



# THINK

## ON THESE THINGS

*Philippians 4:8*

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# Judging the Judgmental

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Everyone, no matter how “open,” “ecumenical,” or “tolerant” must eventually admit that something, sometime is wrong. With some people today, in order to find this “something wrong” we have to go to gross extremes. They see gray areas and exceptions to the rule to justify, in their minds, ignoring (or at least casting a doubt on) what the Lord has revealed to be sinful. Yet, eventually, something distasteful enough, exceptionally violating, is found so that even the most giving and broad-minded must say, “Enough! That’s wrong!”

You will be disappointed if you think you can easily find something that is always considered wrong with those who practice this new tolerance in religion. Since feeling, social acceptance, and easy applicability have become the standard, God’s word has, in reality, little relevance in the thinking of many. The works of the flesh of Galatians 5 have become the accepted plots of favorite media entertainment rather than the vices of those who “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:21). But eventually, you will find something “...shameful even to speak of...” (Eph. 5:12) and they will have to confess it is evil.

Here is my point. Everyone believes something is wrong. Why, then, are Christians condemned as being judgmental when they show from God’s word that other things are also wrong? In fact, it seems that the only ones who can be safely condemned and ostracized in our society are those who confess that God’s word is the true applicable standard for all.

### *Logical Inconsistency*

There is a glaring inconsistency in society when those seen as judgmental are judged. Today those thought to condemn others are

condemned. You will be told you are wrong for saying others are wrong. Recently I was told, “You can believe and do whatever you want, but it’s wrong to try to talk to me about it!” They were telling someone that you can’t tell someone anything! Strange logic!

### *Difference in Standard*

Although everyone accepts something as wrong, the differences that exist between people are not just in the things that are or are not accepted. Since we all accept that there is a wrong out there we are all in the same boat—we are just using different paddles. The standard—how we get to what is right or wrong—often radically varies between people. Jesus boiled it down to just two possibilities: “from heaven or from men?” (Matt. 21:25).

Popular self-help and self exploration techniques send us on a search for answers (standards) from within ourselves. Within each of us are ideas, plans, emotions, abilities, desires, and aspirations. Our own inner man offers the delicious promise of self-fulfillment and even further blinds our already damaged objectivity about ourselves. What the inner man produces is “from men.” Unfortunately, objectivity doesn’t always reign outside of ourselves either. Our world is populated with people whose actions are those of their inner man. When we choose to follow a crowd, culture, or creed we elect a standard “from men.”

With so many different people it is not surprising that there are so many different standards of right and wrong “from men.” This is why it is imperative that we base our judgment on something entirely objective, something entirely outside of man. Man struggles with this because he has not fully accepted that God is God and he is not. When life becomes too real, walking by faith in

God’s way is often questioned, doubted, and then forsaken. No matter how right, convenient, or necessary it may seem at the time, when we quit following God and His word we turn from the standard “from heaven” to that “from men.”

### *Who is Right?*

Once self becomes the rule then no one can be more right or wrong than anyone else—no matter what they do. This is why Christians are accused of being judgmental and intolerant. The world thinks that what we say and do is of self. Even many of the religious world charge, “That’s just your interpretation”—in other words, a product of our inner man. The new tolerance goes beyond open-minded consideration of differences to insistence that nothing and no one is wrong. How could anyone be wrong when my self-developed rule can be no better than yours?

Christians already know who is right. God is right. “... the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous all together” (Psa. 19:9). Determining what is right then simply becomes a matter of searching the mind of God rather than our own. God’s Spirit has revealed His mind to us in the scriptures so that our judgments can be His judgments (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

We lose the battle against the new tolerance when we fail to point out that our perceived intolerance is not being tolerated. Christians often surrender arguments without identifying the fallible, self-serving, and constantly changing standard that the world uses. If we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, if we present it as “the power of God to salvation to every one who believes...” (Rom. 1:16), when the world attempts to judge us they will in reality judge God.

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# Preacher Support and Accountability

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Paul warned Timothy that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). He warned that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (vs. 9). “Some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (vs. 10).

A case in point is the harm we have done with our American dollars in the realm of foreign evangelism. I believe that most have the best of intentions in wanting to support native preachers in third world countries. To us it is inconceivable that men could

comfortably live on \$200 per month. Yet, this is so in some parts of the world. For many churches it is no problem to double that and still feel like they are underpaying these men. However, if we are effectively making preachers “filthy rich” through our generosity, then we are not doing them or their work any favors.

Some preachers in foreign lands have learned how to milk the American cash cow. They write often of the poverty in their land. They become self-appointed clearing-houses for preacher support and/or benevolence. They may ask for amounts of money (\$50 a month) that are minuscule by American standards and yet may be getting rich by their native standards as they tap into the

resources of numerous churches with very little accountability regarding how much they are actually receiving.

I do not write this to discourage American money going overseas for legitimate support but to warn that we do not do the cause of Christ any favors by making native people rich by local standards. If your average Pentecostal preacher in Bonga Wonga is living on the median income of \$150 per month and word gets around that “Church of Christ” preachers are getting \$200 per month, should we be surprised at the multitude of “conversions”?

Similarly, we are sometimes foolish with our money in benevolence. It is not a big problem for a preacher to raise thousands of dollars to take to needy saints, but if the distribution is not done discreetly and according to the biblical pattern it can cause great problems. It is not easy for an American to distribute hundreds of thousands of dollars in a two-week trip to Twangzania. His method ends up being only slightly better than dropping it from the airplane. He hands it over to local preachers to distribute as they see fit! No wonder Twangzanians encourage American preachers to notch their Bibles with frequent evangelistic trips. No wonder their reports always glow with numerous conversions. It doesn’t take long to figure out that if you hear, believe, repent, confess, and are baptized that you not only receive the remission of sins, but the gift of American dollars.

Pardon the cynicism, but there has to be a better way! There is. It begins with “providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21). Accountability before men is imperative to insure that true needs are met and that good, faithful men are supported adequately but not opulently. Any man, American, or otherwise, who will not faithfully disclose what he has received from other churches is allowing either his pride or shame to interfere with being honorable.

Brethren, let us continue to be generous with our wealth. Anyone who knows me or my extended family knows that foreign evangelism is important to us. We want to see it grow. In no way am I suggesting that fewer American dollars should go overseas. However, I am suggesting that some methods employed by brethren are at best inexpedient and at worst unscriptural and dishonorable. For some, the easy way to handle this problem will be to shut off all money overseas. That extreme is unnecessary. While good stewardship always requires more work, that extra effort builds trust and confidence and accomplishes

## Dr. Spock & Dr. Phil GOD

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

During the decade of the 60s when our children were born, almost every new mother had her own copy of a book by Dr. Benjamin Spock. Whenever a question arose about the health and well-being of children he was the one to turn to. Regarding medical advice, his was as good—and perhaps better—than most.

However, in his later years he lent his considerable influence to the crusade against spanking children as a means of discipline. Many parents, accustomed to following his advice in other matters, “swallowed” his psychology-based doctrine, rejecting the clear instruction of God’s word regarding discipline.

Today another advice-giving “doctor” has emerged on the scene. Phillip McGraw, PhD, better known as “Dr. Phil,” is not a medical doctor, and his advice is not strictly about the care of children, but deals with all kinds of relationship issues.

Dr. Phil gained popularity as a weekly guest on the Oprah Winfrey TV show. His straight-talking style along with his wit and cordial Texan drawl made him an instant hit. As a result he now has his own immensely popular TV show.

I like Dr. Phil. So do a lot of other people. However, his advice, which happens to be right much of the time, is rooted in psychology rather than the word of God. The fact that he is so likable must not distract us from the rejecting his advice when it is not in compliance with the Bible.

Take, for example, the issue of spanking children. Though he does not come across as adamant as some, he clearly does not

approve of spanking. He devoted an entire show to the issue and questioned the effectiveness of the practice. In response to a couple who believed and practiced spanking of their unruly child, he said, “If it works so well, why are you here?” In other words, because the child still was somewhat difficult and disruptive, he concluded that their spankings were not effective. I doubt that he would apply that same test to parents who sit down with their child and tell him how much his behavior “disappoints” them. Or will he conclude that “time outs” are ineffective because the child continues to misbehave?

I do not advocate spanking because it’s what my parents did to me, or even because my wife and I used that method of correction on our children. I advocate it because our Creator has revealed in His word that it is what is best for the child, the home and society. The Holy Spirit inspired one to write, “we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect” (Heb. 12:9). He went on to note that “no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous” (vs. 12). I don’t get the impression that the “grievous” chastening was limited to “time out” and talk.

It is distressing to see some Christians taking worldly advice over the truth of God’s word. They’ve read: “He who spares his rod hates his son” (Prov. 13:34); “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15); “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell” (Prov. 23:13-14). They’ve read these, but the question is, do they believe God, or Dr. Phil?

# The Importance of Togetherness

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

From the beginning of the church there was togetherness (Acts 2:42-47). Those who believed were together and had all things in common. Perhaps our abhorrence of communism has caused us to skim over these texts as irrelevant, but let us not confuse government-imposed sharing of the wealth with the voluntary spirit of brotherhood.

The Jerusalem church continued with one accord in the temple, and this togetherness even spilled over into house-to-house togetherness on a smaller scale. Brethren, for us to be an influence and encouragement to one another we need to spend time together.

Certainly in some churches the problems of sinful attitudes are so acute that some might question whether assembling is as valuable as I am making it out to be. The church in Corinth was coming together supposedly to eat the Lord's Supper, but their divisiveness and selfishness was making that impossible (1 Cor. 11:17-21). In light of the problem, it would seem that the easiest solution would have been to just have everyone stay home. However, despite the negativity associated with their assembly, the solution that Paul offers is not to quit coming together (or to break into two assemblies), but to wait for one another (vs. 33). The Lord's Supper is the only congregational fellowship meal authorized, and churches are supposed to take it together. Apparently Paul thought being together was important.

Assembling together is something that we are not supposed to neglect. It is an important forum in which to motivate one another to do what is right (Heb. 10:23-25). Think about those who were reading this letter in the first century. Most are agreed that the motive for the letter seems to be to encourage Jewish Christians to remain faithful despite the strong pressures to return to Judaism.

These were very likely persecuted people. Persecution may have been one of the main reasons that people were neglecting to assemble. Assemblies, groups, and multitudes are much more conspicuous. *Still*, they were admonished not to forsake this important time together. Is persecution the reason why so many neglect their assembling with the church today? If our persecuted brethren of the first century were told not to forsake this important time together, and to do it all the more often, what would our twenty-first century brethren be told?

Our comfortable affluence has us convinced that we don't really need to spend time together. We are self-sufficient and "have need of nothing." (Rev. 3:17). It is just another way in which we are deceived by riches and become unfruitful (Mk. 4:19).

Don't be so proud of your independence, and don't put your trust in your self-sufficiency but in the living God who is the giver of all good things. "Be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (even your time), that you may "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

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## Zeal for Christ in The Spirit of Christ

By **RICK LIGGIN**

"And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'" (Lk. 9:51-56).

In commenting on this text, G. Campbell Morgan made a profound observation; he said, "It is possible to be zealous for the honor of God in a spirit which puts us out of fellowship with God." (*The Gospel According To Luke*, p. 132). This statement seems to exactly describe the mistake of James and John on this occasion. Their deep sense of loyalty and respect for Jesus caused them to want to defend Him in the presence of those who did not share their respect.

Their loyalty, by itself, was not a bad thing. In fact, it was a good thing—and quite admirable. But the way in which they wanted to show their loyalty proved that they had not yet imbibed enough of the spirit of Christ. Their response was totally out of character with His life and (saving) mission. Instead of trying to save the enemies of Jesus, James and John wanted to kill them—with fire from heaven! Here was zeal, for sure, but zeal in a wrong spirit.

This same thing happens to us today when we find ourselves despising the enemies of God...hating the sinner, rather than just hat-

ing the sin. Oh, we pay lip service to the fact that we only hate the sin, but our attitude, at times, subtly suggests otherwise. We tend to look down our noses at those whose lives are messed up by sin, thinking, "He's just getting what he deserves." Our attitude, even as we try to tell him about his need to repent, is, "You're going to hell...and I'm kind of glad of it!"

This wrong spirit also manifests itself in the way some of us (especially in writing) defend truth against error taught by denominational preachers—or even by our own brethren. I find myself, at times, in agreement with the point of truth being defended, but completely opposed to and even embarrassed by the spirit manifested in the one defending the truth. Instead of trying to correct those in opposition to truth with kindness and gentleness, in genuine hope that God will "grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-26), we seem to be more interested in being quarrelsome and stirring up strife.

When such an attitude finds place in our hearts it proves that we still have a carnal spirit—despite our zeal for Christ. It proves that, despite our loyalty to Jesus, we still have not yet imbibed enough of His spirit. Such actions and attitudes are totally out of character with that of our Lord's. And that carnal spirit, though filled with a loyalty to Him, will cause us to be separated from God.

Shall we give up our loyalty to Christ and compromise the truth? Never! Should we continue to zealously defend Jesus? Absolutely! But let's make sure that our zeal is tempered by His godly spirit! Let's not be zealous for God in a way that puts us out of fellowship with Him. No one wins when that

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# Updating the Standard

By AL DIESTELKAMP

For years I've complained when people mispronounce the word cavalry. Instead of pronouncing it as it is spelled, they say "Calvary."

For most of my life I was able to go to the dictionary to prove how *incorrect* it was to say "here comes the Calvary." However, the editors of dictionaries change meanings and pronunciations to fit common usage. If a word is mispronounced often and long enough, they adapt the dictionary to the people who speak the language.

Such is the case with the word, "cavalry." I have an old dictionary which provides only one pronunciation, but my *new* dictionary offers "ka-vel-re, ÷ kal-ve-re" as correct. The explanatory notes say the ÷ symbol indicates "a pronunciation that occurs in educated speech but that is considered by some to be unacceptable."

Concern about such a trivial matter may seem strange, especially coming from one whose family can't even agree on how to pronounce our last name. I'm just thankful the Bible is a constant standard, not subject to editing.

# A Decision Worthy of Admiration

Though they have spent many years in fruitful gospel work in the Atlanta area, going into difficult fields for gospel work is not a foreign concept to Sewell Hall and his good wife.

In their younger years they worked in part of the United States where the church was numerically-challenged. Later, they labored for the Lord on foreign soil.

Now, in their "senior" years, they have accepted the challenge of working with the small group of Christians meeting in the Manhattan section of New York City.

There is a great need for the gospel to be offered in New York City and other large cities. These areas are usually neglected due to the high cost-of-living, but that should not deter us from trying taking the gospel to the masses who work and live there.

This decision, which could not have been an easy one to make, is one that deserves our admiration.

Brother and sister Hall, we salute you!  
—Al Diestelkamp

## Voluntary Partners

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We have been greatly blessed by the financial support of many of our readers. Never have we overtly solicited donations, but it is no secret that we could not continue without such help. This past quarter we received more than ever before. As a result, even with the annual mailing permit renewal fee, the higher postage rates and annual fees for the web site, we are assured of enough money to pay the costs of two issues. Thank you, so much, for the many kind words of support we receive, as well as the donations!

## www.thinkonthesethings.com

Yes, we have a new address for the *Think* web site. The old one was cumbersome and difficult to remember. Even I hadn't committed it to memory. We have recently purchased the domain name thinkonthesethings.com and, thanks to Matt Hennecke, it is up and running. This is not an attempt to mail out less of the printed copies. However, it does make it easier for those who want to reprint articles in church bulletins or other publications without having to retype them, and there are some who enjoy Matt's colorful (and sometimes animated) illustrations that are not possible in the paper edition.

Please take note that I have a new e-mail address (al@thinkonthesethings.com). My AOL address is still active for a time, but will eventually be eliminated.  
—Al Diestelkamp

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