

**AND THE PEOPLE CAME...**

- Week of July 16, 2023 -

Sunday Morning Service -----	38
Sunday Evening Service -----	17
Wednesday Eve., 07/19/23 Service -----	16

**AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...**

- Week of July 16, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 637.00
Children's Sunday School -----	\$ 5.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/16/23:</b>	<b>\$ 642.00</b>

- Week of July 9, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 2,340.99
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/09/23:</b>	<b>\$ 2,340.99</b>

- Week of July 2, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 6,639.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 07/02/23:</b>	<b>\$ 6,639.00</b>

- Week of June 25, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,040.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 06/25/23:</b>	<b>\$ 1,040.00</b>

- Week of June 18, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 947.00
Love Offering, Dr. Phil Stringer -----	\$ 100.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 06/18/23:</b>	<b>\$ 1,047.00</b>

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed for church operating expenses EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ **1,600.00**



**FRONT PORCH RESTORATION FUND -**

Amount Received, Week of 07/16/23: \$ 0.00

TOTAL RECEIVED, THUSFAR: \$ 410.00

**LISTEN TO -**



ABIDINGRADIO.COM

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED**

1. Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.
3. Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.
4. You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).
5. By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, Who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.



**THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!**

During the early part of the pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Sadly, some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing **THEMSELVES** of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, most of our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

**WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE:**

1. **By mail** - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. **Drop it off** - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. **Online** - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithely.com/give?c=433047>

**WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE!  
YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR RENEWED OUTREACH EFFORTS!**

**Church Directory**

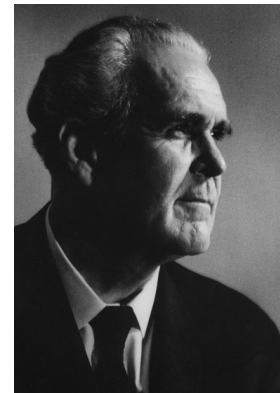
Todd W. White -----	Pastor
Debra Carlton, Mickie Shatwell, Lois Mae Floyd -----	Pianists
Derek Quinnely -----	Greeter
Larry & Mary Byars -----	Outreach
LeAnna White -----	Custodian
GinaMarie Shufelt -----	Flowers
Seth White -----	Sound/Video
Larry Byars, David Smith, Derek Quinnely -----	Trustees

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY  
**REMINDER**

Volume XXIX

July 23, 2023

Number 29



**Dr. Lee Roberson, Pastor  
Highland Park Baptist Church  
Chattanooga, Tenn.  
1942-1983**

**The Astounding Confusion in Today's Churches**

by Dr. Lee Roberson  
(1909-2007)

I want to speak on "The Astounding Confusion in Today's Churches." I'm saying that after visiting literally thousands of churches in all of these years of my ministry and visiting over a hundred every year, one after another, week after week. Now here is my text:

*"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ" (Matt. 16:17-20).*

As I travel around, in every city, I notice churches. There are seven denominations that are prominently seen in almost every city where you go: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of God, Church of Christ, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian. There may be others, but I'm giving you seven that are the major ones. You have them here. They're all different. They all have different confessions of faith and different ideas about how to run things. With some exceptions, they profess to believe the Word of God.

But there is an astounding confusion in today's churches. For example, *there's confusion on salvation*. The Bible teaches salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible is clear on that, but there is confusion. Some believe in salvation by works; some, in salvation by baptism; some, in salvation by church membership. On and on they go.

Then *there's confusion on standards of living*. How should we live? That confusion is everywhere, in every city, on how Christians ought to live, how they should behave, what they should do. Some are weak, and they turn away to the world and the sins of the world. Their members do, and their pastors do. The pastors lead in it. Others are strict and believe the Scriptures and try to live a separated life.

Again, *there's confusion in leadership*. Some believe in a called-out ministry. I do. I believe God calls men to preach and missionaries to go out to the mission field. But some do not believe that. Some take the ministry as a business, paying a good salary, and as a public opportunity. There's confusion in all of that.

Then *there's confusion of purpose*. Why do we have a local church? What is the purpose of the local church? Well, some believe we're going to change society, make America a better nation. No, that's not it. The purpose of our church is to win souls to Christ. That's the purpose of a local church, to win people to the loving Son of God. That's the business we must hold to all the time. The Great Commission has been given to us, and we must not turn away.

**All of this confusion!** Christians are confused, and churches are confused. But what about lost sinners? What about the unsaved? They're confused also by hearing a multiplicity of ideas and thoughts. And I don't blame them sometimes. They get all worked up when they hear Baptist and Methodist and Presbyterian and Church of God and Church of Christ teaching, all of them mixed together. They say, "What are we to believe?"

**My friend, we must come back to the Word of God.** This Book is our standard, and this is what we must have in your church and in my church and in every church. If we are to get things right, eternally right, we have to follow the holy Word of God. When

(continued inside)

we hold to the Book we're then sure of where we stand.

### ***I. There Is Confusion on the Way of Salvation***

Jesus said, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).*** That's clear. That's clear for everyone—Christ, the only Saviour of lost men. One way of salvation:

***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9).***

Good works cannot save; baptism cannot save; church membership cannot save. ***“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).***

This we must see: Christ died for our sin. The world is confused about it. They're confused about that little term, being “born again.” They don't know what it's all about. Some do; some don't; many don't. They are confused, but how simple it is. Understand that for everyone, Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the only Saviour and He saves to the uttermost all who repent, believe and come to Him!

This is simple, understandable to young people. This is understandable to the uneducated man. This is simple to the man of foreign extraction who comes to this country and hears the Gospel. He can be saved. This is understandable to the derelict of the streets, way down deep in sin. He can be saved by simple faith in Christ.

I'm giving you all that to emphasize this matter of the present day and what we should see—the way of salvation—and what we should hold to in our preaching and our teaching. Give the way of salvation clearly and distinctly every time you preach. Every time you stand before people, you tell them that Christ is the only Saviour.

***What can wash away my sin?***

***Nothing but the blood of Jesus.***

***What can make me whole again?***

***Nothing but the blood of Jesus.***

We have to hold to that. We're living in a tough day, a confused day. It's confused by radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books. Everything is confusing. There's confusion in Washington, D.C. It's badly confused! But New York City and Chicago, anywhere you go, there is the same thing. People are confused, and they're searching; they're seeking; they're asking. My friend, we must give them what God says from His Word. They must hear the Word of God.

### ***II. There Is Confusion on the Way of Life***

So there's confusion about the matter of salvation. Then there's confusion on the way of life, how to live this life. The Word of God gives us so many wonderful things on that. We could turn in the Word of God and read them to you, about what God has promised for all of us:

***“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;***

***for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28,29).***

We can find everywhere in the Word of God instruction on how we're to live and what we should do.

The apostle Paul puts it in the words of Romans 12:1,2:

***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”***

How to live is very important. Paul said, ***“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22).*** The confusion of living! There is confusion today about what we should do and what we shouldn't do. Yet the Word of God is very clear: ***“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”*** Live for Christ. That's for every one of us—no compromise at all. We live by the Word of God. We live by the Book. We live by the indwelling Holy Spirit. He's in you, child of God; and if He's in you, He's there to cleanse your life and direct your life and empower your life. The Holy Spirit indwells you, and we live by this indwelling Holy Spirit.

Then, we live by His example. We're to follow Him and do what He would have us to do. That's the matter of our living day by day, being in the right place at the right time, saying the right thing, doing what God wants us to do with our lives, not wasting our lives but using them to the glory of God.

***That means to live a separated life.*** That's the believer's present life—separated from the world. If there's a doubt or a question about something, don't do it. You say, “What about dancing? What about the picture show?” If you have a question about something, don't do it. And you'll have your questions, so turn away and say, “I want to do what God said. I want to follow Him and live in His light.” We're to live in that way.

Then live the life of Holy Spirit power. I can't say too much about this. Child of God, if you're saved, you have the Holy Spirit in you now. He wants to empower you. He wants to fill you and use you and make you into what He wants you to be. You say, “O God, I want the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon my life. I want to know the presence and the power of God. I want to live and teach and preach and sing and have whatever I do to be for the glory of God. I want the Holy Spirit to direct me and to use me.” He wants to fill you. That means to control your life completely.

Then we're to bring others to Christ. That's our business—to let our light shine that we might bring people to the Son of God. The power of a dedicated life! The power of a life that's so close to the Lord that people can sense and feel it.

Don't rush by this thought. You have only one life. Don't misuse it. Don't ignore responsibilities. You have only one life—that's all. Don't be confused by the voice of the world. The way of the Light is simple. It's given to us in the Word of God.

Hold to that with all of your heart.

In this present day, in all of the confusion of this time, the way of salvation is clear. Men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

This matter of a way of life in this present life, what we're to do, is also clear. The Bible prescribes what we're to do, what we're to say, how we're to act, where we're to go, how we're to behave. The Bible tells us how, and you follow the holy Word of God. Live so that others can be brought into touch with our blessed Lord.

Then I come to my third thought:

### ***III. There Is Confusion on the Work of Life***

***“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).***

That's clear, and that's what you're to be. You're to be a witness by your life, a witness by your words, a witness by your actions, a witness by your decisions. You're to make all your decisions based upon the leadership of God in your life.

***Here's the work of life: to point people to the Lamb of God.***

The work of God is for us to carry out the Great Commission of our Saviour, to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth that people might hear and be saved. We're to be witnesses, witnessing for Him day by day and night by night. That's the work of life. Don't be confused on that. It's your job. It's as simple as ABC, and you're to keep with it night and day, pressing upon people their need of Christ and pointing them to the Lamb of God.

I gave invitations in Highland Park Baptist Church for more than forty years and six months, every single service—Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. Every service I pressed upon people that they had the need of Christ. We saw literally thousands saved. I baptized thousands and thousands of converts in those forty years.

We must emphasize this matter of the work of life, getting people to Christ and then showing people what they're to do with their lives when they are born again and saved. They're to be witnesses for Him. Every child of God—the man, the woman, the young, the old—is to be a witness for the loving Saviour.

***We should witness through our daily lives.*** Live in such a way that others can see Christ in you. You don't have to make any apology or any excuses. You don't have to hide. You have nothing to cover up. There's nothing doubtful. You're simply living for Christ, every moment saying, “Lord, I want You to use me to point someone to the Lamb of God.”

If you're doubtful in your living, your actions, your words, your speech, your demeanor of life, you'll fail. But if you live a positive life so that no one can doubt you or what you stand for, you're living a holy life for Christ.

***Witness by your daily life***—not a doubtful life or a questionable life, but one that will let them know what you are. Be definite and positive so they can look at you and know what they should be if they come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Then witness by your worship habits.*** I have a motto I've

given my people for years: “Three to thrive.” In all this time I've never known a man to backslide who attended church Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. I've had a lot to backslide who quit coming to prayer meeting. I've had a lot of them to backslide who didn't come to Sunday night and Wednesday night. But I've never known a man to backslide who would attend all those services, sincerely, with Bible in hand. God would do something for him.

***Witness by your worship by inviting people to the house of God.*** There's something beautiful about going to church. There's something beautiful about a family gathering in the car to drive to church on Sunday morning—Mother and Father and children, driving to the house of God to worship God. You witness by your worship habits. Have the motto for your family: “Three to thrive”—Sunday morning, Sunday night, prayer meeting.

Then, you witness by your spoken testimony. He said, ***“Ye shall be witnesses unto me.”*** We're to be witnessing for Him daily. That's in the visitation for the church, knocking on doors, telling people of the Saviour and witnessing for Christ.

We had a visitation program for forty years in Chattanooga, every Thursday night. We would go out and knock on doors all over Chattanooga. We kept it up year after year, week after week, and kept on maintaining the visitation time of pointing people to the Lamb of God and pointing people to Christ and getting people into the Sunday school to hear the Word of God as it is taught.

***So witness by your spoken testimony.*** Keep this up all the time. You witness by your daily life. You witness by your worship. You witness by your testimony that you're giving for Christ. We're here because someone witnessed to us.

I'm here tonight because a little Sunday school teacher named Mrs. Daisy Hawes witnessed to me. I went to the Sunday school because a young man, a neighbor, took me to Sunday school in an old Ford car. We drove to the old Cedar Creek Baptist Church outside Louisville, and there I heard the Gospel for the first time from the voice of a little lady Sunday school teacher, teaching boys. (That's not usually done, you know, today.) We were a crowd of boys at thirteen and fourteen years of age, but she taught us. She gave us the Gospel. I heard for the first time in my life that I'm saved by faith in Jesus Christ. She had me quoting John 3:16 and other familiar verses and pointed me to the Lamb of God.

Ye shall be witnesses by your testimony, and you're so to testify daily by your speech and your actions that you're pointing people to the blessed Saviour. You're here tonight in this meeting because someone witnessed to you—some preacher, some evangelist, some mother or father, some friend or loved one witnessed to you. Somehow you heard the Gospel, and you read the Word of God, and you received Christ as your loving Saviour.

God wants to use all of us, and we're living in strange, confusing days. Confusion is over the whole nation. It's everywhere. People are confused. They don't know which way to go. They're up and down, in and out. They're not sure of what they should be, but God has a way of letting them know. In this

amazing, unusual day, we have a confession of faith and a knowledge of our Lord and a message to give to them that Christ died for sinners and will save all who repent and come to Him.

In this astounding, astonishing confusion of the day, we should know Christ. Know that you know Him, reader. What a pitiful thing it would be for a man or woman to hear the message of God over and over and go away lost. Yet some have done it. They do it in all churches in every place.

Know Christ. Then live for Christ. Say, “I want to witness for Him every day. In this astonishing, amazing, needy day, I want to witness for Him and let people know about Him. I want to live for Him every hour. I want to give that gospel message: ‘Christ died for our sins.’ I want to keep pressing it upon the hearts of people—men and women, boys and girls—everywhere.”

God, give us a unity in our thinking and a joy in the business of telling the story of Christ and going out everywhere, in every street and highway, pointing people to the Lamb of God, saying, “This is the message God has given me.”

There is astounding confusion in this day, but you’re not to be confused. You’re here in this conference. You’ve read this message. Now have your mind and heart filled with it and go out as one who’s been empowered of God, filled with the Spirit of God, with a message of God in your heart to give to people everywhere.

Take something special from this message—something that maybe others do not have, but you’ll have it. You’ll be able to share it and able to stand for Christ and live for Christ every moment and every hour that others might be blessed by your life and ministry and message.

***Give us unity on the way of salvation—Christ as Saviour.  
Give us unity on the way of life—separation from the world.  
Give us unity on the work of life—witnessing for Christ.  
The way of salvation, the way of life, the work of life and  
victory are through the blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ!***

I want God to use you and pray that God will use you. This is a strange, unusual day in which we live. We’re turning from the Bible. We’re closing up Sunday night services. We’re giving up the prayer meeting. We’re changing everything all around. In this strange, unusual day, this is a time for you who have read this message and know what it’s all about to go out as a missionary, as an evangelist, to point people to the Lamb of God and say, “This is it!” In this strange, unusual day, say, “This is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He can save and keep and satisfy.” Get people to Christ. They’re hungry.

I was preaching one day in Texas. As I stood in the pulpit, two men came in the back door. One was a great big fellow. He had on a bright red shirt and had a big red cap on his head. He came in and sat down with the cap on his head. Ordinarily, when a man walked into church at Highland Park with a cap on his head, I stopped everything and told him to take it off in the house of God. I looked at that fellow. He was too big! I said, “Lord, I’d better leave him alone.” There he sat right back there—a big, big fellow with a big red cap on his head.

I came to the end of my message and gave the invitation, and people started coming forward. I walked back to him. I said, “Son, are you saved?”

He said, “Ah, I don’t want to think about it.”

“Would you like to be? Would you like to be a Christian, saved, born-again, going to Heaven when you die?”

“Yes, I would.”

I said, “Come on!”

He left that place and started down the aisle. I reached up and took the red cap off his head and threw it under a bench—got rid of that. He came and knelt down in front of the bench. I put the Bible down in front of him. I read the Word of God to him. I said, “This is it! Christ died for you. He’ll save you now and give you everlasting life.”

That great big, rugged fellow, tough as nails, bowed his head and said, “Yes sir, I’ll trust Him now. I’ll take Him as my Saviour now.”

He stood up there, a big fellow, taller than I am, big, husky, crying like a baby.

I said, “Son, how did you get here tonight, coming in here with your hat on?”

He said, “He brought me.” He pointed to a little man sitting there who must not have weighed over 125 pounds.

I said, “What do you mean, he brought you?”

He said, “Well, I was standing there in front of the drugstore, talking to the boys, having a big time; and he walked by and said, ‘Let’s go to church.’”

“I said, ‘No, I don’t go to church—don’t like churches.’”

“That little man back there said to me, ‘Are you afraid to go?’”

“I told that little man back there, ‘I’m not afraid of anything or anybody.’”

“He said, ‘Good! Come on!’ That’s how he got me here. Thank God I’m saved. Thank God I’m a Christian.”

Now, my dear friend, that’s the thing I want you to see. There is this strange, astounding confusion today. It is all around us. You see it on every hand. You hear it on the radio, don’t you? You get it on television and in your newspaper. It’s everywhere. People are confused; they don’t know what to think.

You come back to the Word. Come back to the way of salvation. Come back to the way of life in Christ, separated from the world. Come back with the great hope in the second coming of our Saviour. Jesus is coming again! Begin to preach and teach and live in the light of these certainties. Sunday school teachers, ushers in the church, people of the church, no matter what you may be, let your light shine. Live in such a way that people know you belong to the loving Saviour. ■

## ***NEWS OF INTEREST TO CHRISTIANS***

□ ***POPE SAYS EUCHARIST IS “CHRIST HIMSELF”*** - Speaking to an audience at the Vatican in June, Pope Francis said the Eucharist or Mass is not a symbol of

Christ’s sacrifice; ***it is Christ Himself as living bread.***

This is Rome’s false gospel of salvation through the sacraments. Speaking to the organizing committee of the United States Eucharistic Congress that is scheduled for July 2024, the Pope said, “It’s more than a symbol, it’s the real and loving presence of the Lord. ... We must recover the sense of silence, of Adoration. ... as Saint John Paul II said, ‘Without the Priesthood there is no Eucharist’” (“Pope to American Catholics,” Zenit.org, June 19, 2023).

This confirms official Catholic doctrine. The host (wafer) of the Mass is consecrated by a priest and becomes the very body and blood of Christ. It is eaten as Christ and is the object of worship (adoration). The Eucharistic Congress aims to “revive faith in and love for the Most Holy Eucharist.” When I visited a cloistered nunnery in Quebec some years ago, a sign at the entrance of the chapel said, “You are entering to adore the Jesus-Host.”

The following is from Vatican Council II, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery” -

“Hence the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, is at the same time and inseparably: a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated ... For in it Christ perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross, offering himself to the Father for the world’s salvation through the ministry of priests”.

The Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965 was attended by 2,400 bishops and issued the most authoritative doctrinal pronouncements of the modern Roman Catholic Church. Its doctrines are as heretical and blasphemous as they were in the darkest ages of the Inquisition.

In contrast to Rome’s doctrine, the Bible says, ***“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10, 14).***

□ ***MONTANA WITHDRAWS FROM AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OVER ‘MARXIST LESBIAN’ PRESIDENT*** - The following is excerpted from “Montana State Library Withdraws,” Christian Headlines, July 14, 2023:

“The Montana State Library Commission voted to disaffiliate from the American Library Association after ALA’s new president identified herself as a ‘Marxist lesbian.’ On Tuesday, MSLC voted 5-1 to separate from the ALA in response to comments made by the organization’s president Emily Drabinski, who was elected last April and took office this month. ‘Our oath of office and resulting duty to the Constitution forbids association with an organization led by a Marxist,’ the commission stated in a letter sent to ALA.

... Elsie Arntzen, the commission superintendent of public instruction in Montana, supported the decision, arguing that ‘Marxist ideologies directly oppose our Montana values.’ ‘Ms. Drabinski is a supporter of Critical Race Theory, which Montana rejected as discriminatory, and other far-left-leaning ideologies that have no place in our schools and libraries,’ Arntzen told Fox

News. ‘Montanans embrace honest and accurate views of history while understanding that our country, at times, has fallen short of its goals. However, common citizens have rallied together to overcome those shortfalls,’ she added.

***“Our parents are our first teachers; they have an absolute right to determine what is best for their children. By electing a declared Marxist as their president, the ALA has not only turned its back on families, parental rights, and American values--it has turned its back on America itself.”***

□ ***THE PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS THAT BELIEVE IN GOD HAS FALLEN TO AN ALL-TIME LOW*** - Do you believe in God? If so, you belong to a portion of the population that is steadily shrinking. Yes, a majority of Americans still think that God ***exists***, but the trend is clearly going in one direction.

So - are we headed down the same road that so many post-Christian nations in western Europe have already gone down? According to a shocking new survey that Gallup has just released, the percentage of Americans that believe in God has plunged to the lowest level that they have ever recorded...

The percentages of Americans who believe in each of five religious entities - *God, angels, heaven, hell and the devil* - have edged downward by three to five percentage points since 2016. Still, majorities believe in each, ranging from a high of 74% believing in God to lows of 59% for hell and 58% for the devil. About two-thirds each believe in angels (69%) and heaven (67%).

74 percent may sound high, but it is important to note that this includes anyone that may believe that any sort of a “god” exists. So, this figure would include people from many different religions.

Overall, the percentage of Americans that believe in God has fallen by a whopping 16 points just since 2001...

Gallup has used this framework to measure belief in these spiritual entities five times since 2001, and the May 1-24, 2023, poll finds that each is at its lowest point. Compared with 2001, belief in God and heaven is down the most (16 points each), while belief in hell has fallen 12 points, and the devil and angels are down 10 points each.

Church attendance has been steadily declining over the years as well. In fact, a different Gallup survey discovered that church attendance is down by about 10 percentage points since 2012...

U. S. church attendance has shown a small but noticeable decline compared with what it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the four years before the pandemic, 2016 through 2019, an average of 34% of U.S. adults said they had attended church, synagogue, mosque or temple in the past seven days. From 2020 to the present, the average has been 30%, including a 31% reading in a May 1-24 survey.

The recent church attendance levels are about 10 percentage points lower than what Gallup measured in 2012 and most prior years.

□ ***THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS REWRITING THE BIBLE*** - As part of a push to “sinicize” religion, the



Chinese Communist Party has embarked on a 10-year project to rewrite the Bible and other religious texts.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus famously confronts the accusers a woman caught committing adultery, saying **“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”**

The chastened accusers slink away and Jesus says to the woman, **“Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?”** “No man, Lord,” she replied. Jesus said to her, **“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”**

Unless you’re a CCP official. Then it’s a story of a dissident challenging the authority of the state. A possible sneak preview of what a Bible with socialist characteristics might look like appeared in a Chinese university textbook in 2020. The rewritten Gospel of John excerpt ends, not with mercy, but with Jesus himself stoning the adulterous woman to death.

Across Henan province, local CCP officials forced Protestant churches to replace the Ten Commandments with Xi Jinping quotes. **“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,”** became diktats like: **“Resolutely guard against the infiltration of Western ideology.”**

The 10-year project to rewrite the Bible, Quran and other sacred texts is all part of Xi Jinping’s quest to make the faithful serve the party rather than God.

At the 19th Party Congress, Chairman Xi declared “We will... insist on the sinicization of Chinese religions, and provide active guidance for religion and socialism to coexist.”

❑ **VETERAN CLEARED OVER SILENT PRAYER NEAR ABORTION CLINIC** - An army veteran who was fined for praying silently within an abortion clinic ‘buffer zone’ will not face criminal charges.

Adam Smith-Connor was approached six months ago by community safety officers near an abortion clinic in Bournemouth. A Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) zone was imposed around the clinic by the local council last October banning prayer, counselling and acts of “approval/disapproval, with respect to issues related to abortion services, by any means”.

Smith-Connor had been praying silently for his son who was aborted over 20 years ago and for the women, men, and children still being impacted by abortion today.

After being quizzed by community officers about his praying within the PSPO zone, he later received a letter from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council informing him that he was being fined and threatening criminal charges if he failed to comply.

After he launched legal action against the fine, his lawyers at the Alliance Defending Freedom UK (ADF UK) made submissions arguing that the state had no power to restrict thoughts directed towards God.

The police informed Smith-Connor that praying silently was not an offence in England and the council later decided not to pursue prosecution.

Smith-Connor has welcomed the outcome. “Nobody should

be criminalised for what they believe – especially not when they express that belief silently, in the privacy of their own minds,” he said.

“I’m glad that, in my case, common-sense policing won the day. However, it’s not right that I had to wait anxiously for a full six months for the authorities to determine my fate. The process, in essence, became my punishment. It’s unthinkable that I was issued a penalty simply for praying about my own experience of abortion – having paid for my ex-girlfriend to have one – and my son, Jacob, whom I lost. The decision I made all those years ago now grieves me deeply. It isn’t for the authorities to determine the contents of my thoughts on this matter, on a public street. I served in Afghanistan to defend democratic freedom – and yet, we see this encroachment on fundamental rights on the streets of Britain today.”

ADF called it a win against “thought crime”.

“But for the fact that he happened to be praying in his mind about abortion, Adam would not have been asked to leave,” said Jeremiah Igunnubole, legal counsel for ADF UK. “Were another person engaged in silent thought about another issue, such as climate change, within the PSPO censorship zone, then the Council officials would not have required them to leave. Adam was discriminated against in comparison to another person in an analogous situation based on his core faith-based beliefs.”

❑ **AFTER LOSING TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, SBC’S LIFEWAY OPENS 46,000SQ.FT ‘STATE OF THE ART’ TEAMING SPACE**’ - Lifeway Christian Resources, once primarily known as the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has morphed into a controversial behemoth in the Christian publishing world. A purveyor of spiritual strychnine and peddler of outright heresy, their portfolio includes *Heavenly Tourism*, *Omen Interpretation*, *New Age mysticism*, *Anti-Trinitarianism*, *Word-Faith Theology*, and good old fashioned wretched theology, demonstrating Lifeway’s commitment to upholding doctrinal standards is primarily swayed by profit motives.

Financial difficulties have plagued Lifeway since 2014, with a series of losses leading to the closure of 170 physical stores in 2017. A staggering \$50 million was lost between 2014 and 2019, and the 2020 budget year saw a \$45 million shortfall in revenue. In a desperate move, Lifeway sold its \$100 million headquarters in 2021, after occupying it for less than 4 years.

Yet, against the backdrop of these financial struggles, Lifeway recently celebrated the grand opening of a new 46,000 sq. ft. teaming space that includes “An open-concept design that features a social hub, drop-in workstations, meeting rooms with videoconferencing capability, quiet workspaces, video, photography and podcast studios, as well as post-production suites.”

Lifeway President and CEO Ben Mandrel explains:

“This space was designed to draw writers, designers, editors, artists and craftsmen together. When you create a space that’s designed for relationships, communication and teamwork, everyone who enters the building benefits....The open

workspaces, collaborative team rooms and state-of-the-art technology come together to support our work-from-anywhere culture and encourage collaboration....When staff who live outside of Nashville come to town, we want to have a space for them that feels like home, that feels fresh, creative and fun.”

## That Amen Word

Someone wrote to say that I surely use “that amen word” a lot! He’s right, of course!

It’s a word that every Christian should understand and use. It’s a good, Bible word.

You’ll find it here and there several dozen times sprinkled throughout both the Old and New Testaments. It means “so be it” or “it is so” or “that’s right.”

It is an expression of assent, agreement and commendation.

I use it when I preach! I use it when I hear others preach or sing! I use it when I write. I use it in my normal conversations.

It expresses often what I want to say.

It’s a word that hooks up well with edification. So when I’m edified, I say “amen”!

Entertainment is not a bad thing unless it’s bad entertainment!

Typically, if I’m enjoying some wholesome entertainment, I clap my hands; or if some individual is being recognized, introduced or commended, I clap my hands; but somehow when a good sermon or a good song is being rendered in a Spirit-filled way, it just seems fitting and proper to say “amen”!

It’s my preference and my practice! I think it’s a good game plan.

Perhaps you’ll try getting you a list of things to which you can refer often and as you do, let the joy of your heart say “amen.”

Try saying “amen” in a conversation with a crowd of people you do not know. It will communicate immediately that you’re connected to God!

Its very utterance reflects your witness! Try saying “amen” at least once an hour every day for the next week. It just may be the reminder you need to keep your walk with God in good form as you walk among men.

Try saying “amen” a few times when your pastor preaches! He’ll get over the shock quickly and I promise you his preaching will shift into high gear (with your help).

Try saying “amen” to your family and your co-workers. It’ll communicate to them that you believe God’s hand is in the midst of that to which you’ve put your hands.

Go ahead—try it sometime today!

Indeed, “that amen word” is one of my choice words which I frequently employ! And with good reason, I’m convinced!

Amen! Amen and amen! Amen, amen, amen!

- Dr. Shelton Smith

