

Trends

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected church service attendance?
A recent survey found the following:

- ☛ 35% Still attend their pre-COVID church.
- ☛ 14% Changed to a new church from pre-COVID church.
- ☛ 32% Stopped attending church during COVID pandemic.

—via Barna Research

Hebrews 10:24-25: *“²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

Sentence Sermons

“Church attendance is as vital to the disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood to a sick man.”
—Dwight L. Moody

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 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

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.

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

Editor: Craig Thomas (812-320-9569); craigthomas82000@gmail.com

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

Man’s Penchant For Self-Destruction

Craig Thomas



Oct.11,
2020

Vol. 12,
No. 31

Today’s **Thought for the Day** comes from Psalm 119, the thirteenth set of eight verses, “MEM” (vv. 97-104). It never ceases to amaze me how proficient we as members of the human race are at self-destruction. We see it *ad nauseum* day after day in the daily news: murder, mayhem, vice, immorality, etc. Yet most of the self-destructive behavior is played out in the invisible, silent suffering so many experience on a daily basis.

I just finished reading Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s book *“The Gulag Archipelago.”* I highly recommend it but warn you it is not an easy read. In the book Solzhenitsyn chronicles his and other’s experiences in the USSR’s political prison camps. He refers to this system as an *archipelago* (i.e., chain of islands) since it consisted of a vast network, or “chain,” of prison camps that brutalized and murdered millions in the Soviet Union. He especially chronicles the years from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918 to 1956. The book is not for the faint of heart as it reveals the terribly inhumane treatment meted out by the communist government against those it perceived as “enemies of the state.” Untold millions were horribly mistreated, abused, tortured, and murdered by their fellow man. The brutality is almost beyond comprehension and terrifyingly disturbing. However, the ability of the human spirit to endure is awe-inspiring. I believe everyone can benefit from reading it even though the book is not for the faint of heart.

Why did this occur? Solzhenitsyn offers an amazingly simple but profound reason, he said: “Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.” This section of Psalm 119 offers the only antidote for human self-destruction:

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love Your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸ You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies;

For they are ever with me.

⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers,

For Your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰ *I understand more than the ancients,*

Because I keep Your precepts.

¹⁰¹ *I have restrained my feet from every evil way,*

That I may keep Your word.

¹⁰² *I have not departed from Your judgments,*

For You Yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³ *How sweet are Your words to my taste,*

Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴ *Through Your precepts I get understanding;*

Therefore I hate every false way."

It is a sad commentary on the degraded state of the human condition that our source of sadness, despair, despondency, and misery all have an immutable and enduring solution: God! The solution to all our problems and difficulties that lead us down the path of self-destruction is right in front of us. It is right in front of us, staring us in the face. The only barrier to this grand elixir is our own obstinacy and self-centeredness. Let us be determined to empty ourselves of all such foolishness and dive deeply into His Word and totally immerse ourselves in its marvelous healing powers. Recall Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:13-14):

¹³ *Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

"Shall I Not Punish Them For These Things?"

SWORD TIPS #2066 (SEPTEMBER 24, 2020)

Joe R. Price

"Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the LORD. 'And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?'" (Jeremiah 5:9, NKJV)

The cup of Judah's iniquities had reached the brim: *"Their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased"* (Jer. 5:6). Like her sister Israel to the north, idolatry, adultery, selfish indulgence, oppressive leaders, false prophets, and faithless neglect of God headlined her sins (Jer. 5:7-8, 11-13). Yet they were sure punishment would not come upon them (Jer. 5:12-13; Micah 3:11-12). Even to this moment, many have created a view of God that takes everyone to heaven. Sin is minimized out of existence; therefore, they eliminate the prospect of punishment. "A loving God will not send people to hell!" they proclaim. We must divest ourselves of this illusion. Yes, God is love. His severity is also real (Rom. 11:22). Our God is a consuming fire against evil (Heb. 12:29). Over and over, God called His people to turn from their sins and return to Him (Jer. 3:14-18, 22; 4:4; 7:13, 25-

26). Because Judah and Israel rejected God's word and refused to repent, God had no choice but to exact punishment. God's word is clear; those who *"do not know God"* and those *"who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* *"shall be punished"* when Christ returns (2 Thess. 1:8-9; Matt. 25:46). Now is the time to repent and turn to the Lord. Now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

An Act of Kindness

Larry Hafley

From the "Chicken Soup" series of books, my brother extracted the following story.

President Abraham Lincoln often visited hospitals to talk with wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Once, doctors pointed out a young soldier who was near death and Lincoln went over to his bedside.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the President. The soldier obviously didn't recognize Lincoln, and with some effort he was able to whisper, "Would you please write a letter to my mother?"

A pen and paper were provided and the President carefully began writing down what the young man was able to say:

"My dearest mother, I was badly hurt while doing my duty. I'm afraid I'm not going to recover. Don't grieve too much for me, please. Kiss Mary and John for me. May God bless you and father."

The soldier was too weak to continue, so Lincoln signed the letter for him and added, "Written for your son by Abraham Lincoln."

The young man asked to see the note and was astonished when he discovered who had written it. "Are you really the President?" he asked.

"Yes I am," Lincoln replied quietly. Then he asked if there was anything else he could do.

"Would you please hold my hand?" the soldier asked. "It will help to see me through to the end."

In the hushed room, the tall gaunt President took the boy's hand in his and spoke warm words of encouragement until death came.

The kindness President Lincoln showed was returned unto him. When he lay dying, a young surgeon sat by Mr. Lincoln's bed side and held his hand through the night. When asked why he had held his hand, the doctor said that dying men often have brief moments of consciousness just before death, and that he wanted Lincoln to know that he was among friends.

Kindness ought to characterize children of God--*"Be ye kind one to another"* (Eph. 4:32). Kindness is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22). Let *"brotherly kindness"* abound among us with sincere affection (2 Pet. 1:5-7).