

Words Have Meaning

The next time you hear someone use the religious title, "Reverend," you might ask if he has ever looked the word up in a dictionary. It might shock him to find out that it is derived from the word "revere," which is very closely related to worship. Then kindly point out the admonition for each one "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Rom. 12:3).

—Al Diestelkamp.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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In Defense of Discrimination

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

Many today have a misinformed view of what has been called the separation of church and state. The modern application of that phrase has been to "protect" the political process from the influence of spiritual ideas and values. Some would prefer that the moral beliefs of the governed not be allowed to affect the government. The founders of this nation made it abundantly clear that this was not their intent.

Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address, said, "May that Infinite Power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to what is best, and give them a favorable issue for your peace and prosperity." In his second inaugural address he expressed his need for "the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our forefathers, as Israel of old, from their native land...and to whose goodness I ask you to join with me in supplications, that He will so enlighten the minds of your servants, guide their councils, and prosper their measures..."

Still, many today will try to insist that "religious" types should stay out of politics and go back to their pulpits. Are "political" types willing to stay out of spiritual and moral matters? I think not, nor should they. Law making without moral foundation results in bad law. Likewise, preaching which does not address immorality is impotent.

Recently the Illinois House attempted to amend its Human Rights Act to make it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of his or her "sexual orientation." The bill had bi-partisan support and was narrowly defeated. Similar bills will be introduced in each state. Thus, I would like to offer a few words on behalf of discrimination. Discrimination has taken on an exclusively ugly connotation in our culture. "Discrimination is bad," we are told.

Woe to those who cannot discriminate

To discriminate is simply to distinguish or differentiate. We do this all the time and often for good reason. An inability to discriminate is an inability to appreciate. When one cannot discriminate between good and evil, amorality exists. "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20). In other words, woe to those who cannot discriminate.

The Illinois bill seeks to end discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation," or so it says. It reads, "'Sexual orientation' means having or being perceived as having an emotional, physical, or sexual attraction to another person without regard to the sex of that person or having or being perceived as having an orientation for such attraction, or having or being perceived as having a self-image or identity not traditionally associated with ones biological maleness or femaleness."

I am amused by those who complain that we can't understand the Bible, but then write the nonsense just quoted. "Sexual orientation" according to the bill simply means sexual deviancy. The sexually immoral have cowed many politicians and now want to intimidate the rest of us with the force of law to accept their deviant "lifestyles" on all levels. It does not want us to discriminate on the basis of sexual deviancy.

Are we to believe that marriage as ordained by God between a male and a female (Gen. 2:22-24; Matt. 19:4-6) is merely a tradition to which there are legitimate alternative "sexual orientations"? Scripture does not endorse such an indiscriminate view of sexual morality. Society's acceptance and

protection of sexual deviancy devalues the God-designed family and destabilizes its position as the moral foundation of communities.

Just because lawmakers and even religious leaders have bought and sold immorality under the banner of "love" doesn't mean they do so with God's support. Murderers, thieves, liars and others have often attempted to justify their sins by pointing to love as their motivation. It is no surprise that the sexually deviant do likewise. True love does not tolerate immorality, but calls for change in heart and action. True love promotes good over evil and can discriminate between the two.

What I found particularly interesting about the Illinois bill (HB 0474) is that it blatantly discriminates in its definition of "sexual orientation." The last sentence of its definition says, "'Sexual orientation' does not include a physical or sexual attraction to a minor by an adult." In other words, the law allows discrimination against pedophiles. How intolerant! The law is very discriminatory in which sexual deviancies it will protect and which it will not. Perhaps in a few years another house bill will amend the Illinois Human Rights Act by dropping that one sentence.

Remember, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9,10). The truth of Romans 1:18-32 is unfolding before our eyes in this country. Beware!

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NO WORK, NO EAT

By ED BRAND

Most of us have figured out that there is an important connection between gainful employment and eating regularly. Working is the means of putting food on the table.

Paul reminded the Thessalonian brethren of this well established rule. It seems some of the brethren were so excited about the expected return of Jesus that they quit their jobs to await this blessed event. They were unemployed and were busybodies. He wrote to them, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). God intends that we should be busy people, working and toiling in our sphere of labor.

Like so many of God's commands, this one can become corrupted and perverted. I fear work may be the undoing of us. I do not know many lazy saints, although I must admit to having met one or two. I am glad to say, most Christians are hard-working, productive citizens. But is it possible to be *too busy*?

King Ahab made a mortal mistake after Ben-Hadad, King of Syria, had been defeated in battle. King Ben-Hadad's army had been soundly whipped and the king had fled to Aphek for refuge. His officials approached Ahab with a plea for mercy: Let Ben-Hadad live. Ahab spared his life and made a treaty with Syria, including a trade agreement with Damascus. Ben-Hadad was set free.

Later, a prophet disguised as a wounded soldier, intercepted King Ahab. He told the king that a captive was placed in his care, with this warning: "If for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life" (1 Ki. 20:39). The disguised prophet said, "...While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (v. 40). You can read the next three verses to see what this means.

"Busy here and there"

He was too busy to take care of his main business—a contemporary problem with too many saints, preachers included. There are so many projects and jobs to do, all involving time. An hour here, three or four there, and all the day's hours are gone. We had them right here in our hands. Then, before we knew it, they were gone.

Parents can become so busy meeting the demands of their jobs (they both work, you know), that before they know what happened, the children God committed to their care are gone. They have grown up and left home. Where did the time go?

Christians become so preoccupied with being "busy here and there" that the real business of discipleship languishes. Periods of worship and study demand too much time. Working with new converts or wayward or weak brethren is not high on the list of "things to do today." Teaching a lost world? Not today, I'm too busy.

Yes, I'd say that is the truth. We are "busy

here and there" while our real work mostly goes undone. The Lord must have a heavy heart when he sees how busy we are.

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'Uh-oh!'

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

"Uh-oh! I forgot about that part." Perhaps you have uttered words similar to those after inviting people to go with you to a movie or into your home to watch something. It is interesting how our sensitivities to scrupulous standards are heightened when we have invited brethren to be present with us. As uncomfortable as such experiences might be, I believe they are good for us because they remind us that our brother, Jesus, is omnipresent in our homes.

What concerns me is when we quit having those "uh-oh" experiences at times when we should. Scripturally, this is getting to the point of being "past feeling" (Eph. 4:17-20). Paul tells us that this is the way the world lives being alienated from God with minds that are futile, dark and ignorant. That certainly is not the way we have learned Christ. Thus, if sinful worldly activities no longer elicit "uh-ohs" from us, it would indicate that we are no longer keeping God and His values foremost in our minds. It is those kinds of people that God gives over to a debased mind to do things which are not fitting (Rom. 1:28).

We need to re-sensitize ourselves to the immorality that is so often pushed off as art. The so-called poetic or artistic license that is used to violate grammatical or traditional boundaries is also used to violate moral lines. The freedom to express oneself does not include the freedom to harm others. This is understood in relation to certain acts of violence, polluting the environment or even yelling "fire" in a crowded theater. However, it seems that we lack the moral courage to restrict freedoms and choices that harm the unborn, pollute the mind or encourage people to stampede through the wide gate that leads to destruction.

Yes, some will think it strange that we do not run with them in a mad rush to see a certain movie. Some will speak evil of us and disparage the high standards we submit to in Christ. However, we are all going to have to give an account when we stand before the judge of the living and the dead. It would be better to say, "Uh-oh!" now rather than then.

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Devaluing 'I Do'

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The words, "I do" are heard on solemn occasions, such as wedding vows, court cases, swearing-in ceremonies, and when one is asked before baptism if he believes that Jesus is God's Son.

God takes vows very seriously. The law of Moses said: "If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth" (Num. 30:2). Later, Solomon revealed that "When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay" (Eccl. 5:4-5).

While we are not under the law of Moses, Jesus warned against the indiscriminate oath or vow and said, "Do not swear at all . . . but let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' . . ." (see Matt. 5:33-37). We need to tell the truth at *all* times. We don't need an oath to strengthen our word.

Throughout the years "I do" has come to mean anything anyone wants it to mean. Couples who have solemnly said "I do" before God, family and friends, have not kept their "until death do us part" promises; Politicians who have said "I do" with their hands on Bibles seem to think nothing of violating their oaths; Witnesses before judges and juries no longer are expected to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Though we are becoming accustomed to breaking of vows, I'm confident that God will bring each one into account (see Matt. 12:36-37). Those who say, "I do," but *don't*, are liars, who along with other immoral people "will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Think about *that* when you're tempted to be unfaithful to your spouse, or contemplate divorce, or backslide from your faithfulness to the Lord.



Why is it So

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Among the basic differences between men and women is the fact that women are generally more verbal than men. It is usually easy for them to express their feelings. Most men do not find it so easy to verbalize their feelings, especially having to do with love.

When we finally do get around to expressing love, it is often associated with sexual desire. Why do we neglect opportunities to express our love in other ways? I suspect it has to do with our egos. Men have a tendency to think of themselves as God's gift to women, and because men are easily motivated by sexual desire we think it "natural" to express our love in that setting.

It takes more effort for men to find other opportunities to express and show love for their wives, but it's worth it. Studies show that women struggle more than men from lack of self-worth. Therefore, she needs to be frequently reminded of her value.

If this need is not satisfied, she will either seek fulfillment through other avenues, or she will become depressed. Many women are drawn to the business world where opportunities for self-fulfillment seem to abound. In extreme cases, they may be attracted to men other than their husbands as they reach out for the emotional and intellectual stimulation they are not getting at home.

Forces within our culture have been working overtime to feed this dissatisfaction among women. Women who are "workers at home" (Tit. 2:5) are portrayed as inferior to those who are "successful" in the business arena. With this propaganda being dispensed so widely it is not surprising that so few are content with a role of voluntary submission. A godly man needs to recognize this tactic of the enemy and combat it by making his wife aware of her value to him. This is best conveyed by sincere words of praise and love.

There was a time when it was rare that a married woman would commit adultery. However, with the cultural stigma of adultery almost gone, it is not at all unusual to hear of infidelity of wives. In fact, in spite of divine warning to the contrary (Isa. 5:20), our society has made the dreadful mistake of calling this evil "good." Even so, very few wives would indulge in this sin if only their husbands would say something to make them feel better about themselves. Unlike the men they consort with, they probably have no intention of getting involved sexually. That comes after she has been made to feel important by one who treats her like her husband did when they first met.

So, why is it so hard for men to say "I love



'I Love You'?

you" to the women they love? It's hard because men are more action-oriented than verbal. We think we are saying "I love you" loud and clear when we go to work and when we fix something around the house, or buy some labor-saving device. And we can't imagine that she doesn't hear us say "I love you" when we show interest in "lovemaking." But what she would like is meaningful conversation, tender touch and to hear the actual words, "I love you." One man, tiring of his wife's asking if he loved her, finally told her in no uncertain terms that she could rest assured that he loved her more than he could ever tell her. She responded by saying, "I would rather you loved me a little less, and told me so more often."

The man may think that his wife, if she would just analyze the evidence, should know without a word from him that she is loved. However, she wants to know that his love is more than a responsibility. There may be several non-verbal ways to communicate this love, but none better than telling her often.

Refusal to recognize her need (to be verbally reassured of your love), or ridicule of that need, will certainly drive a wedge which will not easily be removed. Understanding this basic need of women is the first step toward satisfying the need. Men are natural problem-solvers once they recognize a need. The wise husband will make the fulfillment of his wife's needs a high priority challenge.

Once the verbal communication of your love has been established, other ways of saying "I love you" will enhance your relationship. Women are relationship-oriented. They love togetherness activities such as quiet talks, leisurely walks, holding hands and reminiscing.

Occasional gifts at unexpected times can also enhance her feeling of value to you. Even men who may not be able to afford a dozen roses can get the same message across

Hard to Say...

with a single rose (or carnation). If you can't afford a box of fancy chocolates, a favorite candy bar with a paper ribbon will send the same message. Almost as good as saying "I love you" with your lips is doing so in writing. Whether you purchase a card which expresses your feelings, or make your own love note, your thoughtfulness will be appreciated.

Since women are usually highly "relational" beings, they cannot imagine their husbands failing to remember special occasions, such as her birthday or your anniversary. These and other special events can be used by the wise husband to let her know just how special she is to him.

Oh, yes! There's one more idea you probably won't think of if I don't bring it up. You can tell your wife how important she is by doing some domestic chore which she usually must do. Doing the supper dishes or watching the children so she can go shopping with a friend is a way of telling her that she is important to you.

Study & Apply

1 Cor. 13:4-8a

Here we have a list of the characteristics of true love. Try applying all of these in your efforts to show love to your wife.

Meditate on your own behavior toward your wife. Does your attitude and action reflect true love?

Practical Suggestions

- ✓ *The next time your wife does something which you don't understand, try putting yourself in her place.*
 - ✓ *Use kindness when you have a disagreement with your wife. Give her the benefit of the doubt.*
 - ✓ *Say and do things which praise and elevate her instead of yourself.*
 - ✓ *Show your love for her by not being easily provoked at her.*
 - ✓ *Say to her, "I love you." Make sure she knows that your love is the kind that will never fail.*
-

Experience the Power of Pentecost'

By DAN RICHARDSON

Recently I observed the above statement on a sign for an area denominational church. It got me to thinking about its possible meaning. While I will not presume to know what this denomination intends (I have not yet asked), I do know we can study the scriptures to find out what happened on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2).

Pentecost is an annual Jewish feast observed fifty days after Passover. The day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, has special meaning to Christians because it marks the beginning of several things. In fact, the apostle Peter referred to it as "the beginning" (Ac. 11:15). It marked when the baptism of the Holy Spirit first occurred (Ac. 2:1-4). The beginning of the preaching of the gospel of Christ was on that day (vs. 22-26). The beginning of gospel obedience and the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ occurred that day (vs. 37-38, 40-41). The beginning of the church (or kingdom) of Christ transpired on that day (vs. 47; Mk. 9:1).

But how or in what degree can we "experience" the power of Pentecost today? And, what "power" does one have in mind by this statement? If one has in mind the baptism of the Holy Spirit (vs. 1-4), let the careful student of scripture note that this was a *promise* of Jesus to His apostles, not a command to be obeyed either then or now.

In Acts 2 the apostles were the *only* recipients of Holy Spirit baptism. The immediate context bears this out (note Ac. 1:26; 2:7, 14, 42-43). It was in fulfillment to what Jesus promised His apostles (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). The baptism of the Holy Spirit here marked the beginning of the Holy

Spirit's work in revelation—to give man the complete and final revelation of God in Jesus Christ. One other instance of Holy Spirit baptism is recorded in Acts 10. This was to show God's acceptance of the Gentiles in His eternal scheme of redemption.

These two incidents are the only recorded occasions where Holy Spirit baptism was given, and in both cases it did not save the sinner. Both audiences were commanded to put on their Lord in water baptism—the one baptism referred to in Ephesians 4:4. It was for the remission of sins (Ac. 2:38). Holy Spirit baptism was not given to save the sinner; the gospel of Christ is *the power* for that (Rom. 1:16).

God used miracles in the beginning to reveal and confirm His word of truth (Mk. 16:18,20; Heb. 2:3-4). However, when the truth was "once for all delivered" (Jude 3), the miracles of the first century forever ceased because they had accomplished their purpose of revelation and confirmation of God's word (1 Cor. 13:8-10). There are no miracles worked today or else they would be demonstrated. Those who look for Holy Spirit baptism today need to give careful consideration to the above scriptures.

There is "power" that does have universal application today found in Acts 2—the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; Jas. 1:18,22; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). The salvation of those Jews on Pentecost, as well as Cornelius' house (Ac. 10) was because they heard the gospel and obeyed it (cf. Ac. 10:35, 47-48). *This* is what must be accomplished today. *This* is what must be obeyed!

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Link On These Things

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