

Prayer List of the Sick and Afflicted:

Ray Sturgill was admitted to St. Francis hospital Indianapolis with chest pain. It was determined that he had a mild heart attack, stroke, considerable blockage in his coronary arteries and blood clots in both legs. In the future it is possible that he will need cardiac by-pass surgery or insertion of stints to correct the obstructed arteries problem. However, nothing can be done until the blood clots in his legs are treated. It is anticipated that he may need to be in rehab for approximately 6 weeks for treatment until the blood clots are successfully resolved then future actions will be determined.

Britani Baxter, Susie Riddle's granddaughter, had back surgery and is doing well. Iris Hash's son, Bobby Epeards, is doing better with his heart issues and is no longer under hospice care.

Linda Jones will have eye surgery next Tuesday in Cincinnati to correct cataracts and to have an iris replacement in her injured eye from her younger days.

Delores Hendrickson is still struggling with a bad cough and is having some vision issues caused by dry macular degeneration in her eyes.

Charlie Henard's niece, Brittany Henard, is battling terminal cancer.

Karen Sproles is still dealing with pain in her knee. She got good results with testing performed regarding her kidneys.

Jean England, daughter of Karen Sproles, is still having stomach issues associated with stress.

John Richardson is battling with bloating and stomach issues.

Pray For Our Shut-Ins:

Gloria Hale, Karen Sproles, Iris Hash, John & Terry Richardson

Pray For The Mission Works We Are Supporting:

John Grubb (Mission work in Asia), Daniel Goshorn and family (Mission work in Peru). See latest mission reports on the bulletin board in the back of the auditorium.

Men's Business Meeting:

The next men's business meeting will be Wednesday, January 1st at 5:00 PM.

Monthly Pitch-in Dinner:

Our next pitch-in dinner will be today, following the AM services. Following the pitch-in, at 1:00 PM, we will have a service in song.

2025 Planning Meetings:

The men and women of the congregation will meet at the building to hold separate meetings on Saturday, January 11th at 9:00 AM to plan works for the 2025.

Radio Program:

Please remember to tune in every Sunday morning at 8:00 AM to WCBK 102.3 FM to hear our radio program which is entitled: "Preparing For Eternity".

God's Plan For Our Salvation

Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).

Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).

Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).

Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).

Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).

Faithful Christian Living, after the above five steps (I Peter 2:11, 12; Rev. 2:10).

December 8, 2024

MORGAN STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST

**540 E. Morgan Street
Martinsville, IN 46151
(765) 342-6027**



Schedule of Services:

Sunday

Bible Study – 9:30 AM

Worship – 10:30 AM

Evening Service - 6:00

Wednesday

Bible Study – 6:00 PM

Thursday

Ladies' Bible Study – 11:00 AM (March through October)

Radio Program:

"Preparing For Eternity"

Sunday Mornings 8:00 AM, WCBK 102.3 FM

Website:

www.morganstreetchurchofchrist.org

Gospel Preacher – Bob Hawkins

IS THE LORD'S CHURCH DYING? (3)

Rod Rutherford

Some suggest the present lack of growth of churches of Christ in the United States may eventually result in our extinction. While it is true that the Lord's church in America is not experiencing the rapid growth of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the church continues to multiply rapidly in many other parts of the world. This is especially true in the nations of Sub Sahara Africa and in the country of India. In previous articles we have noted some of the reasons for our decline in growth. In this article, **we will consider additional reasons for the lack of growth of the Lord's church in the United States in recent years.**

The most significant reason for the lack of growth in the United States, in the opinion of the writer, is what some term "liberalism." Many churches of Christ no longer take the strong, strict doctrinal stance that most congregations and individual members took during our periods of greatest growth. Members generally are no longer known as "people of the Book" who are ready to "give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). It also appears that many are unequipped and unwilling to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Our lack of Bible knowledge, coupled with the popular view that we must not "judge" those who differ with us, has opened the doors to numerous false doctrines and practices which have arisen among us and threaten to divide the body of Christ (Matt. 7:15-20; John 7:24; Rom. 16:17-18). We shall briefly notice some of the more prominent errors which are now widely taught or tolerated among the churches.

1. **Marriage, divorce and remarriage.** Our Lord's teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage is plainly taught in Matthew 19:1-12. Simply stated it is: "One man, one wife, for life!" One exception is given to it: if one's marriage partner commits fornication, the innocent partner has the right to divorce the adulterer and remarry. No other reason is given in the Scriptures for dissolving a marriage with a right (authority) to remarry. Note that the right to remarry is given **only** to the innocent partner. Perhaps the major problem elders have to deal with to keep the church pure is in regard to marriage, divorce and remarriage. Some elders and preachers have tried to "water down" the Lord's teaching by allegedly finding other exceptions for divorce and remarriage. Some simply ignore the problem and accept without question any who wish to become members.

2. **A changing hermeneutics.** We are told to "rightly divide (handle aright-ASV) the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) and to "Hold fast the pattern of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). Some contend for new hermeneutics (a new way of understanding the Scriptures). They decry the idea of there being a "pattern" to which we must adhere in obedience to the Gospel (see Rom. 6:17-18) or in the worship and organization of the church (John 4:24; Acts 14:23). Therefore, they have accepted "contemporary worship" (what people like). Some even advocate that "all of life" is worship, thereby opening the door to anything anyone wants to do and call it worship (Gen. 22:5; Acts 8:27-28).

3. **The roles of men and women in worship.** The Bible is clear on the God-given roles for men and women in worship (1 Tim. 2:1-15). In the past, the Lord's church has strongly held to God's plan. However, the radical feminist movement in society has put pressure on elders to go contrary to God's plan. Some say they are "re-studying the subject." They then conclude that God did not really mean what He said. They then begin to use women to lead in every part of the worship including preaching and serving in the eldership.

4. **Instrumental music, choirs, solos and praise teams in worship.** The New Testament clearly teaches unaccompanied congregational singing in the assembly (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17). There is no authority for instruments of music or special singing groups. To add such is to go beyond that which is written (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

5. **The Lord's supper on days other than the first day of the week.** First century Christians met on the first day of the week to commemorate the Lord's death for our sins. Jesus met with His apostles on the first day of the week following His resurrection (John 20:19-26). The church began on Pentecost which always occurred on the first day of the week (Lev. 23; Acts 2:1). It is not surprising then to find the church meeting on the first day of the week for the partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). We have no authority for partaking of the Lord's supper on any other day, or on any other occasion, except the first day of the week which is called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10).

6. **A weakening of our stand on denominational baptism.** Immersion in water for the remission of sins is clearly taught in the New Testament (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4ff). No other "baptism" is acceptable. However, some are now contending for accepting persons from denominations on the basis of their denominational baptism, regardless of the purpose for which they were baptized or their knowledge of the one true church into which they are added by the Lord (Acts 2:41,47).

7. **Denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment.** Jesus plainly taught the doctrine of Hell as eternal punishment (Mark 9:42-48). In fact, He had far more to say about Hell than anyone else in the Bible! In the parable of the sheep and the goats, He pictured the results of the great Judgment Day when He will judge all men: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). The words "everlasting" and "eternal" describing the duration of the length of punishment, as well as that of Heaven, are both translated from the same Greek word. This means that *Hell* will continue just as long as *Heaven* does, and vice versa!

8. **A misunderstanding of the relationship of faith, grace, and works in our salvation.** The Bible clearly teaches that the ground of our salvation is God's grace (Eph. 2:8-10). We do not deserve, nor can we ever merit (deserve) salvation. God had to take the initiative. However, we must receive (accept) God's grace. The means of acceptance is clearly taught in Scripture (Heb. 5:9). It involves **faith** (Mark 16:16), **repentance** (Luke 24:46-47), **confession of Jesus Christ as Lord** (Rom. 10:9-10); and **baptism for the remission of sins** (Acts 2:38).

9. **A failure to preach on the nature of the church as the one body of Christ.** Denominationalism is contrary to the Lord's prayer for unity (John 17:20-23). It is strongly condemned by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:10-13). There is only one body which is entered into by the one baptism (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6; Gal. 3:26-27). Sermons showing the distinctiveness of the church of Christ used to be commonly taught and thousands took their stand on the New Testament teaching; but some are ashamed of such plain preaching today. If we do not believe those are lost who ignore the teaching of Scripture and join man-made churches rather than being added to the blood bought body of Christ by Gospel obedience, not only have we not saved their souls, but we have removed a major incentive for evangelism!

The Lord's church today is thriving in India, Africa and other parts of the world because they are still preaching "the old Jerusalem Gospel." The church in America needs to get back to doing the same and we will see church grow once again!