

Trends

In his recent book, "The Character Gap: How Good Are We?", Wake Forest philosophy professor Christian Miller cites studies that correlate regular church attendance with around 50% lower levels of domestic violence, 350% higher levels of donations to charity, and 200% higher levels of volunteering. He also notes that religious people are far more likely to donate blood, help the homeless, and express empathy for those less fortunate.

- via The Gospel Coalition

Mark 12:28-31: "And one of the scribes came, and . . . asked him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' And Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is . . . thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength': this is the first commandment.' And the second is like, namely this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'"

Sentence Sermons

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who never can repay you." —John Bunyan

News & Notes

Please pray for the Wallace family. They continue to miss our services (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

Please pray for Marcia Wilson, Wilma's daughter. She is scheduled for gall bladder surgery this coming Wednesday (8/12/20). Also, please pray for Lana May. She is having problems with kidney stones.

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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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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Conformed to the Image of Christ

Craig Thomas

Many years ago, I received my undergraduate degree in Animal Sciences. My specific area of interest in that broad category of science was dairy cows. As an undergraduate I took a course in dairy cattle judging. Every breed of dairy cattle has a breed association that oversees the continual development and promotion of that breed (e.g., Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, etc.). Each breed association has what is called the "ideal cow" that possesses all the desired physical characteristics of that specific breed. Each breed even has portraits and models of what they consider their "ideal cow." To the left is a picture of the "Ideal Holstein Cow."



In the real world there are no "ideal" cows. When dairy cows are judged at a show the judge is constantly, in his/her mind, comparing the cows being judged with that "ideal." Similar concepts are involved when judging other livestock or even dogs (e.g., the Westminster Dog Show). A term that often comes up when judging such animals is "conformation." That is, how well does the actual specimen one is judging "conform" to the ideal.

I don't know if you've ever thought about it, but the concept of "conformation" is applicable to Christianity. Consider Paul's statement in Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew (i.e., Christians), He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Have you ever given the idea of conformation "to the image of His Son" much thought? When I contemplate that concept, it hits me like a "ton of bricks"! Think of the great privilege and honor God extends to the Christian in that He wants the form and fashion of our character to conform to that of Jesus Christ. Further, He fully expects us to achieve this most worthy goal! He does not expect us to make it on our own. But with His constant care, strengthening and guidance we can make it (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16b-7:1; Gal. 5:22-25; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 Jn. 1:5-7).

I don't mean to oversimplify it, but I believe there are two overarching things we must constantly strive for as we cooperate with God's strengthening power to develop in our lives to achieve this most noteworthy goal of *conforming* "to the image of His Son." First, we must have a laser-like focus on doing God's will in all situations. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (Jn. 4:34). Each and every day I must remind myself to focus on that, above all else. A good thought in that regard is given by the apostle Paul when he says, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Rom. 14:7)

Second, I must love others more than myself and serve rather than seeking to be served. Jesus said, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt 20:28). He proved that on the cross! Paul describes it this way,

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:3-8)

Let us busy ourselves today by giving ourselves totally, completely, and absolutely to Him (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). The apostle Paul did it with God's help and so can we! Let his words describe each and every one of us, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

Do We Really Love God?

Craig Thomas

The Bible mentions many ways in which we are to love God. However, there is one aspect of our love that is often overlooked or ignored. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 Paul writes:

⁹ But as it is written:

*'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'*

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."

Notice that God "has prepared" some things "for those who love Him." That should perk the interest of all who claim to love God! What are those "things"? Has He prepared salvation "for those who love Him"? Certainly! Has He prepared heaven "for those who love Him"? Absolutely!

But that's not the point Paul is making in this passage. "The things which God has prepared for those who love Him" in this passage are plainly told in verse 10: "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." Paul is talking

about God's revelation to man; he's talking about the book we call the "Bible." God, through the Holy Spirit, guided the apostles into "all truth" (Jn. 16:13). They wrote it down so that when we read, we "may understand" with the very same level of knowledge they received (Eph 3:1-5). Imagine that! If we will but read and study God's Word (diligently with the right attitude of mind! Lk. 8:11; Acts 17:11), we can have the very same level of knowledge as the great apostle!

When I survey the so-called Christian world today, I see so many folks claiming to be Christians not fully following the teachings of God's Word, the Bible. Oh, they often proclaim they do. They proclaim loudly "I love God!" Yet, they still drink alcohol, cheat on their taxes, gossip, watch pornography, divorce, and remarry indiscriminately, fail to assemble to worship on the Lord's Day, complain, murmur, etc., etc.

How about you and me? Do we really "love God"? We can only legitimately make that claim if we use His Word as our **only** guide and light in life (Psa. 119:105; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11). Only if we, with all honesty and truthfulness, can say that when it comes to the Bible, we have the exact attitude of the prophet Samuel: "Speak; for thy servant heareth." (1 Sam. 3:10).

Recall what Jesus told the apostles about making disciples? He told the apostles to instruct disciples "to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). How's our observing of "all things" that Jesus has commanded? Do you and I really hear and obey God's Word? Or, do we simply "talk the talk" and not "walk the walk"? Don't forget: "God has prepared [His Word] for those who love Him."! Do you and I really "love Him"? Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (Jn. 14:15)

Psalms I

Craig Thomas

One of the primary themes of the Psalms is that God blesses the righteous. A key characteristic of the righteous man/woman is found in verse 2: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." Does that describe you and me? How often do we read our Bibles? We should read, not as we read a novel or newspaper, but read with an intense desire to know, understand, and apply God's will in our lives.

In the parable of the sower and the seed the only ground (i.e., heart) that brought forth the fruit of righteousness upon hearing God's word was the one who "heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience." (Lk. 8:15) God has chosen the medium of His revealed word to communicate His will to man (Jn. 6:44-45; 8:31-32; 16:13; Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; Eph. 3:1-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). Paul refers to these revealed things as "The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2:9) If we truly love Him we will "hear" His word in the sense that we will not only come to understand it, but we will also diligently obey it (Jn. 14:15; Heb. 5:8-9). Does Luke 8:15 describe your heart? Does it describe my heart? Let us all soberly "Examine [y]ourselves as to whether you [I] are in the faith. Test [y]ourselves." (2 Cor. 13:5) If we claim to know and love God but do not hear and obey His words our claims are hollow and false (1 Cor. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:3-5).