

**Noteworthy**

**Prayer Requests:** The Boyette family (*with their recent loss of Sister Fogle*), Joe Brown (*ongoing medical*), the family of Mildred Church (*with her recent passing*), the Day family (*Robyn's father; Ricky, has cancer*), Ronnie Henderson (*recent medical procedure*), Larry Hicks (*sick*), Linda James (*Ongoing medical*), the Johnson family (*Nathaniel; Sherman and Gus' brother passed away recently*), Bennie Jones (*recent procedure*), Becca Marschall (*physical struggles*), Area Miller (*recent fall*), Neil Miller (*medical*), Butch Morgan (*Ongoing medical*), Tabitha Sadler (*sick*), Suzette Stevens (*health struggles*), Arlene Turner (*recent struggles*).

*Family and friends:* Marvin Brown (*from Plant City, cancer*), Ron Daly (*Evangelist in Indiana; recently suffered severe injuries from accident*), Ned Hicks (*Larry Hicks' father, ongoing medical*), Brian James (*cancer*); James, MaryAnne and Lyla King (*Zachary King's parents & daughter*), Rowena Lawson's mother (*Ms. Lourdes, health issues & pain management*), and John Marschall (*Bob Marschall's father*).

**Group Meeting:** Group 2 will meet next week after the PM worship service.

**Men's Bible Study:** The 4th Sunday of each month at 5 pm (*Sept. 22nd*).

**Area Meetings:** The South Bumby Church of Christ will hold a meeting Sept. 13-15 with Tommy Peeler; The Plant City Church of Christ Sept. 22-25 with Gardner Hall (*See bulletin board for details*). Our Gospel Meeting with Chris Reeves will be at the beginning of next month (*Oct. 6-11th*). Please make plans to attend and invite others.

**Remember and encourage** those who are struggling physically and spiritually.

**Assignments for Worship Service**

**Wednesday Night: 9/11/19**

Song Leader: Colby Sadler  
 Opening Prayer: Earl Branham  
 Invitation: Eric Stevens  
 Announcements: Leon Miller  
 Closing Prayer: Neil Miller  
 Recordings: Trent Stevens  
 Usher: Leon Miller

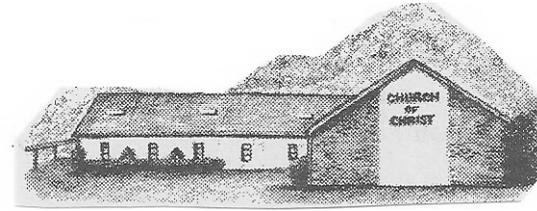
**Sunday Evening: 9/15/19**

Lord's Table: Clay Sadler  
 Song Leader: Logan Lanning  
 Opening Prayer: Steve Parker  
 Announcements: Larry Hicks  
 Closing Prayer: Jerry Williams  
 Recordings: Bob Marschall  
 Usher: Gus Johnson

**Sunday Morning: 9/15/19**

Lord's Table: Clay Sadler (B)  
 Timothy Payne (C)  
 Serving: Steve Parker  
 Sherman Johnson  
 Song Leader: Colby Sadler

Opening Prayer: Charles Goodall  
 Announcements: Larry Hicks  
 Closing Prayer: Jerry Williams  
 Recordings: Bob Marschall  
 Usher: Gus Johnson



**Lakeland Hills  
 Leader**

**LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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**ELDERS**

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 Leon Miller (863) 640-6378  
 Larry Wisdom (863) 583-4311

**SERVICES**

Sunday  
 Bible Study 9:00 A.M.  
 Morning Services 9:50 A.M.  
 Evening Services 6:00 P.M.  
 Wednesday  
 Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

**DEACONS:**

Robert Marschall  
 Michael Sadler  
 Moses Stevens  
 David Williams

**EVANGELIST:**

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

***Moralizing Over the Gospel?***

If not careful, one can easily lose the gospel message through mere moralizing, perhaps thinking that preaching the gospel is equivalent to pushing moral and political issues. Moralizing is the expression of moral judgments or opinions about right or wrong. "Mere" moralizing means that one stops at the expression of these judgments. Many see this as self-righteous and hypocritical, focusing on one specific issue perhaps while ignoring other equally important matters. The goal of moralizing is typically to get people to change their moral stance on something, or at least to feel ashamed if they don't.



This can be a problem on at least two counts:

First, this approach doesn't save souls.

Second, just getting people to change moral views is not the essence of the gospel.

Of course Christians ought to be teaching and standing for biblical morality, and nothing said here should be understood otherwise. At the same time, while Christians understand that immorality without repentance will condemn (**Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10**), and that God does call us to holiness (**1 Pet. 1:13-16**), we also need to understand that the need for the gospel is due to the fact that we are all moral failures. This is not to excuse sin, but we know that all of us are guilty (**Rom. 3:23**). We all stand condemned and in need of salvation, and just changing our moral views or becoming "better" people is not what fills that need. Further, never do we reach a point where we no longer need the gospel message, for none today can claim perfection. We can only claim forgiveness. While grace does not excuse sin (**Rom. 6:1-2**), the need for grace will never go away (**1 John 2:1-2**). We will never be able to rely on ourselves, as that will surely lead to further failure. We've all tried it and failed miserably.

One reason that mere moralizing doesn't work is that it gets the cart before the horse and focuses the attention upon imperfect Christians rather than God. We must stand for moral values, but even if we get people to change their moral views, and if we get more moral laws on the books, these actions by themselves haven't saved a single soul. Moralizing alone will only condemn because it shows a violated standard without a remedy for redemption. The gospel is more than a change in moral standards.

This also leads people to think that a moral failure (sin) for a Christian necessarily means that the Christian is a hypocrite. Why? Because the message doesn't stress grace and forgiveness. It just stresses the importance of moral action. When morality is the main issue, and one fails, then the whole system is seen as a failure and the world is quick to point that out. A Christian certainly can be hypocritical, but confession, repentance, and seeking forgiveness are not acts of hypocrisy. Christians who do this are doing exactly what Scripture tells them to do (**1 John 1:7-10**).

The gospel is needed precisely because we are failures. Since "gospel" is good news, there are two vital components to the gospel that need to be understood and proclaimed:

1. All are guilty of sin (**Rom. 3:23**), and we cannot save ourselves just by changing moral habits. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (**Eph. 2:8-9**). To moralize the gospel is to turn it into a works-based system, and this is not the gospel.

2. Christ, by His grace, died to offer forgiveness, and any message that doesn't include this is not the gospel. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us" (**Eph. 1:7-8a**).

Only when we seek and teach God's grace and forgiveness through the cross of Christ will we then be spreading the gospel. Once people accept what Christ has done for them, morals begin to change. People will repent, not because morals are forced on them politically, but because they will desire the grace and forgiveness only God can provide, and repentance is the only viable response (**Acts 2:38; 3:19; cf. Titus 2:11-14**).

If our message to the world is filled with the hope of forgiveness, the riches of God's grace and mercy, and how repent-

ance fits into this, then we will not be presenting an "us vs. them" political type of message; rather, we will present an "all of us are in the same boat and need saving" type of message. What distinguishes the Christian from the world at the most basic level is that the Christian has come to God for that forgiveness. Yes, there are greater implications for how Christians should be living (e.g., not conformed to this world, **Rom. 12:1-2**), but the focal point of the gospel message must always be this:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared..." (**1 Cor. 15:3ff**).

If this real gospel is not accepted, then no amount of moralizing will save souls. The failure of "moralizing over the gospel" is that the message is not the gospel at all. It's a cheap substitute based on a misunderstanding that we can fix our own problems. Let's make sure our message properly reflects what God came to do in Christ.

~ Doy Moyer