

Trends

Although large majorities of the public claim to be “deeply spiritual” and say that their religious faith is “very important” in their life, only 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church ranked their relationship with God as the top priority in their life. As alarming as that finding was, its significance was magnified by research showing that on average pastors believe that 70% of the adults in their congregation consider their relationship with God to be their highest priority in life.

—via Barna Group

Matthew 22:37, 38: “Jesus said to him, ‘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.”

Sentence Sermons

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

—C. S. Lewis

Matthew 10:37, 38: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”

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

My trip to the Philippines (April 7-May 5) has been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. Lord willing, this will soon come to an end and the preaching training schools planned can be rescheduled. Please continue to pray for the furtherance of the gospel!

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

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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



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The Church Jesus Built (Part I): The Need For Studying the Church

Craig Thomas

The word “church” is found 115 times in the New Testament in significant contexts. Matthew records Jesus promising to build an indestructible “church” upon a rock (Matt. 16:18). Several decades later, this victorious Jesus tells John that he sent his angel to him to testify to “the churches” (Rev. 22:16).

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

—Matthew 16:18

The concept of Christ’s church ought to stir the interest of all spiritually minded people. Because of its identification with Christ and things spiritual, our desire should be to learn accurately the concept of “the church” as revealed in the only reliable source of divine information: the New Testament.

1) **Much confusion about Christ’s church.** As with other New Testament concepts, much misinformation exists about “the church.” This is painfully obvious when you consider, by some counts, there are over 30,000 “churches” in Christendom! Isn’t there something wrong with that picture when we find that the New Testament says Jesus built only one church? (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:4)

2) **Understanding the New Testament concept of Christ’s church is critical.** This is easily seen by considering three New Testament facts: 1) God has chosen to reconcile man “in the body of His [Christ] flesh” (Col. 1:22), which is Christ’s body, the church (Col. 1:18); 2) “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47); and 3) “Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body [church]” (Eph. 5:23).

Our concepts about Christ’s church are not merely academic matters. A definite relationship exists between how we think and how we act, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34). Words and actions are extensions of how and what we think. If our concepts are improper, our lan-

guage and actions will reflect these erroneous ideas. Since an accurate concept of Christ's church has eternal consequences it is much more than a theoretical matter.

Many notions about "the church" spring from human tradition rather than Truth; from creeds instead of Christ. Over the next several weeks we will consider many aspects of Christ's church as revealed in the New Testament. During this study we invite you to study and think along with us (Acts 17:11) as we examine New Testament truths pertaining to "the church." We hope all will be led to a greater understanding and appreciation of *"the church of God which He [Christ] purchased with His own blood."* (Acts 20:28)

"I Didn't Marry a Christian"

Several months ago I read an article titled, "I Married A Christian," and it drove home some very sobering thoughts. As I read it I couldn't help but think of what a contrast my own life was—because I didn't marry a Christian. No one told me of the unhappiness I was due in marrying a non-Christian. At the time I married, my parents were not faithful and consequently neither was I. I can't put the responsibility for my actions on them. I was eighteen years old and knew what the Bible taught on marriage.

Now, after having lived with a non-Christian for almost ten years, I now know how important it is for our young people to marry Christians. These ten years have not made me an expert on the subject, but they have made me realize that I should try to teach and/or discourage others from making the same mistake.

When I fell in love with my husband, I couldn't think about those things that could lay ahead. The only thing I knew was that I loved him with all my heart and no one knew or had experienced this kind of love. Ours was different as I felt there was nothing that could ever come between us that we could not overcome.

After we were married, I soon realized how our attitudes and thinking varied. We rented a small apartment and were entertaining other non-Christians in our home. The drinking and dancing were all part of what I had been taught to abhor. And yet in my own home I was consenting to, and becoming a part of, sin. I was getting further and further away from the church. I knew what I should be doing as a Christian, but I was doing nothing to change. We were happy by most people's standards, but I was miserable. I knew my husband did not share my love for the truth and he was not serious about things like that. I loved him so much and I was learning a cold, hard fact: love was not enough. I wanted to return to my "first love." We talked about my return to the church and I realized another fact—he had no intention of going with me in spite of his promises that he would.

I decided to wait on returning and try to work things out. In the meantime, we found out we were expecting our first child. I was elated! I also

was made aware of the creation of God within me. I was soon to become a mother and have a life truly influenced by me. I was going to get my heart right with God again.

I repented of my sins and started trying to live righteously. It was hard. First, because I had no encouragement from my husband. Second, we still had all our non-Christian friends. My Christian friends from church came by, but not too often because my husband didn't like them. I loved them and wanted them in my home. I needed them. At this point the hostility began. I was seeing and hearing a different guy from that wonderful guy I married. There was a wall building between us. Out of love for my husband, I again stopped attending church. I was miserable inside again. After the birth of our daughter, I wanted to go back to church. My husband's answer was "No." He wanted me to start going to church with him where he went as a child—a church that did not follow the Bible.

Three and a half years ago I repented again and started to live like a Christian. I thank God that He spared my life and let me live long enough to get back. There is no turning back for me now. We have three children and I want more than anything to have a Christian home for them. This presents another problem. My husband and I do not agree on how to raise the children. We are both pulling in different directions. I believe in teaching them

" 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.' 10 His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.'"

—Matthew 19:9-10

to put God first in their life and to be faithful. He still can see no reason to attend every service and openly overrides me when I insist the children go.

Our marriage has deteriorated greatly over the last few years. The "church problem," as my husband put it, has moved into every aspect of our marriage. We both keep things bottled up

inside and find that we can't talk things out anymore. I am ill with the children much too often. I know it's because things are not right between my husband and myself.

My marriage has reached a disastrous point. My husband has given an ultimatum: him or the church. Those of you who are Christians know what a rough decision I had. I, of course, have chosen the Lord. I still love my husband with all my heart and have prayed that God would open his heart to understand the truth. I know I have to remain faithful and do what God has commanded me to do. It looks so dark sometimes and yet I have *"to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:4). I'm so weary from being torn between my husband and the Lord.

My prayer is that this article may in some way make our young people, or anyone planning to marry, decide to marry a Christian. I can't do mine over again, but I can teach my children and others how important it is to marry a Christian and make their home the kind the Lord intended for it to be.