to be "put off" (Eph. 4:22). Some of the particulars of that "former manner of life" are specified in Ephesians 4:25 through 5:18 and in 1 Peter 4:3. One's life in Christ is to stand out

in stark contrast and bold relief against the former lifestyle (1 Pet.4:4). In that same connection, regarding "the time past of our" lives, we are now to be "ashamed" of it. We are to be "ashamed" of how we once lived (Rom. 6:21). We were conformed, shaped, molded, patterned after the world and its intemperance and immodesty, but now we are to be transformed, having put on the new man (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22-24). Put all those texts together. Now, what does our dress reflect with respect to our "former manner of life"? Does our dress cause people to think it strange that we run not with them, or does it suggest that we live like they live, act like they act? Does our dress place us with the ungodly and lump us with the world of iniquity?

Proverbs 7:10 mentions a woman clad "in the attire of an harlot." That statement means something, else, why did the Holy Spirit cite it? If a TV show wants to portray a prostitute, how do they dress her for the role? (Rather, how do they undress her for the role!) While it's true that one "cannot (always) tell a book by its cover," I think we all know the difference between *Playboy* and the Bible!

When the wild man, "Legion," was cleansed of his demons, he later was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Lk. 8:35). Is it too much to ask that those today who are "sitting at the feet of Jesus, (be) clothed, and in (their) right mind"?

### "They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist..."

Steve Dewhurst

These were the last words spoken by General John Sedgwick as he surveyed the enemy troops during the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. In mid-word, a Rebel bullet found its mark and so ended a great military career. The general's statue stands today near the parade grounds at West Point, an enduring testimonial to Confederate marksmanship!

Stories like this should remind us just how silly—and dangerous—our words can be. Speech reveals what's in our hearts. Sedgwick's comments evinced great confidence in the safety and security of his troops, when in reality, he was merely seconds from the Grim Reaper.

Our own words are no less revealing. Whether statements are casual, careless, or deliberate, our choice of terms and voice inflection belie what might otherwise remain hidden.

### Consider some of our "stupid" words:

- "I was just too busy to do my Bible lesson." In truth we're too wedded to the world to divorce ourselves from carnal concerns long enough to cultivate spiritual growth.
- "It's the church's job to teach my children the Bible." Then what, pray tell, is your job, Dad?
- "I don't know why the preacher can't quit on time?" Perhaps it's because there is so much you need to hear.
- "The Bible doesn't say I have to go to church on Sunday night." The Bible doesn't say you have to go to heaven either, but why would you want to miss it?