

## Trends

Americans give to churches more than any nonprofit organization. More than half of Americans (54%) have given money to a church in the past year. Another 22% of Americans have given to a nonprofit other than a church. The remaining one-quarter of Americans (24%) have given to neither. Unsurprisingly almost all practicing Christians (94%) have given to a church. In fact, practicing Christians tend to be more generous overall than their secular counterparts: 96% of practicing Christians gave to a church or a nonprofit, compared to 60% among atheists and agnostics.

**2 Corinthians 9:6-7:** "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

## Sentence Sermons

**"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another."**  
—Charles Dickens

**1 John 3:17:** "...whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

## News & Notes

Pray that the excellent preaching we experienced at last week's gospel meeting continues to influence all of us for good! We extend our sincerest thanks to Stacy Crim for his excellent preaching!

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. Jennifer's last embryo transfer was, unfortunately, unsuccessful. Please keep her in your prayers.

Please keep sister Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. She is recovering from a recent illness.

Pray for our members who do not attend regularly. Try to encourage them!

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 face many trials and temptations at school.

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

Please let us know of any in need of our prayers! We'll announce it and post it.

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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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## Any Counterfeiters Around?

Jerry Fite

Oh yes, there are those making fake 20, 50 and 100-dollar bills, and passing them off daily. Sure, there are those selling "look alike merchandise," from expensive watches to trendy sneakers, and marketing them as the genuine article. No doubt about it, in the capitalistic world of buying and selling for profit, counterfeiters seek their fortune through deception and fraud. If something is of value, you can be assured that there will be a false look alike not far off stage ready to enter and deceive.

While it is readily admitted that counterfeiters are at work in the secular world, few ever have their consciousness raised to be alarmed of counterfeiters in the spiritual realm. But the Bible identifies many counterfeit things existing, and if not identified, they will harm us eternally.

The Bible speaks of *counterfeit prophets*. Jesus says, "beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Does this sound like every spokesman for God is a true prophet? If we acknowledge with Jesus that there are "false prophets," can we pass them off as being harmless and benign when Jesus calls them "ravening wolves"?

Peter warns us of *counterfeit or false teachers* who "privily bring in destructive heresies, denying the Master that bought them..." (2 Peter 2:1). They are teaching an "easy religion." You can live like you want and continue to satisfy the desires of the fleshly mind (2 Peter 2:18). These teachers are offering a counterfeit religion. They are promising "liberty," when really, they are "bondservants of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19).

Were these false teachers harmless? Those following the teachings of such counterfeiters fall into a spiritual state before God that has "become worse with them than the first" (2 Peter 2:20). Like a dog returning to his vomit, and the sow returning to the wallowing in the mire, the once cleansed Christian returns to his old ways of sin. Spiritual death, or separation from God, con-

tinues to be the wage of sin, regardless of how many counterfeit teachers claim otherwise (Romans 6:23). We have the freedom to choose our Masters: Christ or sin. If we choose Christ, we must put to death the old man of sin (Colossians 3:1-9), and put on the new man created in the image of Christ (Colossians 3:10-14). There is no genuine “easy-do-what-I-want Christian religion.”

Paul warns us of a *counterfeit gospel*. He speaks of “another gospel” which really is not another gospel, “only there are some who trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). The only gospel that can be trusted is the gospel preached by Paul (Galatians 1:8-9). Men may try to be righteous according to their own standard of “think-so’s” and “I feel like,” but the only standard that makes us right before God is the gospel of Christ. For in this genuine message, the “righteousness of God” is revealed (Romans 1:16-17).

Be on guard! There are spiritual counterfeits around. Take the true gospel of Christ revealed in the New Testament, and “prove all things; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). To not do so, is naïve and spiritually irresponsible. Your soul is at stake!

### **The Way, and the Truth and the Life**

Jim Stauffer

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.’” (John 14:6) There is great specificity in this statement by our Lord.

First, He uses the term way, to indicate a specific path to be followed. We are taught to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as He is our example for avoiding the pitfalls of life on earth while in His service (1 Pet. 2:21). Jesus tells us there are two very different ways we can go. One is broad and easy and leads to destruction and the other is narrow and rigid and leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). We know we can

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

**Matthew 7:13-14**

stray from the way and sometimes it is as simple as failing to understand the way. See Apollos in Acts 18:25-26. Second, He indicates this way is connected to the truth. Truth has always been something men have compromised and vacillated over according to how it fits their desires. Pilate responded to Jesus’ claim of being God’s witness of the truth by saying, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) We know from Jesus’ teaching that God’s word is truth (John 17:17) and that very truth will set us

free from the burden of sin (John 8:32).

The third word He uses in His answer to Thomas is *life*. Jesus is the life. He tells Thomas all these things are necessary in coming to the Father and all are achieved in and through Jesus Christ Himself. We learn Jesus is life and as life He is the light of the world (John 1:4). His life shines light on a world of darkness. Paul tells us we have all become a

*“though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,”*

**Hebrews 5:8-9**

part of that darkness and as a result have become alienated or separated from God by our sin (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 4:17-19). But when we have renewed access to the life Jesus brings it is because we have accepted the truth He has revealed to us and follow the way He has set before us.

This life is promised to those who believe in Him (John 3:15-16). Those who believe in Him obey Him in recognition of His authority (Heb. 5:8-9).

Now, here is the plea made with these remarks. Please, for our own benefit, let us recognize the demand of the biblical language. There is no compromise of the way, truth or life. They are not negotiable. We cannot make peace spiritually with anyone who does not acknowledge Christ as the way, truth and life.

The world we live in wishes us to soften our approach to Christianity. We cannot. We are not the authors of this great pathway from certain destruction to eternal life in heaven. We therefore, cannot accept false religions. False religions are those who teach things contrary to what Jesus and His apostles taught (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

**1 John 2:15-17**

We are warned about the dangers of the world and how those things of the world are at odds with the will of God (1 John 2:15-17).

Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? Have you followed His instructions to be added to His church as one of the saved? (Acts 2:47) If so, stand up and be counted. If not, realize you are not following the way, the truth and the life sent from God.