

Slug Eaters

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

I read an article reporting that scientists are trying to design small robots that can be fueled by digesting slugs. The hope is that eventually self-sufficient machines can be developed which refuel themselves by finding and digesting slugs. I was fascinated by what science sees as almost insurmountable hurdles in making a machine that can turn slugs into fuel (not to mention the artificial intelligence necessary to do things like find slugs and know what to do with them).

What actually drew my attention to slug digesting machines was the protests scientists are facing which challenge this research. There are a number of people who believe technology of this sort is dangerous. They believe if machines are given any form of autonomy, any ability to decide or act without human control, they'll rebel—or worse, take over.

Man clearly sees machines as his creation. They are the fruit of his creative mind and his physical labor. From the very start they were made to serve man and his interests. It is a ludicrous, yet daunting, thought that machines would someday “think” they were the master and man their servant. Anyone who thinks all of this is too far fetched need only wonder who is serving whom when a car won't start, a computer won't boot, a VCR won't stop flashing 12:00, or an automated phone system refuses to cooperate.

This picture rings all too familiar in another realm. Man is God's creation, the fruit of His creative mind and His labor. God made man for His glory (Isa. 43:7). Man was created to do the will of God, His commands were intended to be man's programming (Ecc. 12:13). But unlike a mere machine, God wired us with the ability to think and choose. This ability opens unlimited opportunities of communion with God, yet there is always the threat of rebellion—or worse, attempts to take over.

Some see the complexity of man and the incredible abilities he has been given and praise man (humanism). But the psalmist had it right, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa. 139:14). All that man is and has is ultimately from God and we express this when we use all we are and have to His praise. In the end, machines won't take over, but neither will man. How silly of us to get a belly full of slugs and then in our arrogance forget Who made us and why!

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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A Tough Command

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Throughout modern times, the subject of congregational corrective discipline has been a source of quiet controversy among brethren. I say, “quiet” because it is an issue that has not generally produced outright division, and those with differing convictions usually find ways to work together. Perhaps this is how it should be, but it should not be so quiet that we do not pursue the truth on the topic.

While we might rejoice that this has not become a divisive issue among us, there is a downside. Many Christians have not been taught what the Bible teaches on the matter and have never been part of a congregation which has used corrective discipline in an effort to bring people to repentance. Then because of the mobility of our society, Christians who move away from their “home” congregation are totally unprepared when brethren in their new surroundings have to withdraw themselves from the unfaithful.

Most Christians will understand that there is the need for corrective discipline when a brother or sister is engaged in unrepentant immorality. The controversy comes when morally upright people who at one time put on Christ, have allowed the “cares of this world” (Matt. 13:22) to draw them away from the Lord. What is our responsibility in such cases?

One of the most popular defenses offered by those who do not use corrective discipline on such people is that “you can't withdraw from someone who has withdrawn from you.” That sounds logical. However, we do not base our faith on human logic! Human logic, at best, is flawed. If my logical mind tells me one thing and God's word another, I have to assume that there's something wrong with my logic.

The apostle Paul clearly gives the command to “withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6). If failure to worship and work with other Christians is not “disorderly,” I don't know what is. Those who refuse to obey this command regarding those who have quit attending worship sometimes justify their inaction by pointing out that the withdrawal was to be from those “among you” (v.11).

There is more than one way for a person to be “among” us. When a Christian becomes a part of a local body of believers he is “among” us in a working relationship. This is not only in our assemblies, but also in our efforts together to be an influence to people in our community. Often when one just quits attending he will still tell others that he is a Christian and a member of the congregation.

It's also true that many who become unfaithful are closely related to, or maintain social relations with, others within the congregation. It amazes me how many Christians, without qualms, “eat, drink and be merry” with brothers and sisters who are clearly walking disorderly.

Even among those who, “ought to be teachers” (Heb. 5:12) and, in many cases *are* teaching and preaching, we see many who are unwilling to withdraw themselves from family members and friends who are unfaithful to the Lord. Not only do they continue their social relationships, but sometimes they “think it strange” that other faithful Christians cannot conscientiously join them.

It's never pleasant to have to withdraw from any brother or sister in Christ. I know of no one who enjoys the process. However, to fail to do so places us in the unenviable position of disobeying a direct command from an inspired apostle of Christ.

Preparing the Next Generation to Lead

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

We've all heard the term "generation gap." It is a gap of ignorance resulting in the inability of those in one generation to appreciate or respect the thinking of those in another generation. While the older generation may bemoan the disrespectful attitudes of the younger generation, the size of the gap is largely determined by the older generation's efforts to train and prepare the next generation. Negligence will result in generation chasms, while diligence will produce generation lines.

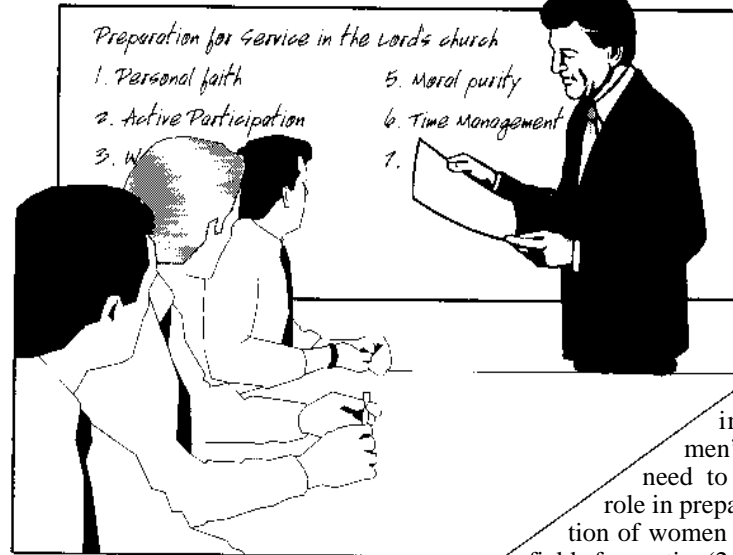
It is impressive when we read Joshua's bold proclamation, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). As a leader, Joshua spoke for his house and, likewise, influenced a nation. However, far more goes into that statement than inscribing it on a plaque and hanging it in your house. That statement is the culmination of years of preparation and leadership.

When Moses died Israel needed a leader, and God gave them Joshua. The next generation always needs leaders. Leaders are not born; they are made; they are grown; they are prepared. We need spiritual leaders. We need them today and we'll need them tomorrow. Whether there will be leaders tomorrow depends largely on what preparation is made today.

The Moses/Joshua relationship reveals some key components to the preparation and training of future leaders. Moses gave Joshua responsibility in leading the armies of Israel against Amalek (Ex. 17:8-14). With this responsibility Moses also gave Joshua support and encouragement. This is critical to the formation of good leaders. Moses shared his knowledge and wisdom with Joshua and imparted to Joshua his authority (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 34:9). Moses spent time with Joshua (Ex. 24:12,13; 33:7-11). Joshua was Moses' servant and was constantly at Moses' tent (Ex. 33:7-11). The older was clearly spending time with the younger.

We see the same pattern in the apostle Paul's efforts to train and prepare the younger evangelists Timothy and Titus. Paul spent a great deal of time with these younger men. He likewise imparted to them what knowledge and wisdom he had and gave them a pattern of sound words to hold onto (2 Tim. 1:13). Paul encouraged and supported these young men in their work as teachers (1 Tim. 6:11-14). Paul also gave them responsibilities (1 Tim. 4:6,11-16). We would do well to follow the examples of Moses and Paul in preparing leaders.

Preparation for leadership demands that the generations spend time together. It has become vogue for there to be a separation of



the young from the old. Youth ministries are popular in modern churches, but these programs accentuate generation gaps rather than bridge them. Churches have only increased the generation gap with their contemporary vs. traditional worship services. Guess which service is generally preferred by each age group! The segregation of young and old undermines the purpose and importance of assembling together (Heb. 10:23-25). Joshua, Timothy, and Titus were not prepared for their roles by hanging out with people their own age but by sitting at the feet of the older generation. The question for us is, "Is either generation interested in putting forth the effort necessary to spend time together?"

Preparation for leadership demands that the older generation share with the younger generation. This is called training, and the primary forum for this is the home (Eph. 6:4; Dt. 6:6-9), not churches. Certainly, under the broad mandate of spreading the gospel and upholding truth, a church has the liberty to support the teaching of children, but that should be viewed as a supplement and not the sole sustenance of the next generation's training. Our failure to train the next generation has not been the failure of churches, but the failure of families. Unfortunately, modern families do not spend enough time together and are often dysfunctional due to divorce and other immoral and carnal behaviors that emphasize selfishness rather than the selflessness that produces good leaders.

Titus was left in the lazy Cretan culture to set in order the things that were lacking (Titus 1:5). There was more lacking than just elders, but they are first mentioned because of their importance in setting other things in order through their leadership. Even churches that have elders need to be preparing the next generation to lead. Toward the goal of setting things in order, Titus was to

prepare the next generation to lead. He wanted the older women to train the younger women (2:4). We need women leaders, too! The women's domain is different from, but no less important than, the men's role. Older women need to take seriously their role in preparing the next generation of women to be leaders in their field of expertise (2:4,5). Our culture does

not encourage this sound training, and our families and churches are suffering for it. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," was a fitting acknowledgment of the priceless role of motherhood in training the next generation. Who is rocking the cradles these days, and do we want them ruling the world? Without women who will lead in their realm, there are no elders, and there is no future generation of spiritual leaders.

Preparation for leadership demands that all generations support and encourage one another. Everybody needs encouragement (Rom. 12:9-18)! Children need their parents to encourage them. Parents need the older generation to encourage them. Churches need elders who will encourage them. Even leaders need encouragement (Heb. 13:17).

Preparation for leadership demands that we give responsibility. We don't first make someone a leader and only then give them responsibility. Responsibility makes leaders. Deacons were first to be proved (1 Tim. 3:10,11). In other words, they have been given responsibilities and have proven themselves first. Then, and only then, are they appointed as deacons. If we do not give people the opportunity to exercise themselves spiritually, they will not develop into effective teachers and leaders, and we will be left with weak and immature brethren who can only handle milk and not meat (Heb. 5:12-14).

The older generation must be willing to provide these things, and the younger generation must be willing to receive them. If so, there will be no insurmountable generation gap but, instead, a close partnership in the never-ending but rewarding task of growing in Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

Are you doing your part?

Are you helping to prepare the next generation to do theirs?

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FOLLOWING JESUS

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

The term “Christian” is used in the Bible to describe one who follows Christ. We often stress the need to follow Jesus without fully identifying the way in which He intended us to follow Him.

At first we are tempted to say, “Following is following—simply do what He did.” This oversimplification has opened doors to apparent inconsistencies over things like the Sabbath, Jewish feasts, circumcision, and miraculous abilities—all of which Jesus participated in, but Christians do not.

Following as Disciples

“And the disciples were called Christians...” (Acts 11:26). Christians are followers of Jesus in the sense that they are disciples. Disciples are learners or pupils of a teacher. Vine’s says, “A disciple was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher.” Therefore we are Christians—followers of Christ—because we do what He has taught us, His disciples, to do—not because we do every act He ever did.

Following What Jesus Said

Jesus sent His apostles into all the world to “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Learning and doing what Jesus has commanded is central to becoming and remaining a true disciple. “...If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (Jn. 8:31).

As disciples, following Jesus must focus on what Jesus taught (and what He caused His apostles and prophets to teach). As students of the Master Teacher we spend our lives trying to understand and apply His revealed will to our lives.

Following What Jesus Meant

The challenge of disciples is not that of simple memorization of Bible texts. True disciples are interested in what was originally meant by the Teacher. So disciples study the Scriptures for content and meaning. They have to take into consideration things like the original meaning of words, context, and figures of speech.

A superficial approach to following what Jesus said will have His disciples doing things like poking out their eyes and washing each other’s feet. The failure to perceive what Jesus meant when He taught is a failure to be His disciple. One cannot do what Jesus said if one does not understand what He meant.

Following “My” Jesus

Many people today have formed a non-Biblical concept they have developed about Jesus rather than following what Jesus Himself, the Teacher (Jn. 20:16), revealed for His disciples. They say, “The Jesus I believe in...,” or “My Jesus...,” but then go on to attribute to Him words He never spoke, actions He never approved, and doctrines He never taught. They discount, ignore or twist anything from or about Christ that they don’t like. They recreate Him to fit their own desires, perceived needs, and culture.

How is it possible that “doctrine” (that which is taught) has become separated in the minds of many from both the Teacher and the student (disciple)? Unfortunately, many will continue to see themselves as students (disciples) without studying, following a teacher who has no teaching (doctrine). Jesus Himself said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (Jn. 8:31).

Need we ask, “What if we don’t?”

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HAVING A FAMILY FOCUS

By RICK LIGGIN

In the beginning, when God initially made man, Adam was *alone*. Unlike the animals who all had mates, man was without a suitable companion. It was the Creator who said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). This statement affirms the fact that man, being a social creature, needs a companion—he needs relationships. And so, for this reason, God created the *family*. He created the woman so that the man and his wife, in marriage, could be a family—a family that could be expanded and enlarged by the addition of children.

Now, I want you to notice that God did not create a “buddy” for man to “hang out” with; He didn’t put Adam with a group of friends who weren’t really related to him. God put man in a closer relationship—one with a woman who could be bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23)! He put the man in a *family* relationship! This makes it clear that, as far as God is concerned, the most fundamental unit of all human relationships is “family.” Family is critical to the health and welfare of human beings! The fact is that people who, unfortunately, do not have a family are missing something of vital importance.

This may very well be one of the reasons why God organized the church to be like a *family*—not only because it is a great pattern for spiritual relationships—but also because the church can supply the need for family to those unfortunate Christians who no longer have a family.

What I am trying to get us to see is the *priority* of family! Family should have top priority over all human relationships! No, our family does not come before God! But our family does come before all other human relationships! Family is more important than our relationship with the neighbors, or

with our employers, or even with our friends! Family, next to God, must take top priority, and Christians who recognize this will have a *family* focus.

Sadly, we live in a fast-paced, hectic society that tends to send us all out in different directions away from each other—away from the family. Each individual within our families tends to have his own independent activities that take him away from the home. Far too often, instead of trying to find things to bring us together as a family, we find things that keep us apart. We take separate vacations and we enjoy separate recreation. Spouses (husbands mostly) want to stay away from home, and kids just want to “hang out” with friends. Most families spend more time apart than they do together. We don’t even want to sit together in church services.

Now, I guess all this, in some moderation, may be okay; but when it becomes the rule, rather than the exception, there’s got to be a problem. Parents, for example, have the heavy responsibility of raising their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). But how can this be done when our children are constantly away from us, being influenced by others—often, by the world! And let me tell you, if our kids are more comfortable being away from home—if they’d rather spend time away from the family than with the family—then something is wrong! And that something has to change! We need to figure out what’s so messed up and fix it, so that we can have the kind of families God wants us to have.

If we’re going to build better families, we need to develop a sharper family focus! We need to see the priority of family, focus on being a family, and start living like family. And if we’ll do just that...well, maybe then we will begin to have better homes. What do you think?

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Church Ads

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

At the risk of upsetting some editors, foundations, churches, elders and preachers, I am calling into question the long-standing practice of church ads in the various journals produced by brethren. Perhaps many of you will see this as petty, because \$100 per year is virtually nothing to you. However, I would like to hear the justification for a church to spend this token amount in such a way.

Let's not argue about whether or not it is scripturally authorized. I would like to understand its expediency. If churches were to just donate this amount to their favorite magazine, we would be having debates and taking sides over it. However, because the magazine supplies a little box with some local church information, it becomes scriptural advertising. What is it that we are advertising, brethren? Seriously!

Journals, magazines, etc. are generally the work of individuals. Other individuals may contribute articles, computer expertise, labor, funds, etc., but churches are not supposed to be sponsoring them. Again, it may be argued that it is not church sponsorship but the buying of an advertising service. Pardon my cynicism, but I think it is, in many cases, something else. A magazine may tout that its list of churches (sponsors) serves as a directory for Christians when they travel. That is basically nonsense. Few would want to consult their favorite journal when planning their travel because the "directory" is woefully incomplete.

What these little boxes at the back of a journal advertise are the churches, elderships, or preachers who, in general, support the editorial policy and/or stands on certain issues of that journal. You think not?

Since \$100 is virtually nothing to many of these congregations, and these churches think that money buys such valuable advertising, why then do these groups not advertise in *all* the journals so as to increase exposure in such an economical way? It is because those who appreciate the content and approach of one magazine want to support it, and they don't want to be seen as supporting that other magazine. How is this not potentially divisive and unhealthy as churches align themselves with "brotherhood publications?" With the same reasoning, a "brotherhood college" should sell bricks with the times of services of local churches on them and make a "brotherhood courtyard." At the annual lectureship people could wander the courtyard to determine what churches to worship with on the way home!

Just as "brotherhood publications" would rightly criticize colleges for soliciting funds from churches, so those same publications should quit soliciting funds from churches (Rom. 2:1-3). Calling it advertising is simply salve for consciences. It is a practice that should stop for appearance's sake, if for no other reason (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:21).

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New Personal Evangelism Brochure

For You Friend, Because I Care is the title of a new tri-fold brochure written by Andy Diestelkamp that is intended for use in personal evangelism.

The brochure is designed to be used by Christians to encourage personal friends to enter into a study of God's word. At the end of the message there is a space available for

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Domestic Postage (permit)	402.80
Foreign Postage & Bundles	43.57
Return Postage (23)	8.51
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 539.88
Funds Available for past issue	1,382.80
Surplus	\$ 842.92

Donations (as of 2/20):

Gwen Ford, FL	\$ 30.00
Anonymous, FL	50.00
Timothy & Conny Calvert, AR	75.00
Keith & Debbie Storment, OH	10.00
William & Audrey Dehner, KY	120.00
Philip & Melanie Cavender, TN	100.00
Robert & Verna Leigh, IL	30.00
Anonymous, TN	50.00
Anonymous, MO	50.00
Anonymous, WI	55.00
Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	50.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 620.00
Surplus from past issue	842.92
Funds for this issue	\$1,462.92

In the past when donations exceeded our immediate needs, providing a surplus for future issues of this publication, donations dropped off significantly. That was not the case this time, and the generosity of many Christians has provided funds which will pay for this issue (expected to be approximately \$540) and leave a surplus more than sufficient to pay for the next issue. We thank all of our voluntary partners, past and present, for your help.

personalizing it. An image of the brochure and the text may be seen by visiting our website (www.thinkonthesethings.com).

Also on the website is information about the following publications:

- *We Are Simply Christians*
- *Is Your Preacher Telling You the Truth?*
- *A Brother At Our Door*

THINK

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