

# Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

30 August 2015

## Topics

### A.M. Bible Class:

What can God do (Mark 11:20-25)?

### A.M. Lesson:

Our fellowship (1 John 1:1-7)

### P.M. Lesson:

Contend for the faith (Jude 3)

### Wednesday:

James 1:12f

### Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

### Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

*Great are the works of the Lord,  
studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2  
Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices.*

## Ashley Madison and Mercy

M. W. Bassford

<http://hisexcellentword.blogspot.com>

August 27, 2015

Like most human beings with an Internet connection, I've spent quite a bit of time over the past week reading about the slow-motion disaster of the Ashley Madison scandal. For those of you who have been living under a rock, Ashley Madison is an Internet dating site sporting the slogan, "Life is short. Have an affair." If you want to find somebody online to cheat with, you go to Ashley Madison.

However, some enterprising group, for reasons they haven't completely disclosed, stole the personal data of millions of Ashley Madison customers. After giving the company a month to shut down, they published the data on the Internet last week. Since then, nearly every day has brought some new development in the story, be it some new hypocrite uncovered or some new lawsuit filed against the infidelity broker.

I admit that when the story first broke, I was as gleeful about it as anybody. I thought immediately of Numbers 32:23. Yep; even 3500 years after Moses said it, we can still be sure that our sin will find us out.

However, as I continued to follow the goings-on, I felt a growing sense of unease. First of all, there are absolutely no good guys anywhere in the whole thing. The Ashley Madison people tried to get rich by enabling

sin. All the Ashley Madison clients, even though they may not have succeeded in having an affair (Internet scuttlebutt has it that about 99 percent of AM users were male), they certainly wanted to.

Even the nameless hackers are no heroes. They got all that personal data by stealing it. That's evil and wrong, full stop. I hope that the relevant governmental unit is able to track them down, prosecute them, and punish them.

Out of such a wretched hive of scum and villainy (to borrow a phrase), is it possible that any good can come?

Worse still, though, is the undisguised satisfaction with which many Christians have been watching the scandal unfold. Yeah, yeah; we get to see all of the villainous wretches get their comeuppance. It's all been no threat to me personally. I can't deny that part of me has been enjoying the spectacle too. Josh Duggar uncovered? Pass the popcorn!

However, in order to enjoy it, I have to forget one all-important fact. On my own merits, I am no better than the worst sinner who ever logged on to the site. I haven't sinned in that way, but I have certainly sinned. I have no more claim to my own righteousness than any of them do. My only hope is the blood of Jesus Christ, and I live each day only by His mercy. In short, who am I to judge?

I'm no adulterer, but I don't have any trouble understanding why someone might want to be. Here's some poor slob who's dissatisfied with his marriage. He feels bored; he feels trapped. The devil enters his heart

and begins painting vivid pictures of all the fun he would have if he had an affair. Deceived, he logs on to the Ashley Madison website and gets out his credit card. He probably never got that affair (although I'm sure that AM billed him either way), but now he's outed, and his life is ruined. Maybe he loses his job. Maybe his wife divorces him. Maybe he commits suicide.

Tempted, deceived, ruined. I can't sneer at somebody who looks like that. He looks too much like me.

And yet, this empathy, this sense of fellow feeling that I think all of us would experience if the AM clients were people we worshiped with, is absent from the online drama. Instead of reacting with gentleness, looking to ourselves, lest we also be tempted, we hoot and applaud as each new victim is paraded before us. From every pore, we exude the sour stench of self-righteousness.

The Internet is sneaky like that. For some reason, when we're online, it's easy for us to forget that we're supposed to be decent people. This is most obvious when it comes to anger and contention, but it may be an equally large problem in remembering to be merciful. In the AM scandal, all of the villains are also victims. Except for the devil, villains always are.

Rather than applauding, we ought to be mourning, mourning all the shattered lives the story is strewing in its wake, mourning even the godless emptiness of soul that makes things like Ashley Madison possible. This is nothing more than another act in the long tragedy of mankind as we try to find our hapless way through this benighted world.

As we have opportunity, we should work to ameliorate the harm. Even if we don't have opportunity, we still don't get to stand back and laugh. None of us really need more self-righteousness than we've already got. Just about all of us could stand to develop a little more compassion.

Now would be a good time to practice.

## News:

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday contribution today. Today's offering will go to support the Bibles for Ukraine project. Jacey, Pete and Cindy Waller's granddaughter, has a back surgery in her future. Doctors are studying her condition in order to determine and recommend the best treatment options for Jacey. Mike Cavassos' twin brother Mark is receiving treatment for a heart aneurysm.

## Extended prayer list:

*Tatyana Knowlton—macular degeneration*

*Ken Cocke—back and shoulder pains. Infection*

*Janet Radar—nursing home*

*H.L. Boling—general health and complications from leukemia*

*Mike Cavasos—constant pain, foot surgeries*

*Sandy Cavasos—degenerative disk disease*

*Nic and Ani Self—health and personal needs*

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# SEPTEMBER 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> singing	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Kyle Kramer Birthday
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Labor Day	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Jesse Short Birthday	<b>11</b> Patriot Day Tamara Richards Birthday	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> Grandparents Day Linda Boling Birthday	<b>14</b> Rosh Hashanah	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Greg Briggs Birthday	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Bob Mayo Birthday
<b>20</b> Fellowship meal	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Autumnal equinox Yom Kippur Sheila Miller Birthday	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Verdell and Cassandra Kescoli, Anniv Bob and Connie Mayo, Anniv
<b>27</b> Lunar Eclipse Max @ 7:47 P.M.	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			