



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Bulging Treasuries

By AL DIESTELKAMP

According to financial reports that are tacked up on bulletin boards of church buildings, it appears that there is a growing number of congregations which have tens of thousands of dollars sitting in bank accounts, with no specific need for which they are saving.

I realize that there are needs, such as construction costs, for which congregations must build up large amounts of money. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm referring to congregations who have an adequate meetinghouse, are supporting their preacher adequately and meeting all their local needs with money to spare.

When questioned about the large treasury, sometimes the excuse is something along the line of, "We never know when we'll have a need for a large sum of money—the heating system may go out." If the furnace is old and giving signs of trouble it would be prudent to set aside some for that purpose, but if it is pessimism this smacks more of a lack of faith. Who knows, the Lord may come before the furnace goes out? In the meantime there are preachers all over the world, working in places where the local church cannot fully support them, who are struggling to raise and keep support. This ought not to be.

Another attitude that may be contributing to inflated treasuries is expressed by some who say, "We need to spend more money locally." Now, if they mean that they need to be more aggressive in evangelizing their community, I can't fault them. However, this too often translates into simply providing more creature comforts or improvements designed to impress the world.

The apostle Paul, when urging well-off brethren to respond to benevolent needs of other congregations, said, "For I do not

mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack'" (2 Cor. 8:12-15).

Now, before anyone comes unglued because I used a "benevolence" situation to make a point about evangelism, I am only suggesting that we would do well to have a similar *attitude* toward our brethren in other places.

Always keep in mind that it is not the purpose of the church to *save* money. The reason Christians are to give to the Lord is for the church to *use* the money. If there is no financial need, there is no reason for a collection or a treasury. Dare anyone say there is no need? There may be no need (or little need) locally, but "lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (Jn. 4:34).

We are in a spiritual war along with brethren from all over the world. We are on the same side. Let us not be "French-like" by allowing our "allies" to go it alone.

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall

By KARL DIESTELKAMP

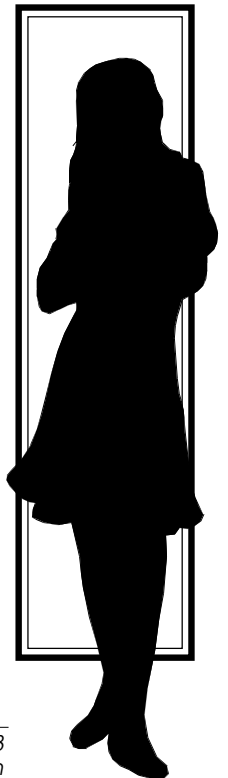
In almost every discussion of modesty (1 Tim. 2:9,10), and what is appropriate or inappropriate apparel, someone seems to want a specific "rule" by which to measure what is and is not modest. I suggest a very simple, *one minute test*, that all can take, that will be truly helpful if we will be honest with ourselves.

Simply stand in front of a full-length mirror and take an objective look at yourself in your clothing. Turn sideways and around—raising your arms as you do so. Now lean toward the mirror, and then sit in a chair several feet in front of the mirror and observe.

What you see is what everyone else also sees! Do the words "form-fitting," "revealing" or "skin" come to mind?

Is what *you see* and what you are "showing" compatible with that which is "becoming" to one "professing godliness"?

It might be helpful for some fathers and mothers to stand in front of the mirror with their children when they take the test. And, it won't do any good if anyone "...is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away and *immediately forgets* what kind of man he was" (Jas. 1:23,24).



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This Way to Sodom

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Recent events have shown that America is fertile ground for the homosexual movement. The vocal nature of this group and the apparent acceptance of it by society in general may even tempt Christians to pause to wonder if they should be less dogmatic about this sin. But we ought to be pausing to see the real reasons for modern acceptance of this sin!

Ignorance. It is hard to claim unintentional ignorance of the error of homosexuality. Romans 1:26 calls homosexuality “against nature”—in other words, simple anatomy shows that the human body is heterosexual, not homosexual. In spite of this, “...women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful...” (Rom. 1:26-27).

This is not to say everyone thinks homosexuality is wrong. Paul goes on to say that there are those who do not “retain God in their knowledge” and therefore develop a “debased mind”—wrong seems right when your thinking is perverted.

Ignorance of God’s word allows religious people to defend sins like homosexuality. The Scriptures themselves are painfully clear. According to Romans, homosexuality is “unclean,” it dishonors one’s body, is a result of “vile passions,” is against nature, “shameful,” and “error” (Rom. 1:24-27). Paul also wrote that “homosexuals” and “sodomites” will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Homosexuality has always been a violation of God’s law (example: Lev. 20:13), with God’s destruction of the city of Sodom standing as a monument to His displeasure of this sin (Gen. 19; 2 Pet. 2:6). The problem is not that the Scriptures are unclear. The problem is ignorance of Scripture—whether unintentional or intentional.

New Tolerance. The redefinition of tolerance to mean acceptance and agreement is the driving force behind current denominational ecumenical and unification movements. The only guiding standard is that of being true to what you want or believe, and the only thing condemned is condemnation of others. The potential accusation of being closed minded or judgmental has kept many denominational mouths from teaching what they know to be the truth about homosexuality. Even some who oppose homosexuality have stood silent as their denomination embraced it. The reasons for this vary from attempts to keep position, members and money, to feelings that the tide cannot be changed by a few lonely voices.

Tolerance which accepts sin is no longer tolerance—it is sin! The “wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable...” (Jas. 3:17). It is not peace at the cost of purity. In his rejection of homosexuality in Romans, Paul also strongly condemned those who “approve of those” who practice such sins (1:32). It’s time for God’s people to pay less attention to being politically correct and more attention to speaking God’s word!

Evolutionary Thinking. If we accept that man is an animal—differentiated from other animals only by anatomy and the fortuitous wiring of our brains—then how can the following of physical animal passions be wrong? This is the homosexual argument that one is born a homosexual. Some have even gone so far as to say God made them “this way.”

The Genesis account of creation reveals two important facts pertaining to this study. First, man is not simply an animal. Man was created with a spiritual side—“in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26)—and with this comes the ability to know right from wrong. Man has the ability and responsibility to bring his passions into subjection to the will of God

(Rom. 6:12). Why is it that our society allows and approves of man acting like an animal sexually, but in any other area of life to act like an animal is wrong and punished? Second, God made mankind “male and female” with sexual relations to occur only between a man and woman, and that only within lawful marriage (Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:18-24; 4:1). This is how God made man and woman and how He makes them today!

Hedonism. The pursuit of pleasure is a very dark path. Pay attention to media advertisements and you will learn that the world is offering everything the pleasure seeker could desire. “Try it you’ll like it,” “If it feels good do it,” and, “Don’t knock it ‘till you’ve tried it” are mottos that have sent people looking for gratification in areas that Paul says are even a shame to speak of (Eph. 5:12). Making pleasure god will lead to perversity, extremes, and extreme perversity as new thrills and experiences are sought. Until our treasure is in heaven, the false promises and artificial glitter of the world will appear enticing no matter how perverted it may be (Matt. 6:20).

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Feeding Sparrows



By AL DIESTELKAMP

Some time back my wife and I bought a bird-feeder that was specially designed to attract cardinals. I remember it even had a tag that made that claim. We attached it to our deck, filled it with the kind of birdseed that is formulated to the desire of the colorful birds and waited for results.

Time has passed and nary a redbird has appeared on our deck. What we have seen, are hundreds of sparrows. I’ve counted as many as ten on the feeder at one time with others waiting a few feet away for an opportunity to perch. I was somewhat disappointed until I realized, sparrows have to eat too. Just because they are not as attractive doesn’t mean they shouldn’t eat.

Then I began to think about how we sometimes are like that when it comes to preaching the gospel. We build a meetinghouse and hope some people much like ourselves (beautiful souls that we are) will show up to

be fed with God’s word. Seldom do they come. Instead, many times the ones who do show do not appear very “colorful” in our eyes. However, they need to be “fed” just as much as anyone else.

Then there are gospel preachers who have similar mind-sets regarding where they will preach. They look only among the “beautiful” churches where there are elders, fine buildings (with projection systems) and are self-supporting. No doubt, these churches need preachers, but so do “sparrow” congregations.

Sometimes I wonder if preachers who limit their options to larger, established congregations do so because they think too highly of themselves. They’re “too valuable” to squander their talents on behalf of so few.

If past experience is any indicator, I have already written more than enough to raise the ire of a few, so maybe it’s best that I end this and go check on the sparrows.

Perverting Jesus and Scripture

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

“Of making books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh” (Eccl. 12:12). The wise preacher was not condemning the writing and publishing of books or the value of study, but he was admonishing us not to lose our perspective of what is most important. “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13).

A couple of months ago an Associated Press article ran in several newspapers advertising another book that has been made. This book takes the position that Jesus of Nazareth both approved of and participated in homosexual activity. This is not an original idea, but it is one that is being heard with greater frequency now that our culture is becoming more tolerant of the practice of homosexuality.

People are always looking for ways to validate the choices they or their friends or family members have made. It should come as no surprise that the mindset that enables people to be more tolerant of behaviors, which the Scriptures bluntly describe as vile and shameful (Rom. 1:26,27), also enables them to revise history. Such twisting of the Scriptures by the advocates of homosexual practices reveals that their goal is not mere tolerance of their lifestyle. They are seeking acceptance and affirmation. They want their choice of sexual expression embraced as equal to the union of marriage.

In seeking to justify their choices, practicing homosexuals have typically ignored the scriptural references that condemn their behavior. Another author wrote, “The point is not really whether or not some passage in the Bible condemns homosexual acts; the point is that you cannot allow your moral and ethical decisions to be determined by the literature of a people whose culture and history are so far removed from your own. You must dare to be iconoclastic enough to say, ‘So what if the Bible does say it? Who cares?’” (Robert Williams, *Just As I Am*, Crown, 1992, p.42).

The cafeteria-style approach to the Scriptures, which allows people to pick and choose what they want and then ignore the rest, is convenient but not very consistent. The Episcopalians’ recent efforts to appoint a homosexual bishop makes one wonder if they ever bother to read what Paul had to say about that important position (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

It is one thing to ignore the Scriptures. It is quite another to “spin” them and turn Jesus into a practicing homosexual. To do this takes a perverse imagination. Positive references to strong, loving relationships between people of the same sex (Naomi and Ruth, David and Jonathan, Jesus and His apostles, etc.) are interpreted by a few as homosexual innuendoes. We have raised a shallow generation of people who equate love with sex, and now some of those people are trying their hand at biblical interpretation.

From a purely biological perspective it may seem irrelevant who copulates with whom. Indeed, since many learn from their youth that they are just highly-evolved animals, animal-like behavior should be expected. Still, people have “hang-ups” over things like “consent” and “love” that make it clear that there is more than a biological perspective to consider when it comes to human sexuality.

Just because one has an urge doesn’t mean that it is valid to act on it. Just because there is passion and strong desire doesn’t mean it is right. There are still laws against prostitution, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, and rape—for good reasons—and none of those reasons are biological. There are spiritual and moral perspectives that must take precedence over the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16).

The Scriptures plainly warn, “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). Paul writes, “Such were some of you.” Notice the past tense! What happened? They were washed, sanctified and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (vs. 11). It is ludicrous and blasphemous to suggest that Jesus ever approved or practiced anything in that list. Don’t be deceived!

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Read prior to the Lord's Supper

The Golgotha Address

By **DON McCUNE**

139 years ago we had a president who had witnessed the bloodiest battle in American history. He gave a speech to dedicate that battlefield to the honored dead who gave their lives there. His speech changed the course of the war and the country. We still read it regularly in our schools, in history classes and during times of distress like over the cleared site of the World Trade Center in honor of those that died in the 9/11 attack.

I have taken that speech and altered it to talk about our honored dead whom we commemorate this morning. I hope it will help us focus our minds on the Lord’s Supper and Christ’s sacrifice.

Fourscore centuries and many years ago our Father brought forth on this world a new creation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created saved. Now we are engaged in a great spiritual war, testing whether man so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of His sacrifice as a memorial for Him that gave His life that we might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this memorial. A brave Man, dead and living, who struggled here, has consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what He did here. It is for us the living to dedicate here the work, which He who fought here has thus far so nobly advanced. It is for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from this honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which He gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that this dead shall not have died in vain, that this kingdom under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and shall not perish from the earth.

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Vision for the future

TOWARD GREATER SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

By RICK LIGGIN

There is something quite refreshing about a *simple* person—and by “simple” I do not mean stupid; I mean, uncomplicated. It is especially refreshing to see a man of simple (uncomplicated) *faith*. A man of simple faith is *not* ignorant. His faith is based on solid, credible evidence. But he doesn’t argue with God, and he doesn’t argue about the obvious. When the evidence is laid out there for him, he simply believes—without doubting.

All true believers in Jesus ought to be people of simple faith. For such people, all their questions are already potentially answered; all they have to do is learn what Jesus thinks about the question, and then they know what they must think...and believe. That is simple faith!

But sometimes people misunderstand what we mean when we talk about *simple* faith. They seem to think that we are praising a lack of education and ability. And worse, they seem to think that, among Christians, it is somehow praiseworthy to be uneducated and lacking in ability—“After all, the apostles were even said to have been ‘uneducated and untrained’!” (Ac. 4:13).

But please, make no mistake about it: the apostle *were not* ignorant men! Sure, they didn’t have much formal education—as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned. They hadn’t attended any religious school, nor had they sat at the feet of some popular Jewish rabbi. But they were not ignorant of religious things, and they certainly were not untrained in spiritual matters. In fact, they had been trained by the greatest teacher who has ever lived; they had been trained by

Jesus Christ, and they were led (even inspired) by the Holy Spirit of God.

“So, what’s your point, Rick?” Well, my point is: we need to see that there is no special virtue in being *simple*—not if we mean by this that one is ignorant and uneducated. It’s not “okay” to be ignorant or uneducated in the Will of God! Sure, one doesn’t have to have much, if any, formal education to be a faithful disciple of Jesus! But that doesn’t mean we can be ignorant of God’s Will and uneducated in His Word.

We will do well to remember that it is the “untaught and unstable” (NASB), or the “ignorant and unstedfast” (ASV), who “distort” the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). There may be some good brothers in Christ who are genuinely limited in their knowledge of the Scriptures, and they may even be limited in their ability to learn what the Bible says. But none of us can ever be satisfied with our lack of education in the Word of God. I’m afraid that some of us may be using “simple” to disguise our own laziness.

No one is asked by God to do more than he has the ability to do. But when we have the ability to improve—to better educate ourselves in the Word of God—we *must* do it (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18)! If we want the Lord’s church to grow in the years yet to come, then we have to challenge ourselves... we have to stretch ourselves... we have to exercise ourselves—or else the church of tomorrow will be even weaker than the church of today. Vision for the future requires that we push ourselves towards greater spiritual education!

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Surplus	\$ 675.13

Donations (as of 8/14):

Anonymous, TN	\$ 50.00
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TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 100.00
Surplus from past issue	675.13
Funds for this issue	\$ 775.13

Our surplus has finally caught up with us, resulting in only two donations this quarter. We are thankful for these gifts. Our annual postal permit fee (\$150) will be due soon, as will the annual renewal fees for the website (\$90) so this issue is expected to cost \$780, which, without additional funds, would put us slightly back in the deficit column.

Church Website?

Having a website on the internet is a good tool for reaching people. Recently, we have had two visitors to our services in Sycamore, Illinois, who found us via the internet.

Matt Hennecke, who maintains the *Think* website, is offering a service to churches in creating and maintaining a very attractive web site. The cost is a fraction of what would be charged by companies which offer this service, and you can relax knowing that there will be no problem with embarrassing artwork or unscriptural wording. Go to sycamorechurch.com to see what he has done for us.

For more information contact Matt Hennecke <hennecke@elnet.com> or call (630) 584-7848.

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