

## Trends

A recent survey found that scientists, on the whole, are much less religious than the general public. In fact, scientists are roughly half as likely as the general public to believe in God or a higher power. According to the poll, just over half of scientists (51%) believe in some form of deity or higher power; specifically, 33% of scientists say they believe in God, while 18% believe in a universal spirit or higher power. By contrast, 95% of Americans believe in some form of deity or higher power. Specifically, more than eight-in-ten Americans (83%) say they believe in God and 12% believe in a universal spirit or higher power. Finally, the poll of scientists finds that four-in-ten scientists (41%) say they do not believe in God or a higher power, while the poll of the public finds that only 4% of Americans share this view.

- via Pew Research

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

## Sentence Sermons

"There have been men before now who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself."

—C.S. Lewis

**Matthew 22:37:** "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'"

## 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 on the foyer bulletin board.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Rody and Tessie Gumapd. They are suffering from a variety of health problems.

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 all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

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

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

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**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



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## Being Right and Living Right

Craig Thomas

Undoubtedly the Bible teaches the importance of being "doctrinally correct," for 2 John 9 says: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." By that I mean it's critical for us as God's people to follow the scriptural plan of salvation and the New Testament (NT) pattern for the worship, work, and organization of the church. Denominationalism perverts and/or ignores these important "doctrinal" issues. Over the years brethren have vehemently and militantly opposed the doctrinal innovations, perversions, and apostasies of the denominational world. It is good and right that we've done so, for we must (Jude 3). However, we must never forget there's more to being a faithful Christian than "doctrinal orthodoxy" on these matters.

1) **You're Getting Soft, You're Compromising.** Some may cringe at the last statement and accuse me of getting soft or compromising the truth. That's not the case at all. In those areas mentioned we must be "doctrinally correct." But, if that is all we are, we fall far short of practicing pure New Testament Christianity. Unequivocally we can only practice pure New Testament Christianity when we've restored things like the scriptural plan of salvation and follow the New Testament pattern for the worship, work, and organization of the church. **BUT**, we must also just as certainly restore all of the aspects of Christian character and living. Otherwise our claim to having restored the New Testament church is merely a hollow, pharisaical boast!

2) **Whole Counsel of God.** Paul legitimately laid claim he was "innocent of the blood of all men," because he had "not shunned to declare...the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). Do you suppose Paul's preaching and teaching stopped at the plan of salvation and the worship, work, and organization of the church? No! For example, he taught the need for individual Christians to reject conformity with the world and be totally transformed by God's word! (Rom. 12:1-2) He taught the need for individual Christians to reject every form and facet of fleshly, worldly behavior and become a new man! (Col. 3:5-14) He taught the necessity of practicing benevolence on an individual basis (Gal. 6:10; cf. Jas. 1:27). The Lord

Himself summed up what Paul surely taught in Matt. 22:37-40. True religion is not found in devotion to a doctrinal “system” or by satisfying oneself by being “doctrinally correct” on a few, albeit critical, points. True religion can only be found when one **totally** submits to all of God’s will in humble, contrite obedience and glorifies God by imitating Jesus’ virtuous life and treating one’s fellow man with compassion and true concern. All else falls short!

3) **Balance.** Being a faithful Christian is like most things in the sense that truth is usually not found at the extremes, but at some balance point in the middle. To stress compassion and concern and ignore “doctrine” is not acceptable (2 Jn. 9-11). To stress “doctrinal correctness” without perfecting our individual walk with Christ (e.g., Phil. 1:27) is not acceptable. To stress “doctrinal correctness” and our individual walk with Christ while ignoring our responsibilities to our fellow man is not acceptable either (Matt. 25:31-46; Jas. 1:27). Denominationalists and some brethren are guilty of following these extremes. Let us be determined to truly restore New Testament Christianity in our lives by living it ALL! Remember, we must live by both James 4:17 and 2 John 9. In the process we’ll grow, the church will grow, and we’ll make it to heaven.

*“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*

Jas. 4:17

### **The Message of the Empty Seat**

John Isaac Edwards

Jonathan said to David, *“To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty”* (1 Samuel 20:18). One problem facing the church today is that of empty seats. The empty seat says... Some Are Not Putting First Things First. Jesus taught, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom, the Lord’s church, is to come first before everything else. Whenever my seat is empty, does it say my priorities are mixed up?

#### **Some Are of Little Faith**

The context of Matthew 6:33 finds Jesus talking about folks who were worried about the material things of life. In verse 30 Jesus said, *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* The Lord assures us that as we put the church first. He will take care of us. One reason seats are empty is that of folks not having enough faith in the Lord and His word.

#### **Some Do Not Properly Value Their Influence**

Whether we realize it or not, all of us possess influence. The Lord declared, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). My at-

tendance, or lack thereof, has tremendous influence on others. Think about your influence on your fellow members, your family, visitors, new converts, and the like when your seat is empty. Wouldn’t it be tragic if your lack of attendance influenced others to not attend?

#### **Some Do Not Love the Lord**

Hebrews 10:25 shows attendance to be a command of God: *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* Obedience is proof of our love for the Lord. Jesus revealed, *“If a man love me, he will keep my words...”* (John 14:23). To forsake the assembling is to disobey the Lord!

#### **Some Are Not Building Up the Church**

Each member of the Lord’s body has responsibility to supply a part to build up the church (Ephesians 4:10-16). Faithful attendance on the part of each member goes a long way in making the church a growing church!

#### **Some Are Sick, Have Moved Away or Died**

Let’s not overlook the point that some seats are empty because folks are sick. Do these know we care? Some folks have moved away or passed away. When the faithful are gone, they are truly missed. Let us work to fill these seats with new converts by teaching others the will of God (2 Timothy 2:2)

### **How Special Is Your Child?**

John Isaac Edwards

I’d like to ask you the question today, “How special is your child?” Special enough to entreat the Lord, *“...teach us what we shall do unto the child”* (Judges 13:8)? Special enough to pray for as Hannah said, *“For this child I prayed...”* (1 Samuel 1:27)? Special enough to teach diligently as Moses exhorted, *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”* (Deuteronomy 6:7)? Special enough to train in the way he should go? Wise Solomon counseled, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Special enough to chasten betimes? One said, *“My child is so special, I just love him too much to discipline him.”* Read this passage and see if they don’t have that backwards. *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). Special enough to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Paul instructed Ephesian fathers, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). Special enough to know the Scriptures? Timothy knew the Scriptures *“from a child”* as a result of the influence of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Special enough to bring to Bible class and worship? *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”* (Hebrews 10:25). Don’t underestimate the value of these services for your child!