

The following statement was read by the elders of the Lord's church at Westside to the members.

I Peter 2:9 states that Christians are to be "*peculiar people.*" Peter was not talking about our individual quirks, but telling Christians, baptized believers, that we are to be different from the world. In this mixed-up world, God has presented His people both a challenge, and a great opportunity for the body of Christ at Westside to let its light shine brightly in a dark and mixed up society.

We are to be focused and allow our light to stand out in a confusing and conflicted world. We must think differently, talk differently, act differently, and dress differently.

I John 2:15-16, Christians are warned not to "*love the world nor the things in the world – the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life*". John wrote if we "*love the world, the love of the Father is not in us*".

Twenty-five years ago, the leadership at Westside pledged that Westside would be known as a Bible-believing church, holding fast to the teachings of Jesus the Chief Shepherd, and His inspired apostles. As a result, this congregation has always striven to be known as a sound body of Christians, dedicated to evangelism and helping one another get to Heaven.

The elders are even more steadfast in its collective resolve for all of us to be the people that God wants us to be. It is the Lord's desire that all would be saved (2 Peter 3:9)

Every member at Westside has a divine ministry and the elders are dedicated to helping each and every one reach his or her potential as a servant, and to ultimately enjoy the reward promised by our Savior Jesus Christ who said in Rev. 2:10: "*Be faithful until death and I will give you a crown of life.*"

If you are not already involved, the elders encourage you to find your place to contribute. This will enhance your individual spiritual growth, and strengthen the body here at Westside. There are many ways to be evangelistic – one may teach, one may invite, or one may encourage. Some may be able to do all three. Everyone is important. Christ is the head of the body, and He has placed us in the body just as He desired. (I Cor. 12:18)

The elders resolve to maintain the purity of the Word. Each Lord's Day our pulpit minister holds up the Bible and declares "this is what we go by." The elders want to underscore that statement. The elders appreciate the commitment made by our ministers, Bible class teachers, World Bible School workers, deacons, and pre-school staff as they strive to further the cause of Christ in this mixed-up world.

It is the duty of the shepherds to feed the flock, and to guard it from false teaching and error. To ensure sound doctrine is a very sobering responsibility that is taken very seriously by each elder. The character and material used by Preachers, speakers, and Bible class teachers are constantly reviewed and monitored. We have many excellent Bible teachers here, and we commend them for their diligence in adhering to the Word.

We also have an outstanding group of deacons who along with their wives stand ready to serve our members. They are Godly individuals, and the elders applaud their dedicated and unselfish service.

Times in our society are changing – and not always for the better. The elders believe without reservation that God's Word is complete and ever-lasting. Despite negative influences from a misguided society, the Westside leadership is resolved to trust God, and to remain true to the Word. Westside continues to be known in the brotherhood for its faithfulness, and as elders we will do our part to ensure that it remains faithful until the Lord comes again.

Sometimes there are questions of opinion that arise that are not directly addressed by chapter and verse. As elders we will always strive to do what is prudent, expedient, and what is in the best interest of all the members. Regardless of what other congregations may be doing, the elders stand unified to continue to worship and work according to New Testament commandments and patterns.

In John 10:27, Jesus speaking as the Good Shepherd, said "*the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, I know them, and they follow*". The elders also pledge to be available to each and every one of you. We want to rejoice with you, hurt with you, and will always be praying for you. Our meetings are open to anyone, or we can arrange a meeting with you on a short notice. We pledge to improve our communication, and we ask that you also let us know what you are thinking as two-way communication is always the most beneficial. The elders are available to you.

Due to the tremendous generosity of the Westside family, we have been able to do more in the areas of evangelism, and in helping others. You are to be commended for your love for the lost and concern for those in need.

Sadly, it seems that society today is more interested in being politically correct than in being right with God. Despite the trend toward tolerance and compromise, your elders want all to know that we will **never** tolerate evil. I Thess. 5:22 exhorts us all to “*flee from the very appearance of evil*”.

While society may condone social drinking, living together, same-sex marriage, adultery, fudging to get ahead or being rebellious (just to mention a few) – these are not characteristics of a faithful Christian. In addition, your elders also want all to know that God teaches there are no big or little sins. Lying is a sin, being at odds with a brother is a sin, holding a grudge is a sin and causing conflict is a sin. The bottom line: **sin separates us from God.** (Isaiah 59:2.)

While we will not compromise, justify nor tolerate sin, the elders further resolve to “sound the warning trumpet” when such a situation arises. The elders want you to know that we will diligently attempt to restore the fallen in a spirit of kindness and gentleness. (Gal 6:1)

The elders want to innumerate just a few Biblical principles that are considered core beliefs:

– First, the Bible is complete, it is our sole authority, and it needs no additions or subtraction. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:3)

--All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and as a result we are saved by grace. (Rom. 3:23-24)

--Salvation not only requires belief, it demands acknowledgment that Jesus is God's son and it requires repentance for our sins. (John 8:24, Luke 13:3)

-- Baptism is essential for salvation.(Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38)

--Those who are fully obedient to the Gospel, our Lord adds them to **His church.** (Acts 2:36-37)

– To remain pleasing to God, baptized believers must continue to walk and live in the light. (Rev. 2:10)

--When we fall short of God's will for us, we must confess our sins, and we are promised that He is faithful to forgive. (I John 1:9)

--We believe acceptable worship must be the same way first century Christians worshiped; to assemble for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, remembering Christ's death by partaking of the Lord's Supper, giving as we have been prospered, and singing without musical accompaniment.

--We strongly believe a Christian, a baptized believer, should not **intentionally** forsake the assembly. (Heb. 10:24-25)

--All resources should be dedicated to evangelism- that is seeking and saving the lost and striving to keep the saved faithful. (Luke 19:10)

--Everyone can and should share the Good News of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:18-20)

--Without faith, it is impossible to please God, but faith without works is useless. (Heb. 11:6, James 2:20)

--The Christian who knows to do good, and fails to do it -- to him or her it is sin. (James 4:17)

--We believe that one day every person will face individual judgment. (2 Cor. 5:10, Heb: 9:27, Rev. 22:12)

--For those who choose to live a sinful lifestyle, the elders will never condone nor justify the sin. We will always stand ready to lovingly attempt to show the sinner God's will.

--The elders are grateful for the opportunity to be God's servants, and your servants. We soberly realize that one day each one of us will have to give an account of our service.

Lastly we unanimously believe that Westside is made up of some of the most sound and dedicated Christians anywhere -- men and women, young and old, boys and girls. We again commend everyone for all that is done the cause of Christ.

The elders believe our best days lie ahead for the body of Christ that meets at Westside. His promises are true, and we can trust Him. In Philippians 3:13-14, Christians are told to *“forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead, pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”*.

We pray that God will richly bless your family, our worship and service together, and that one day we will all rejoice together in Heaven. May God bless our unified efforts here at Westside as we focus as a body to make known to a mixed up world *“the manifold wisdom of God”* (Eph 3:10).