

## Nolan Anderson Dies

Nolan Anderson, long-time gospel preacher, died August 30 at the age of 90 after an extended illness.

After preaching for a number of congregations in central Iowa, in 1951 he helped to start the church in Madrid, Iowa, where he labored as long as his health allowed. Brother Anderson also served as an elder of the church in Madrid for a number of years.

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

*Philippians 4:8*

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# THE CONSCIENCE

By RAY FERRIS

If one were to take four watches, one with the right time, one an hour fast, one an hour slow, and one that is stopped, he might compare them to four types of conscience. One is by the right standard—it operates correctly; two are by wrong standards—one operates too loosely and is thus too fast, and one is too binding and is thus too slow; the fourth is by no standard at all. It just doesn't operate.

Just what is the condition of your conscience? The word is formed by a combination of two words in the original language of the New Testament—one being a word that means with and the other a word which means *knowledge*. It thus conveys the sense of knowing with oneself. Webster says, "a knowledge or feeling of right and wrong, with a compulsion to do right; moral judgment that prohibits or opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle" (*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, p.312*).

Paul writes of the conscience accusing or excusing (Rom. 2:15). Thus the conscience is that which we know within ourselves to measure up to a standard previously established in some way in our thinking. It is the built-in judge that exists in every man. If *improper* knowledge exists in an individual he may condemn that which is acceptable, or he may approve that which should be condemned. Study Romans 14 to see this principle illustrated.

### *Your Conscience*

But what of your conscience? Is it one that has been formed and guided to the proper standard by God's word? Or is it one that permits you to go beyond what God would desire due to failure to concentrate on His will? It is entirely possible that it is one that binds you, and would seek to limit others, where God has not.

This would be caused by some type of misunderstanding of the scripture. Thought

of such possibility ought to motivate us to a fervent study and constant consideration of God's word.

It is also possible that one's conscience will allow that which ought not to be done with no judgment of wrong-doing. Paul said, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Rom. 14:21-22).

Note that a conscience that does not condemn us in some practice does not guarantee the practice to be right. We are happy (blessed) when what is allowed does not condemn us! The Christian had best be very careful what practices are approved in his life.

Perhaps your conscience has, in essence, ceased to function at all. We read of those who are guilty of "speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron..." (1 Tim. 4:2). We also read of people whose consciences were defiled (Tit. 1:15). These passages indicate consciences that are not working. Is it possible for that to be true of you?

### *Assurance or Condemnation*

The conscience is a vital aspect of the Christian's effort to please God. John said, "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 Jn. 3:19-20). Paul wrote, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not in faith: *for God hath received him*" (Rom. 14:23, *emphasis mine, REF*).

The basis of the sin is the self-accusation of one's own conscience which condemns him as one who rebels against what he believes to be God's will. The very spirit of rebellion is something which cannot be condoned. John says God, being greater than one's heart, recognizes the rebellious spirit. It is impossible for me to expect the Lord

to approve of me when I do not approve of myself.

May the Lord help us to develop a proper conscience that will restrain us from any activity that would displease God, and motivate us always to be involved in active good.

Once more we quote from the pen of Paul: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And *herein do I exercise myself*, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Ac. 24:14-16, *emphasis mine, REF*).

The Spirit-inspired apostle exercised himself (that surely implies that he worked at the task) so that his conscience would not accuse him of doing what he believed to be wrong.

### *Conclusion*

Remember, failure to be convicted of sin by one's conscience does not guarantee that one is right, as illustrated by Paul's life when he persecuted Christians in all good conscience. He said: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Ac. 26:9).

On another occasion he indicated that even while engaged in those acts, he had "lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Ac. 23:1).

On the other hand, conviction by one's conscience that he is not doing right guarantees that he is sinning! God will condemn him.

May the Lord help us then to exercise ourselves that we may have a good conscience, but that we also constantly seek to educate ourselves so the conscience will judge our

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# As You Travel...

By ROY DIESTELKAMP

I know a family that went away on vacation to a New England state. There was no sound local church known to be anywhere in that state. The obvious question was, what were they going to do for worship. Their decision was simple, they gathered the family together, got in the car and drove four hours, over mountainous roads, and worshipped with a church in another state. In Ontario a number of years ago a bus tour made up of Christians phoned ahead, found out where the congregation met, told the driver where they wanted to go, searched out city streets, and arrived for worship.

Are these stories unusual? They ought not to be, and for many in former times they were not. Formerly, when Christians (at least the ones I knew) went on vacation they worshipped with local churches. Admittedly they did not do exactly as the two earlier stories. Excursions to far off locations, staying in motels and touring was something many Christians could not afford. When many of us were growing up in the fifties and sixties, vacation, usually meant going to see other family. At times of worship the decision was usually easy. We would go with family (if they were Christians) to the local assembly of the saints.

Moreover, when brethren in the sixties and the seventies began to have some money for travel, they would not go to, or at least stay long in an area where they could not meet with a church. The reason was plain and simple, they would not miss worship services. Now, however, an alternative worship plan seems to have arisen. If there is a plurality of Christians traveling together, they will just meet in the motel room or at a scenic spot, and ignore the local brethren. After all, "where two or three are gathered together..."

Let's consider when we go away on vacation, etc., and we fail to worship with a local church what we have done:

**1. We have failed to come together "in the church"** (1 Cor. 11:18, 22, 33-34). Now, a church may be composed of two or three Christians, but when did a temporary gathering of two or more Christians become "in the church." If, for instance, an elder and his family are traveling and assemble as a "temporary church," what is the organization of that church? Is he an elder of another church, and at the same time one of those directing the affairs of the "temporary church?" If he may do this for a week, how much longer may he do it—be a member of two churches, and responsible for oversight of one and leading with the men (if there are other men) in the other. I use the illustration

of an elder, but such applies to all Christians.

**2. We have failed to encourage local brethren.** This is not the only reason for assembling with the saints, but it is one reason to visit with local saints when traveling. Paul waited a week in Troas (Acts 20) to meet with the saints, eat the Lord's supper, and take the opportunity to preach to them. What an encouragement to the local church! What an opportunity to provoke these brethren to faithfulness, zeal, and steadfastness. Since Paul and his company were in a hurry (Ac. 20:16) they might have stopped in some quiet place, worshipped, and headed on their journey. What disappointment the local brethren would have suffered when they found out that Paul had been here, but didn't come among them. What disappointment local Christians have today when they hear a group of Christians came to town, were here during time of worship, but met among themselves and didn't come among us. Surely we can enjoy our vacations and encourage local churches at the same time.

**3. We are not setting a good example to the weak.** If the weak hear that we fail to worship with the local church in another area, they may do the same thing. Only they may not even attempt to worship privately. And so, they do not remember their Lord's sacrifice, nor praise God in song, nor gain edification from Bible instruction. They are weak—and getting weaker—by following the actions of those who are so "strong" they can meet apart from a local church.

One thing that has always separated the practice of Christians from denominationalists has been the consistency and regularity of attendance at the services of the church. Denominational churches may have local membership in the hundreds and thousands, and attendance in the dozens. The church of Christ in a locality may have membership in the fifties and sixties, and a like number in attendance. The reason for this is that we love the Lord and have been taught to be a people "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..." (Heb. 10:25).

If the Lord has blessed you to be able to travel, rejoice in the Lord's blessing. However, you should not use this opportunity as a cloak to be away too much from your responsibilities to the local church. Nor should you use it as a time when you do not search out and meet with local saints. In the late 1950's the Standard Oil Company advertised: "As You Travel Ask Us."

Well, let Christians think just slightly differently: As You Travel, Worship With The Local Church.

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# CLOSING

## WINDOWS

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Recently, while opening an account for the local church at a religious book and supply business, the lady manager commented, "Oh, Church of Christ! That's Max Lucado's church." I immediately began to distance myself, and the congregation, from Lucado's ultra-liberal views and practice.

In further discussion she related how that she and some of her associates "knowing the reputation of the Church of Christ" were quite surprised and amused at the inconsistency of Lucado's new CD release, *Opening Windows*, featuring an evening of praise and worship, which includes spiritual songs accompanied by musical instruments. I agreed that it was inconsistent with Bible teaching, but asked, "Are you certain there are instruments?"

With eagerness she popped a CD in her player to let me hear for myself. The recording began with an introduction of "our minister, Max Lucado," followed by a rousing round of applause. The manager got a chuckle when I remarked, "Funny! They don't applaud when I get in the pulpit."

Sure enough, when the first song began, the sound of stringed instruments was obvious. I told the lady that I had heard enough and spent the rest of my time trying to explain that Lucado's "inconsistency" was not really inconsistent with his liberal attitude toward the scriptures.

A gospel preacher who is a talented writer may author a book which will hit the best-seller list, but he can't maintain that popularity without modifying his convictions or, at least, holding back truth (cp. Ac. 20:20,27). Time and again it has been proven that the general public will not "endure sound doctrine" even if the writing style is desirable (cp. 2 Tim. 4:2-4). Popularity just among our brethren will never put an author on a best-seller list.

Even many of the brethren with whom Lucado has been associated have been alarmed and embarrassed by his compromise on doctrinal issues. But, in reality, he is merely the product of the environment they have created. The brethren at whose feet he sat probably never taught him to seek scriptural authority via commands, statements, approved examples and necessary implications. Or, if they did, they also taught him to make loose application of these principles.

Meanwhile, the list of unauthorized practices and brethren from whom we are forced to distance ourselves mounts.

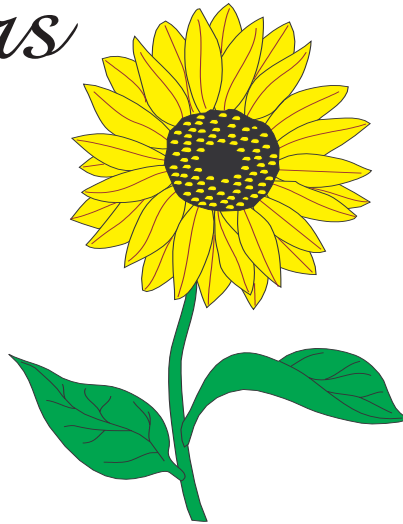
# Sunflowers

# & Smiles

By **FRED K. HENNECKE**

Several years ago while I was working at International Harvester's Farm Equipment Research Center in Hinsdale, Illinois, I had a curious experience. One morning before work, having arrived earlier than usual, I walked over to the east side of an experimental field of sunflowers in full bloom. The east side is important, because they were all facing the early morning sun. When I looked at the field it seemed that all the sunflowers were looking at me and that I should say a few words. They were not looking at me but at the sun, the source of all their beauty and energy. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful sight.

Not long ago at a worship assembly I experienced a similar sight. I had inadvertently repeated the third verse of a song that I was leading. When I acknowledged my error and thanked the congregation for going along with me, I looked up and saw that field of sunflowers. Again, my brothers and sisters were not looking at me, but had just been singing praises to God and were forgiving me for the error I made and were reflecting the love of the source of our strength.



I have never been what may be referred to as a "joiner"—a person given to joining groups, organizations, or causes. I once worked for a man who wanted to be a member of the Freemasons so that his chances for advancement would be enhanced, for he firmly believed that was the way to "make it" at work. He had no special regard for the Masonic order other than what he could gain at his place of employment.

Before I was added to the Lord's church I am sure that I was not fully aware of all the "advantages" that would accrue to its

members. As we study we learn that there are indeed advantages beyond our fondest hope: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15); "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

As we are engaged in the service of God, obedient to His will, we are blessed: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

To be part of the family of God wherein mutual love can be expressed is encouraged, and even commanded: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn. 13:34-35).

This is certainly to be highly recommended. And so do I now.

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## Decades of Spiritual Decay Result in Spiritual Rottenness

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

In a moment of reminiscence I pulled out the very first issue of Truth Magazine (October, 1956).

My father, Leslie Diestelkamp, along with Gordon Pennock and Bryan Vinson, Jr., were the men who started that paper when I was 15 years old. I remember well the many planning session that took place at our house. I also remember that I accompanied my dad to the print shop in Elburn, Illinois, where we helped collate and staple the early issues of the magazine. That may have been what whetted my appetite for printing and publishing.

As I began reading the articles, I was struck with how relevant they still are more than four decades later. Really, that should be no surprise, for if the articles were true then, they will be true today. Things haven't changed that much! Only the statistics have changed—and they for the worse.

One of the articles, written by my father, was entitled "Spiritual Decay," which noted "an ever-increasingly passive attitude on the part of many people toward the actual teaching of the Bible." Over forty years ago Christians were decrying apathy toward the word of God and issuing warnings about the resulting ignorance of the Bible, moral decline and increase in materialism and carnality.

If the decline was evident back then, think how far we have fallen! In this "information age" we know more about less important things and less about what is truly vital for our existence here and on into eternity. Instead of putting God and spirituality in first place, it falls in the rankings far down the list.

Just like today, one of the major hindrances to spiritual growth back then was materialism. He wrote: "The great urge to 'keep up with the Joneses' ...[It] keeps men's minds so occupied with money that they have little time or energy for study, prayer,

worship or work for the Lord." Does this sound familiar?

Even way back then he felt the need to warn that "Many parents promote the cultural, social and financial welfare of their children in such a way that they smother out any spiritual desires in the child."

He also noticed that "Many parents are completely happy if the child makes good grades, is socially popular and has a knack for business. Later they will wonder why the child (then a man or woman) is not a Christian."

The article ends with an admonition: "If parents will put spiritual things first (Matt. 6:33), their children will not be so religiously retarded nor so void of spiritual concepts and ideals."

I might add that because such admonitions were not heeded by the vast majority of Christians, the spiritual decay has developed into spiritual rottenness and, if not reversed, will result in spiritual death.

# ONE THING IS NEEDFUL

By ED BRAND

We are surrounded by plenty—as in much. If you dispute this observation, take an inventory of your belongings. Will one page be sufficient to catalog all of them? So you see, we are surrounded by plenty, much of it our own.

Suppose you were told you must choose ten items from that number. The ten things

you choose, you can keep; the remainder must be given away. What ten would you choose? The house, obviously, then the car, food, clothing, checkbook, the dog . . . Oh, I forgot, of course the furniture.

You may have chosen different articles, but I suspect you chose along the same line as the above. Unless you have a cat. Have you noticed something missing in this list? I have, but of course I should, since I know where this article is heading. Where is the Bible?

It is interesting that the possession which is the most valuable, is so ignored. It is often left at home when its owner goes on vacation (Home Alone). Even surrounded by people, it is sometimes lost. "Let's see, where did I put that thing?" It often goes for long stretches with no human companionship.

On one occasion, Jesus had been received into Martha's house (Lk. 10:38ff). She was busy doing the things necessary in order to entertain a guest in her home. Food must be prepared, cooked, and then served. Her sister, Mary, didn't seem to notice that poor Martha had to do all of these things. While she was busy, busy, busy, Mary was listening to Jesus. He was placed in the unenviable po-

sition of having to settle a family squabble. "Bid her therefore that she help me" said Martha.

His answer was simple, but profound: "but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part..." Martha is the overworked, harried sister who has been deserted by Mary to do all this work alone. The feelings Martha experienced are common to each of us. We are doing what has to be done, while Mary is off visiting with the guest.

"One thing is needful." Instead of choosing ten things, now you have to choose only one. Mary chose "the good part." She chose food for the soul. When all of our things are gone, this is the one thing which shall last. That ought to help us put things in perspective, shouldn't it?

Opportunity for spiritual growth and satisfaction should rate better than a hurried "later." The worship of God on the day he specified ought not be an afterthought or resentful intrusion into our busy schedule (the preacher went ten minutes over and the roast might burn!)

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Once again we want to express our appreciation to all contributors for their support. This issue is expected to cost approximately \$580 leaving a deficit of \$106.86. However, before mailing this issue we spent an additional \$170 for a new bulk mailing permit and annual fee, increasing the expected deficit to \$276.86.

## Coming To The Web

If all goes as planned Think will soon be available on the internet. A novice when it comes to internet workings, I have sought the help of Matt Hennecke to design a web page for that purpose. Of course, we will continue to publish and mail out the printed edition. The internet version will allow those who wish to copy articles to reprint in other publications to do so without having to reset the type. Also, back issues will be able to be accessed. Perhaps in our next issue we will have a web address for those who are interested.

# THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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