

## Trends

A recent survey on reasons people cited for attending worship services:

- ☛ 76% sermons that teach more about Scripture
- ☛ 75% sermons applicable to daily life
- ☛ 64% programs for children/teens
- ☛ 59% community outreach
- ☛ 54% dynamic/inspiring leaders
- ☛ 49% social activities
- ☛ 38% music, choir, praise band

- via Gallup

**John 4:24:** "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

## Sentence Sermons

"I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven." —A.W. Tozer

**Psalms 122:1:** "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.'"

## News & Notes

Please pray for Zachary Wallace. He is not faithfully attending services as he should (Heb. 10:24-25). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please keep sister Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. She is an encouragement to all of us!

Pray for all 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.

**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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# Words of Life

Westside church of Christ

July 7, 2019

Vol. 11, No. 24

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

John 6:68



**Jump Start # 2383**

Roger Shouse

**I John 5:3:** "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

Our verse is a good reminder that you and I can obey God. All of my life I have heard preachers say how hard it is to be a Christian. That has always bothered me. I wondered if statements like that scared people away, thinking, "There is no way I can do this. It's too hard." Indeed, there is a cost to be paid. Indeed, there is a commitment. But the commandments are not burdensome, John tells us.

I believe one of the hardest aspects of our journey with Christ is having our minds in the right place. Thinking as we ought to think, is another way of saying it. For the Christian, he must consider what he says before he says it. He must think about being that light into the world. He must give thought to how people see him and what impression he leaves. He must be kind. He must be gracious. He must be thoughtful. So, the child of God is always thinking. Always.

Now, the man of the world doesn't do that. He only thinks about himself. He doesn't care about others and especially what they think. So, if he feels like burping out loud in a restaurant, he'll do it. If he feels like being loud and offensive, he will. If he hurts someone's feelings, too bad. If someone doesn't like what he says, they can leave. He can be rude, crude and mean and no one is going to change him. In my vocabulary, the man of the world can be a real jerk and he just doesn't care. He'll leave a trail of destruction. The little waitress gets chewed out because his order wasn't perfect. The mechanic at the car shop gets a tongue lashing because it took too long to fix his car. Family get together often end with someone getting mad because of something this guy has said. No filters. No consideration. No thoughtfulness. He boasts, "I call them as I see them," and he doesn't realize what an embarrassment he is to his family and others.

Unlike the man of the world, the Christian wants to be governed by the principles of Christ. He knows that those principles will bring honor to God and will bring out the best in him. He knows that the principles of Christ build bridges in relationships. Certainly, it is a lot harder to forgive than it is to walk away and ignore someone. Certainly, it is a lot harder to take the time to help show and teach someone the way of the Lord. These solid principles will make not only better relationships, they will bring peace and a path of goodness wherever this man goes.

When the man of God gets the wrong order in a restaurant, he'll not demand to see the manager, expect a free meal, and try to get someone fired in the process. That's

what the man of the world does. Instead, the man of God, will kindly point the mistake. He'll not make it a big deal. Even when offered a free meal for the mistake, he may pass on that. Everyone makes mistakes, he realizes. And, the way he handles this helps a young person feel better. When having to wait a long time on his car, the man of God will use that time for good things. He'll catch up on Bible reading. He'll use the time to pray. He'll send a few texts of encouragement to others. He knows making a scene won't speed things up. He knows complaining and demanding won't make others want to follow him to church services on Sunday. He may be upset, but he still is under-control.

The hardest part of Christianity is not figuring out the Bible. Sure, there are a few difficult places, but that's not where the tough stuff is. It's not in worshipping God. That's pretty easy and enjoyable. No, the tough part is remembering to think and remembering to apply what God wants you to do in your life. It's not the knowing part that is hard. It's the doing part. And, most of our trouble comes not from the knowing part, but from the doing part.

We forget to be thankful. We don't feel like forgiving. We want to be a bit selfish. We act like the man of the world. And, what is interesting in all of this, how we think and how we act, is what people notice the most about our faith. Our beliefs about the second coming isn't a major discussion point very often. But given the chance to be nice or to forgive or to be kind, people will long remember that, especially if it is directed towards them. Again, it's the doing part that matters so much.

Now, I tend to think we get this a bit lopsided at times. Sitting in our Bible classes, we can be passionate about what a verse teaches, but then go home after services, and be short with our mate, fussy with the kids and be in a bad mood the rest of the day. Again, it's the doing part that matters.

Does the knowing part matter? Sure, it does. If you don't know, then you won't do. But we can know to forgive, but do we? We can know to be kind, but are we? We can know to love enemies, but are we? If one doesn't know, then he won't do. So, we must preach and teach these things. We must come to learn what God expects of us and how God wants us to live. But if all we do is know it, and we don't do it, then we suffer and our faith is not complete.

And, there are some things that are just hard to do. It's hard to forgive someone who has hurt you. It's hard to love your enemies. Which is harder? Both. It's hard to seek first the kingdom. It's hard to deny yourself. It's hard to take up your cross. Are those concepts hard to understand? Not really. What's hard is the doing part. If Christianity is merely knowing stuff, it would be like going to school. It would be a matter of hitting the books and simply learning the facts. But that's not Christianity. It is being conformed to Christ. It is being holy. It is letting your light shine. It is the doing part that God wants us to do.

So, when those old-time preachers said that it is hard to be a Christian, I believe I know what they mean. Most of my troubles do not come from a lack of not knowing. The information part is easy to get. My troubles come when I do not do what I should. The doing part is the hardest part. But I have found that the more I do, the easier it gets. And, the more I do, the less trouble I get into.

Knowing and doing—it's not one or the other. It's both. How are you at these things? Are you doing what you know?

**Easier Worship**  
Larry Ray Hafley

(Under the heading above come the words of Tod Brainard below. He has

much to say which ought to stir and stimulate reflection and reformation among brethren—LRH).

"The title comes from an advertisement recently published in the 'Your Church' magazine which markets technologies to churches. The gist of the advertisement was that technologies on the market today make worship easier. Much more is being said by such a title that most are willing to realize. The truth is, the average local church today is in a state of flux. The concept of a worship services is being re-worked and retooled to fit 21<sup>st</sup> century standards. Churches are now hiring 'worship leaders' to bring the modern audiences into the 'spirit of worship' that is supposedly missing in old-fashioned Bible-preaching, hymn-singing church services. The old-fashioned congregation is out and the newfangled theatre audience is in!

### **Congregation Vs. Audience**

"...Over the past 25 years there has been a diminishing of the congregational concept of worship. An appointment with the Lord in a collective setting that leads...to adoration of Christ...has given way to a selfish hodge-podge of fleshly activities. The spirit of secularism pervades much of the 'worship scene' today. We have learned how to sharpen our swords on Philistine stones. Most church worship services reflect more the values and culture of Nebuchadnezzar's worship service than that of Christ's (Dan. 3:4-7). The offering of praise and worship in song has moved for the most part from the pew to the podium....Most...congregations today are nothing more than audiences watching the spectacle of 'praise teams' with microphones, headsets, big screen projections, and special effect lighting....The flesh-orientation trumps Spirit-orientation in this setting. Worship then becomes all about us and our pleasure and less about Christ and his glory. By virtue of this worship philosophy, the preaching of the word of God is no longer front and center, it is secondary and supplemental.

"...One is easily deceived when one is flesh-oriented. Truth is exchanged for fables without the recognition of what is taking place.

### **Return to The Old Paths Wherein Is The Good Way**

"Jeremiah told the Israelite religious leaders that they had left the old paths and the good way (Jer. 6:16). The 'worship leaders' of Jeremiah's day promoted a new way of worship which was very much like unto the worship of the Canaanites. It is high time...to get back to the Bible. Brush off the old hymnals and get back to singing the sound, doctrinal hymns....Preaching the Word of God after the manner of 2 Timothy 4:2 is desperately needed. '*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*' Preaching the exalted Word of God must be the centerpiece in reality and not in promotion only.

"...If people come away with a 'Wow, that service was so neat!' rather than 'I need to confess my sin and do right for the Lord Jesus Christ!' then we have not preached the Word of God with conviction nor have we worshiped the Lord in any way, shape, or form. The degree of our worship is measured not by our technologies and our...programs, but rather by...Christian lives being tuned and calibrated by the convicting Word of God to sing the eternal praises of the Holy One, Jesus Christ."

**Concluding Comments:** Did I mention that the author of the above piece, Tod Brainard, is a Baptist preacher and that his article appeared in *The Baptist Watchman*, May 2004?