

Trends

Disturbing trends:

- ☛ Only 8% of churchgoers think sharing their faith is "very important."
- ☛ 69% of churchgoers believe everyone is going to heaven.
- ☛ About 50% of Christians think non-Christians have no interest in hearing about Jesus.
- ☛ 78% of the unchurched would listen to someone who shared their beliefs about Christianity.

- via *Outside the Walls*

★ **John 4:35:** "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"

Sentence Sermons

★ "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you're not saved yourself, be sure of that!"

—Charles Spurgeon

★ **Mark 16:15-16:** "And he said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. I he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'"

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's an encouragement to all!

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

● Pray for the African appeal for funds to buy Bibles, songbooks and support faithful preachers' travel expense. Donate if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17

● Another 6.9 earthquake hit the southern Philippines. There have been over 3,000 tremblers since this terrible disaster first hit October 16th. Remember, we are "tools of God's providence" for those in need! Jas. 2:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:1-7

● 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?!

● Anyone need prayers? Let us know so we can announce it and post it.

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

John 6:68



**Does the church produce the Bible
or does the Bible produce the church?**

Ryan Thomas

Perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions regarding the Bible is that it is a product of the church. Many reject the Bible as our sole source of religious authority and instruction and belittle us for believing in the "Bible alone theory." Thus, there is a great need to discuss the relationship between the Bible and the church. As always, we will appeal to the scripture as our only source of authority and not our own wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6-7).

For one to understand that the Bible is our only standard for all religious faith and practice, one must understand the church is the result of the Bible and depends on it for everything it preaches and practices. In other words, the Bible produces the church, not the other way around. We are told by some that since the "church is the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), the church itself establishes what truth is. On the contrary, truth emanates only from God (Psa. 86:11; Jn. 1:17; 17:17) and the church is limited to preaching, practicing and upholding that truth (Matt. 28:20). Or as Paul put it in Ephesians 3:10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." The church, just like individuals, must appeal to the Bible as the only source of authority for it alone contains the manifold wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:9-13; Eph. 3:3-5). Just as Moses was admonished to "make all things according to the pattern" (Heb. 8:5); we must use the Bible alone to insure we are following God's revealed pattern for His church. Thus, we must speak where the Bible speaks, remain silent where the Bible is silent, do Bible things in Bible ways, and call Bible things by Bible names (1 Pet. 4:11).

We read in Acts 16:5 that the "churches were established in the faith." We would like to emphasize very kindly, yet very firmly, that the one true church is established *in* the faith—it does not establish the faith. The faith which is spoken of in Acts 16:5 is simply the revealed truth of the gospel which was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) by the end of the first century. As beings created with the rights of freedom and choice, why would anyone bind themselves to the decrees, councils and conventions of men? "God forbid: yea, let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

“The Focal Point of the Bible”

Jarrold Jacobs

If I were to ask you what the focal point of the entire Bible is, would you know the answer? Sometimes, folks approach the Bible with utter confusion. They have no idea what the Bible is about, nor its central theme. To some, the Bible is a jumbled collection of sixty-six books, written by men over thousands of years, that have very little to do with one another. If this is your approach to the Bible, then let this short article be an encouragement to change your thinking.

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, true, but these books all have a common theme. This theme runs through the entirety of the Bible. While these books were written at different time periods and by different authors, they are in perfect harmony with each other. Put simply, the theme of the Bible is redemption. Man sinned before God (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 3:23). Due to sin, God promised a way by which man can be free from sin (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 6:23). From Genesis three through the rest of the Old Testament, we see God revealing a plan by which all men can be saved from sin. This plan so intrigued the spiritual realm that even the angels “desired to look into” God’s plan and watched it unfold (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.”

—1 Peter 1:10-12

As we study the Scriptures, we not only see God’s plan unfolding, but we see the focal point of the Bible itself. There is a point at which all the Old Testament directs our attention. At the same time, the New Testament also directs us to that point in time. It is a point in time wherein Matthew and Luke dedicate

nearly 25% of their writings to recording it. Mark dedicates 33% of his book to the event, and John dedicates 50% of his book to the event. What could have taken place in the lives of these men that would cause them to dedicate so much ink to its description?

It is this event that caused Paul to be imprisoned (Acts 23:6, 24:21, 26:6-8, 28:20), and all the apostles (except John) to lose their lives. It is the event that motivated the apostles, and all first century Christians to preach the truth and try to win souls. This event caused folks in the Old and New Testament times to suffer, be persecuted, and lose all (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; Heb. 10:33-39, 11:26, 32-40). At the same time, though these folks lost their worldly goods, they understood it was leading to something far greater in the spiritual realm (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-17, 12:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-7, 4:12-16)!

The focal point of the Bible is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ! It is this event Paul preached to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It is this event that was prophesied by the Old Testament heroes (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; etc.),

and even promised by Jesus Himself (Matt. 12:38-41, 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19; Lk. 9:22)!

Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection mean that we have the promise of salvation today. This event is reenacted every time someone is baptized for the remission of sins (Rom. 6:3-6). Peter promised that baptism “doth also now save us” because of the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). This event is prominent in the Bible. Do you appreciate what the Lord did? Is it the focal point of your life?

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”

—1 Peter 3:21

What Can I Do This Year?

Greg Gwin

Many times, Christians feel as though there is nothing they can do to positively assist in the work of the church. This, of course, is a huge mistake. There is something for everyone to do. Let us suggest these things that **EVERY** member of the local congregation can do that will help our collective service for the Lord:

(1) You can read your Bible every day. There are few things that can compare to regular Bible reading when it comes to strengthening the soul and maintaining focus on spiritual priorities. What are you waiting for? Make the commitment right **NOW** to read your Bible this year.

(2) You can attend the services faithfully. We all push ourselves to do certain things. We’ll go to real extremes to attend family gatherings, keep a doctor’s appointment, go to a ballgame, have a regular time at the beauty shop, etc. Unfortunately, some are not nearly so

“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

—Ephesians 4:16

determined to attend worship services and Bible studies. If you can get out for other things, why can’t you get out for services? Think! You can really help by simply being present.

(3) You can pray fervently. Do you consistently spend time in prayer every day? Pray for the church, for the elders, for those who are weak, for our work in reaching the lost, etc. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

(4) You can invite a neighbor, co-worker, or family member to attend the services with you. You might be surprised how many would be willing to come with you if you simply invited them.

(5) You can set a good example. Don’t forget that others are watching everything you do, everything you say, everywhere you go. If you let down, even once, they will notice it, and your influence will be damaged. Be conscious of your impact by way of your example.

(6) You can be positive and enthusiastic. Too many are “doom and gloom” Christians, always looking for negative things to complain about. Look up! Be thankful for what you have and excited about what you can do for God’s glory.