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“Woe to those who call evil  
good, and good evil...” (Isa 5:20)

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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# Knowing You're Right

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Have you ever had anybody ask you, “How do you know you’re right?” The question can be a little unnerving! Have you ever asked anybody that question? While there are certainly things that are unknowable, does *everything* fall into the category of the unknown? When it comes to spiritual things, the importance of knowing with confidence becomes all the more important. Can you know what you believe is right? Can you know that you are right with God? *How* do you know?

Many people treat life as a role of the dice. They place all their bets on one number and hope for the best. Others dabble in a little of everything, figuring that their chances are greater of coming in contact with what is true and right if they diversify. While that may sound more reasonable, the question is *how* will they *know* that they have found the truth? Will it just feel right? What is the right feeling? How do they know?

The struggle to determine truth is nothing new. Jesus said, “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.” Pilate’s response was, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:37,38). Unfortunately, some professing Christians are sounding more like Pilate than like Jesus these days. For many, truth is virtually unknowable.

The purpose of scripture is to establish truth. Luke wrote so that Theophilus would *know the certainty* of those things which he had been instructed (Lk. 1:1-4). The apostle John wrote his gospel account so his readers might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 20:30,31). John wrote an epistle so that his readers might *know* they have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11-13). Paul affirmed that faith comes by hearing the word

of God (Rom. 10:17). From a scriptural perspective, there is no conflict between faith and knowledge.

Paul challenged the Christians in Corinth to examine themselves as to whether they were in the faith. They were to test themselves (2 Cor. 13:5). This testing cannot employ subjective personal opinion or experience. It must use the objective authority of God’s word.

John said as much when he clearly stated “by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3-5). This is not because keeping God’s commandments earns us anything. It does not. Obedience to God is not putting confidence in ourselves, but in the God whose word we are obeying. We know we know God, not because we are so good, perfect, or faithful, but because God is so good, perfect and faithful.

Of course, we must beware lest we think that knowledge is the end. Knowledge, by itself, is insufficient and may only lead to pride (1 Cor. 8:1-3). To know but not act will not save (Jas. 4:17). To know but not act in love is a waste of knowledge (1 Cor. 13:2).

Yet, these cautions about knowledge do not diminish the importance of knowing truth and keeping it. Indeed, Jesus made a willingness to keep His commandments an indicator of whether or not we truly love Him (Jn. 14:15,21). True discipleship is found in abiding in His word. The result of abiding in His Word is that we know the truth and are made free (Jn. 8:31,32). *How* do we know this? It has been revealed to us by God in His word.

Whenever this needed emphasis is given to truth and obedience, there will be some who assume that we are teaching salvation by personal perfection. Frankly, we sometimes come across this way. Yes, we have

been given complete and flawless revelation, but that does not mean that our understanding and/or application are perfect. Indeed we know that in the past our understanding and application have not been perfect (“For all have sinned... Rom. 3:23). How do we know we have not been perfect in the past? God’s Word informs us. Thus, “If we say that we have not sinned we make [God] a liar and His word is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:10).

If we can so readily acknowledge an imperfect past, then we should be able to concede an imperfect present (the past of the future). “For all have sinned [past tense] and fall [present tense] short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). If my personal fellowship with God is dependent upon my flawless understanding and application of God’s Word and my flawless recollection and repentance of every transgression of that word, then I am as doomed as those whose boast was in the law.

The emphasis upon knowing the word of God is not with the thought that we can be flawless. Hungering and thirsting to know and apply God’s word is the only appropriate response to God’s grace! Shall we continue in ignorance, apathy, and carelessness because God is so good? Certainly not (Rom. 6:1,15). Respect for the will of God and His grace motivates us to know, make application and repent (Rom. 2:4).

Let us, therefore, base our beliefs and practices on what we can know. It is time for those who claim to be disciples of He who came to bear witness of the truth to be a people who *know* the truth. The only way we can *know* that we are right with God is if we are hungering to hear the word, know the word and apply the word. By God’s grace He has revealed His word and counts faith in Him and His word as righteousness (Rom. 4:19-25). What a wonderful offer!

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# Speech Seasoned with Salt...and Pepper

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The apostle Paul wrote, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). I understand this to mean that our speech is not *only* to be truthful, but *also* tactful, so that it will be more palatable to the hearers.

Occasionally a small child will blurt out a truthful statement which will embarrass the hearers for it's lack of tact. The words we find excusable from a child may be offensive when coming from an adult.

The challenge facing Christians is to learn to speak the truth without unnecessarily offending people. How *do* we tell people who are fully convinced of their salvation that they are lost? The answer lies in training ourselves to speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, with kindness and compassion.

I believe, for the most part, Christians try to be truthful and tactful in their efforts to teach others. In fact, we may at times go overboard with the "salt" to the point that the hearers fail to "taste" the truth. If we are so tactful that it obscures the truth they need to learn, we have defeated our purpose.

Even though the primary application to Paul's instructions have to do with our speech



toward those who are not Christians, I would certainly think that we would want to also apply it to our conversations with fellow Christians. We should try to frame our speech with Christians in the least offensive way possible.

However, there comes a time when we may need a little "pepper" along with the "salt." Just because our speech is to be tactful, doesn't mean it must be bland. I'm confident that our Lord was careful that His speech was "with grace, seasoned with salt," but that doesn't mean that He never got "tough" with those who needed it. If you have doubts about that, all you have to do is read the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

Then there is the matter as to how we react to others when they disagree with us, suggesting we are wrong about some controversial issue. Are we too easily offended when one

takes issue with what we believe or practice? Hopefully, they will disagree without being unkind, but we should not automatically consider it as a personal attack when someone challenges our beliefs or practices.

I have seen long-time Christians become angry when they have been kindly questioned about what they consider a "settled" issue. This is especially true if it involves something that has long been practiced among brethren. It is almost like they are saying, "We've already completed the restoration of true Christianity." Let me say with as much "salt" as possible, that such an attitude smacks of arrogance and self-righteousness.

As uncomfortable as it is to consider that we could be wrong about something we've believed or practiced, we need to be open to further study to see whether we are truly doing all "in the name of the Lord" (Col. 3:17). It will do no good for us to get angry or allow our feelings to be hurt by someone who challenges us.

Getting back to our talking with those we believe are in error, let us make sure that in speaking "with grace, seasoned with salt," that we do not go overboard with "salt" and withhold truth from them. We also must "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

## Needed: Christians Who Know The Bible

By RICK LIGGIN

In the early 1900's, members of the "church of Christ" in this country had a reputation for being "walking Bibles." In fact, it was sometimes (half seriously) suggested that if no Bible was available in the courtroom for a witness to put his hand on while being "sworn in," he could simply place his hand on the head of a member of the "church of Christ"—that would be as good as having a Bible! The point is: members of the Lord's church used to be well known for their Bible knowledge. Few people in denominational churches wanted to "tangle" with any member of the "church of Christ" in a Bible discussion, because members of the Lord's church simply knew their Bibles too well to be "tangled" with.

To our shame and embarrassment, the average member of the "church of Christ" today cannot live up to that old positive reputation. Our world has created so many distractions for us that the average member no longer devotes much time at all to a study of the Bible. For too many in the church, the only Bible study that gets done takes place during church services! Beyond that, a lot of us just don't study! And because our knowledge of scripture has fallen

way off, we are no longer able to defend the truth against error—like those in earlier generations could. The fact is that many of us in the "church of Christ" today would be hard pressed to give "book, chapter, and verse" in answer to even a simple question like, "What must I do to be saved?" Could you...really?

But it's not just our inability to defend truth against error that concerns me. Our lack of Bible knowledge is producing serious spiritual problems among us. We make bad spiritual choices in our daily lives, because we do not know enough about God's word to help us choose wisely and rightly. And it's not uncommon to hear Christians trying to defend sinful (or at least dangerous) practices by saying, "I don't see anything wrong with it!" Maybe the reason you "don't see anything wrong with it" is because you are deficient in "real knowledge" and don't have your spiritual "senses trained to discern good and evil" (Phil. 1:9-11; Heb. 5:11-14). Whether or not you "see anything wrong with it" is irrelevant! What matters is what God says about it—and you won't know what that is without a careful study of His word.

If our future (as individual Christians or as the church) is going to bring glory to God, then

we need desperately to start learning *now* how to be good Bible students. Knowing God's word is critical to any real progress for the future. Any "workman" who wants to be approved by God must know how to handle "accurately the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We cannot know God, either now or in the future, if we do not know His word.

Lamenting over Old Testament Israel, God once said: "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Is that God's opinion of us today? Will our lack of knowledge ultimately lead to our own destruction? It will, if we don't do something about it! We cannot afford to wait another minute; we need to start studying the Bible *today*.

I know of an old preacher who was once told by a young admirer: "Sir, I'd give half my life to know the Bible like you do!" To this, the old preacher replied: "Well, son, that's about what it's taken—about half my life."

Knowing the Bible well requires a lifetime of study...beginning right now! If you care about the future of the Lord's church—if you have a vision for the future—start studying your Bible today!

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# BRETHREN, WE NEED TO BE TEACHING!

By CLEE REDDINGER

A number of years ago a Christian shared an experience she had while speaking with a friend who was a member of a prominent denomination. While talking about an upcoming wedding the sister commented that she was so glad these two people got together after failed first marriages because “they made such a cute couple.” Her denominational friend was shocked and asked her, “How can you say that in light of Matthew 19:9?” It was our sister’s turn to be shocked as she read and understood for the first time the words of Jesus on the matter of divorce and remarriage.

This sister was not a “Sunday morning Christian.” She had been going to church all her life and had faithfully worked on her Bible Classes but didn’t know the scriptures said

## Let Their Fingers Do the Walking



By AL DIESTELKAMP

Christians who travel, often find it hard to get information which enables them to worship while away from home. Even though there are helpful directories of churches in print and on the internet, they are far from complete, and often the times of services are not listed or are out-of-date.

We try to encourage travelers to “do their homework” and call ahead to verify current locations and times of services. Those who make the effort frequently find that they have no way to do this. In this age of high technology it seems some among us, in an effort to save money, are being “penny wise and pound foolish.”

Many churches do not have listings in the local phone books. It is my uninspired opinion a listing in the Yellow Pages is the best advertising for the money. It does usually require the expense of having a phone in the church’s name, but it is the first place most people go to when looking for information.

Some churches which have a phone at the building do not have an answering machine or voice mail, and cannot be reached except during times of meeting. That makes it hard to get there on time.

Still others have answering capabilities, but they don’t check their messages often and fail to call people back with needed information.

In addition to travelers, there may be Christians moving into your area that may have difficulty finding you—not to mention truth-seekers from the community.

anything about divorce and remarriage. As far as she knew, as long as it was legal it was all right. While she bears some responsibility for her ignorance, greater blame falls on the elders of the local church where she grew up. It was *their job* to see the truth fully taught in this area, and they failed. Unfortunately, this sister and this congregation are not alone. Brethren, we need to be teaching!

While attending a high school basketball game my wife asked me to get something from the concession stand. I noticed they were selling chances on the “game ball.” As always, I ignored it, *until* I was approached by a member of another local congregation and asked to buy a couple of tickets for the ball, since it was going to benefit the local athletic club. When I told her frankly that I don’t gamble, and that she shouldn’t either, I was met with a look of stunned disbelief. “This *isn’t* gambling. It’s just to help out the local athletic club.” was her response.

We expect to be approached by those of the world with opportunities to gamble with lotteries, raffles and the like. It is quite another thing to have members of the Lord’s church, or their children, approach us and *expect* us to participate in the worldly fundraising schemes. I am not saying that all of these organizations are evil. Many of them are good organizations with good purposes. Good intentions, however, do not justify evil actions (Jas. 1:20).

Often I offer to make a donation to the group at some other time. Sometimes the salesperson suggests I make a donation and he/she will take the ticket, since I will not. In that case I make it absolutely clear that I will not be a party to the action, and I don’t make the donation. Often this makes them angry or frustrated, and they ask, “What is your problem?” My problem is that my preaching and teaching brethren (and I include myself in this number) have been falling down on the job. Brethren, we need to be teaching!

I was at a congregation once where introductions were being made that went something like this: “This is Joe, and Bill and his wife Anne, and this is Charlie.” Then they turned and said, “This is brother Clee. He’ll be preaching for us today.” Did you notice the difference? Everyone was introduced by first names except for the preacher. He was called “brother.” Isn’t this simply a case of making a biblical word into a religious title and creating a separate clergy? This is often done, not just by immature Christians, but by brethren who ought to know better.

Jesus said, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even He who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is you master, even the Christ” (Matt. 23:8-10). If

we are going to introduce the preacher as “brother” then we ought to do the same for everyone. If we are not going to introduce each other as brother or sister then we must not do so for the preacher, either! To do otherwise is to create a clergy-laity system we claim so much to be against. Brethren, we need to be teaching!

One of the primary jobs of an evangelist is to teach the word of God. Paul told Timothy an evangelist was to be “apt to teach” (2 Tim. 2:24). That means he has both the willingness and the ability to do so. Jesus said we are to be “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you” (Matt. 28:20).

The Hebrew writer rebukes Christians who were not teachers, though they had long been Christians (Heb. 5:12). Elders are to both “exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). To “exhort in the sound doctrine” means to both teach the doctrine and encourage toward obedience. Teaching is fundamental to the spread of Christianity. Though some people may think Christianity is “caught—not taught,” the picture we get from scripture is quite different.

The disciples “went everywhere preaching the word” after the martyrdom of Stephen (Ac. 8:4). We read how Barnabas the encourager came to Antioch, “who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Ac. 11:23-24). Even still, Barnabus knew just what was needed, “And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people, and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Ac. 11:25-26). He went and got an expert teacher because he knew that was what was needed! It is still what is needed today as well.

Sound teaching will help us avoid the situations I’ve cited here as well as many others. Local congregations which make their teaching curriculum a priority are those which will grow over time. I have had the blessing of observing several churches that have made the commitment and investment in their teaching and *each one* has outgrown its building and has had to add on or move. Insisting on biblical authority for all that we do is not a condemnation to remain small forever. Rather, it is the only way to be founded upon Christ, the Rock of our salvation and is the only foundation for the Christian’s life (1Cor. 3:11)! Brethren, we need to be teaching!

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As you can see, the many donations have once again erased a potential deficit. We are truly grateful for these gifts. In an earlier issue I noted the need to have some repairs done to my printing press, which along with the annual mailing and website renewal fees account for the high costs in this report.

**OUCH!** Unfortunately, I have been informed that the platemaking system I have been using since 1972 will soon be obsolete because supplies are no longer being manufactured. This will require a substantial investment in an alternative system, and so I will have to use what would have been a surplus toward such a purchase. I am hoping to find used equipment, because new equipment would cost nearly \$3,000.

# Whatever Happened to the Lord's Day?

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

There was a time, not so long ago, when brethren generally referred to the first day of the week as "the Lord's day." Many of us remember when even the world recognized that there was something *unique* about "Sunday." Most stores and factories were closed and it was even hard to find a place to buy gasoline.

Among God's children, there was an unhurried special significance to the "first day of the week." There was special preparation on Saturday and Bible lessons were studied and reviewed. "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes were cleaned and ready and shoes were polished—we were going to worship God with

## Hazel Owen and Verna Leigh Go to Be With the Lord

Two righteous women, both of whom had a positive impact on the Lord's church in the Chicago area, have recently passed from this life. Both served the Lord for many years as wives of elders in the West Side church in Aurora, Illinois.

Hazel Owen, wife of Charlie Owen, died in late August, just after we had mailed the past issue of this paper. She had suffered a stroke a year earlier and had been confined to bed the whole time since.

Verna Leigh, wife of Bob Leigh, died November 19th, just as we were completing the composition of this issue. She had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure in September and had undergone a second bypass surgery in early November from which she never recovered.

*the saints.* And when worship was over on Sunday morning it was yet "the Lord's day." There was Sunday evening worship to look forward to and often an afternoon association with some "of like precious faith."

In the present age of hyperactivity, anticipation of "the Lord's day" is often marred by the lack of significant preparation and the casual indifference to it being something that is truly the Lord's. Many who could do better, dress as though they were going to some sporting event. Some are habitually late, and not a few, it seems, can hardly wait to "get out" to go to some restaurant or to embark on a full afternoon and evening of secular activity. If the church meets on Sunday evening "their day" is so full that they may not make it back for worship.

The apostle John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:9,10). Though this is the only place in scripture where that phrase is found, the Holy Spirit inspired its use for some purpose. That the "Lord's day" is the first day of the week is hardly disputed. That is the day on which Christ arose from the dead (Mk. 16:2,9); the day the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles and the church came into existence (Ac. 2); the day the Lord's supper is to be eaten (Ac. 20:7) and the day we are authorized to give into a common treasury (1 Cor. 16:1,2).

No, I do not know how much time first century brethren spent together. And, no, I would not try to legislate on the matter. However, it does seem significant to me that John did not say he was in the Spirit during "the Lord's hour." While some brethren seem to be trying to figure out ways to spend less time in worship and with one another, some of us long for a time again when the prime focus was on worshipping the Lord on His day.

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# THINK ON THESE THINGS

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