

Do Your Children Know Where You Are?

A graduate student, working on a study about juvenile delinquency, reported in a sociology seminar that he was having difficulty collecting data. His project was to telephone a dozen homes around 9 p.m. and ask the parents if they knew where their children were at that hour. "My first five calls, he lamented, were answered by children who had no idea where their parents were."

~Readers Digest

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 36

October-November-December, 2005

Number 4

Divide and Conquer

By AL DIESTELKAMP

There is little doubt that one of Satan's tactics, in his effort to "kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10), is to divide and conquer. He knows that if he can get Christians to "bite and devour one another" (Gal. 5:15) that he will not only win the parties involved, but will also turn others away from Christ.

Satan doesn't care whether the division among Christians arises from personal disputes, cultural differences, or doctrinal issues. He's willing to use any and all avenues of driving wedges and splintering the body of Christ, one congregation at a time.

Knowing this to be one of Satan's devices should motivate Christians to foil his plan by being determined to "be of one mind" (2 Cor. 13:11). Of course, in order to do this we must have "compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1 Pet. 3:8).

Diverse personality traits will sometimes provoke disputes among brethren. When that happens we need to remember that we are commanded to "pursue peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14). That means work at it! Otherwise, it is bound to result in bitterness, which will "cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15).

The handling of doctrinal differences is another area in which we need to work hard in order to maintain, if at all possible, peace among our brethren. There is no doubt that we must be willing to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), but we can do that without being contentious. Our defense of the truth must be accompanied by a sincere desire to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

Please do not interpret what I am saying to mean that we should compromise truth in order to maintain unity. The "divide and conquer" technique is not Satan's only de-

vice. He will happily abandon that approach if he sees that we are vulnerable to his "peace at any price" appeal. We must be watchful that men do not creep in with teachings and practices that involve us in error. Also, I need to make it clear that I am not suggesting that when brethren disagree that both are right, and for that reason, discussion and study on the issue(s) should not be avoided.

However, not every disagreement among brethren requires total agreement in order to maintain unity. Knowledge and understanding of God's word is a growth process, and we are not all at the same level. Who among us has not changed his convictions on some subjects over a period of years of study? If there be any who have never changed, I would suspect that somewhere along the way they stopped open-minded study of the Bible.

The same inspired apostle who pleaded with brethren to "all speak the same thing" and to, "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10), in another letter acknowledged differing levels of faith over "doubtful things" (Rom. 14:1). These commands are not contradictory. In the one, Paul is pleading for Christians to maintain unity by going to the same source of authority, and in the other, he is commanding forbearance in the application of that authority.

However, my brethren and I have difficulty determining which "issues" to place in the "doubtful things" category. Certainly, no strongly-held beliefs that I have belong there! But maybe they do. When brethren who have the same respect for the authority of the scriptures arrive at differing applications, it might fit into the category of "doubtful things."

Some suggest that only "matters of opinion," and not "convictions," belong in the "doubtful things" category. This may be a

matter of semantics, but I make a distinction between opinion and conviction, and I don't take too kindly when anyone relegates my conviction down to the level of an opinion. However, I am not so dogmatic in some of my convictions that I refuse to consider my brother's differing conviction.

So, can brethren with different convictions work together? The answer depends on whether the differences result in causing one or the other to sin. There are some exceptions, but most of the issues wherein brethren disagree, do not require a breaking of fellowship. History will confirm that most of the issues which have produced widespread division in congregations, if brethren had been considerate, could have been resolved in a way in which no one's conscience was violated.

Of course, there are a few issues in which divergent views may necessitate a break in fellowship within a local congregation. Some of the views regarding remarriage after divorce result in some insisting on accepting into fellowship persons that I believe to be adulterers. Since we are told "not to keep company with anyone named a brother who is sexually immoral" (1 Cor. 5:11), this would be a situation which I could not continue in without violating my conscience. Fortunately, most controversies among brethren do not place us in that kind of situation.

In our battle against Satan's devices, let's not give him an advantage by needlessly splintering the body of Christ. None of us, in an effort to maintain unity, should claim that "Your convictions must conform to my convictions," but each of us should be sensitive to the convictions of others and diligently seeking a way to work together without any of us having to make the choice between violating one's conscience or breaking fellowship.

Evolution vs. Design

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

The current public debate over the legitimacy of various theories on the origin of life and whether or not they should be taught as science is healthy. At least in debate there is the opportunity for ideas to be considered and compared; which is something that most atheists, agnostics, and even some religionists are apparently not willing to tolerate in the context of a science classroom. Why?

The National Academy of Sciences explains its view in the conclusion of its 1999 publication, *Science and Creationism*: "The claim that equity demands balanced treatment of evolutionary theory and special creation in science classrooms reflects a misunderstanding of what science is and how it is conducted. Scientific investigators seek to understand natural phenomena by observation and experimentation. Scientific interpretations of facts and the explanations that account for them therefore must be testable by observation and experimentation."

The Academy further clarified: "Creationism, intelligent design, and other claims of supernatural intervention in the origin of life or of species are not science because they are not testable by the methods of science.... This contrasts with science, where any hypothesis or theory always remains subject to the possibility of rejection or modification in the light of new knowledge."

That last quote seems so objective and open minded. Yet, those who contend that the spontaneous generation of life from nothing is good science are quite intolerant to suggestions that we are here by design. They claim that their intolerance is because designer theories are not science which can be observed and tested. Yet, the Academy also wrote: "Science is not the only way of acquiring knowledge about ourselves and the world around us. Humans gain understanding in many other ways, such as through literature, the arts, philosophical reflection, and religious experience." Is it possible that there are things outside of their narrow definition of science that might actually be helpful to science?

There are essentially only two possibilities for the origin of life: accident or design. The spontaneous generation of something from nothing has never been observed, and repeated testing does not support it, inferring that spontaneous generation is not good science. Yet, that leaves only the alternative of a creative act of a designer. Atheistic scientists, however, presume there is no designer and are, therefore, forced to the unscientific and untenable conclusion that life spontaneously arose and evolved by accident. Therefore, by their own narrow definition of science, atheistic scientists should

logically conclude that any discussion of origins and/or the historical mechanism used to bring about life are beyond science.

Nevertheless, many insist that efforts to explain origins without design are scientific but that attempts to explain origins as the result of design are unscientific. The Academy tells us: "Biological evolution is the best scientific explanation we have for the enormous range of observations about the living world." Yet, no biological species has ever been observed to evolve into another species. This fact does not keep evolutionists from making huge presumptive leaps in their own faith.

Observe how a hypothesis evolves into a fact according to the Academy: "Scientists most often use the word 'fact' to describe an observation. But scientists also use fact to mean something that has been tested or observed so many times that there is no longer a compelling reason to keep testing or looking for examples. The occurrence of evolution in this sense is a fact. Scientists no longer question whether descent with modification occurred because the evidence supporting the idea is so strong." Atheists have observed evolution within a species so often that they confidently declare evolution from one species to another a scientific "fact" without any observation or testing. This, we are told, is sound science. Yet, to observe the design of the human body from the blueprint of its DNA and suggest that it had a designer is somehow unscientific.

"Every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God" (Heb. 3:4). That is a factual observation, with a plausible deduction violating no science. It is no wonder that the purveyors of the doctrine of evolution do not want design taught in a science classroom as a possible cause. For they would then have to explain why believing something came from nothing is a more "scientific" and sensible inference than acknowledging that design demands a designer.

Those who believe in God should have no difficulty believing that with Him all things are possible (Matt. 19:26). This faith frustrates the atheist who thinks that such a view quenches zeal for scientific inquiry (and sometimes it has). However, the atheist believes that with time all things are possible. Time is the god of atheists. Observe what Nobel prize winner, George Wald wrote: "Time is in fact the hero of the plot. The time with which we have to deal is of the order of 2 billion years. What we regard as impossible on the basis of human experience is meaningless here. Given so much time, the 'impossible' becomes possible, the possible probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles" ("The Origin of

Life," *Scientific American*, August, 1954). If Wald could theorize things of history happening which are "impossible on the basis of human experience" and call it science, then it would seem that one could also theorize a designer and call it science.

It is only the atheist who needs vast amounts of time to explain how something came from nothing and eventually evolved into intelligent life. By the way, Wald's 2 billion years has since been increased to 5 billion years. Why not? Do I hear 10 billion? Will anyone give me 10?

My concern is not with scientists who actually employ the scientific method in their research. It is with those who make inferences about the past using data gathered from the present while insisting that an atheistic interpretation is the only thing that can be called science. If God is not allowed to be a viable option, and unlimited time has unlimited potential, then of course the data must be interpreted to allow enough time for the otherwise impossible to happen. No wonder atheistic scientists glibly postulate millions and billions of years. To them time is as unlimited and flexible as it needs to be to allow for their impossible theories.

Brethren, I become concerned when, in an attempt to be scientifically open minded, we follow in the paths of atheistic pied pipers and accept their historical inferences and timetables that are clearly based on the need to uphold theories which demand an unimaginable amount of time to accomplish the impossible.

Dr. Patterson, the Senior Principal Scientific Officer of Paleontology at the British Museum of Natural History, gave the keynote address to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City on November 5, 1981. In that speech he repeated a question that he had recently asked his peers in science: "Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing that is true?" He went on to say, "I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History, and the only answer I got was silence. I tried it on the members of the Evolutionary Morphology Seminar in the University of Chicago, a very prestigious body of evolutionists, and all I got there was silence for a long time, and eventually one person said, 'I do know one thing. It [evolution] ought not be taught in high school.'"

If design should not be taught in public school science classes because it does not qualify as science, then neither should the general theory of evolution be taught because it does not qualify as science either. We're on solid ground, brethren. Stand there!

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764
e-mail: adiestel@bwsys.net

'OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'

By FRANK VONDRACEK

Jesus, the King, said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). In another place, the Bible records Him to say, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3-4).

There can be no doubt to the discerning reader that little children were used by Jesus to illustrate aspects of the kingdom He was sent by His Father to establish and build up. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," confessed Peter, and Jesus responded, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18). On the day of Pentecost the Lord kept His word, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Ac. 2:47). The apostle Paul later wrote, "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse," that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:2, 13-14). So, without a doubt, Jesus Christ has a church in existence, and it shall remain on earth uninterrupted until He returns (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

What is there about little children that the Lord was so impressed by their example with reference to the kingdom of heaven? In Matthew 18:3-4, it seems to be the humility of little children that attracted the attention of Jesus. Little ones may be bullies towards their peers, but for lack of sheer strength against bigger foes, they submit to power. They seem to realize their helplessness against that which is obviously more powerful than themselves. So it is with those who would be citizens in heaven's kingdom. Humble submission to the power, but even more so, to the will and authority of God are requirements for entrance into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Jesus said one's conversion will come as he submits to God. "Of such is the kingdom of God."

In Matthew 19:13-14, the apostles apparently tried to prohibit what they perceived as a bother to their busy Master when they rebuked those who brought children to Jesus for a blessing. But the Lord returned the rebuke to His disciples for intruding into the effort of others to come to Him. Consider why it is that people come to Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30): Spiritual needs; love for God and truth; forgiveness of sins; because Jesus loves us and died to save us; comfort in the

heartaches of life. Who is there that recognizes a loving, kind, generous, caring, person more quickly than a child? To whom does a child gladly go back time and again but to one who he believes is trustworthy, and who cares about him and his every need? "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Brethren, even though we realize that Jesus Christ, our King, requires and expects

His people to grow and develop spiritually, let us understand that the direction of our growth and developments *must* be in the direction of becoming more childlike in humility, submission and dependence on Jesus Christ in our lives. After all, the Lord said it best: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

1822 Center Point Rd., Thompkinsville, KY 42167
e-mail: frankv832@alltel.net

An
Article
From the
Days Gone By

GO KILL A BEAR!

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP

No doubt, most readers have already heard the following story:

A very large man and a very small man were talking. Admiring the size of the larger man, the smaller one said, "Man, if I were as big as you, I wouldn't be afraid of anything. I'd go out in the forest and find the biggest bear and tear him limb from limb."

The large man replied with a smile, "There are a lot of small bears in the forest, too, you know. Why don't you go tackle one of them?"

The story has a point that is badly needed right now among the people of God. Many Christians stand on the sidelines and tell what they would do if they were as strong as others. Some like to tell what they would do if they were elders of the church. Others would surely do a better job if they were the song leaders. Some would sure like to get into that pulpit and "tell it like it is!"

Some preachers boast of what they would do if they were preaching for the big church on the hill instead of the little one in the valley. Other preachers insist on telling us just what they would do if they ever got into one of those new fields of the world! But there is work in the kingdom for everyone. There are a lot of us *little fellows* who need to quit coveting the strength of others and who need to go out and tear some little bears apart!

An additional thought needs to be injected right here. How can one ever qualify himself to fight big bears if he

hasn't first tackled the little ones? In other words, as Christians, how can we ever expect to succeed in great battles for truth and righteousness if we haven't learned to do the smaller things that seem somewhat insignificant? Most of us could start on the road to success by just bravely facing up to the tasks that already are altogether suited to our "size," spiritually.

The lesson herein also applied to churches. Some congregations may be doing almost nothing except "keeping house for the Lord" because they think they are not big enough for greater things. They may look upon the large congregations with envy, and they may be satisfying their consciences by reflecting upon what they would do if they were big like some other congregations.

But the big church can't do any more than the little church, proportionately. The church is people, and a few people can each do as much as each one in the larger groups.

Together, the few can do just as much as the many in proportion to their numbers. Perhaps the church where you worship needs to simply go out and find some small bears to engage in battle for truth and holiness.

Try it. You'll like it!

This article first appeared in *THINK*, Volume 4, Number 5, dated July, 1973



Just Who Is Serving Whom?

By RICK LIGGIN

It is not uncommon for us in churches of Christ to refer to our regular worship periods as “worship services”—and I personally do not have a problem with that. Admittedly, it is not a Biblical expression; there is no place in Scripture where an assembly of saints is called a “worship service.” But I *do* believe that the phrase *does* express a Biblical concept. When the church assembles itself together for worship, it does offer up a service to God! We *do* serve God in our worship! And so, the point of this article is not to oppose the use of this legitimate phrase.

My concern is that some of us have developed a wrong view about the “worship services.” In fact, there’s a real sense in which, I fear, that some of us have gotten things completely inverted...or turned around!

You see, when we normally think of “services,” we think of buying the *services* of some company or taking advantage of (using) the *services* offered by some institution. The point is that when we speak of “services,” we most often think of services rendered *to us*. And that’s where my concern is raised.

I am afraid that some of us have come to think of “worship services” as a time of worship when *we are served!*

Now, it’s not that we think that we are worshipped! We know better than that! But the point is, I fear, that some of us get the aim of the “worship services” inverted in our minds: we begin to think of “worship services” as being something designed to serve us! And folks, that’s just not the case!

“Worship services” are not designed to

serve us, nor are they designed to provide us with some kind of “service.” Sure, we will be edified if we worship God according to His design and instructions. But this primarily is a by-product of our “worship services.” We need to understand that worship is not something that happens to us! It’s something that happens to God...something we *do to Him!* We serve Him in our “worship services”—not the other way around! And yet, this seems to be the idea circulating in the minds of some.

Too many seem to be satisfied to come to “worship services” just to sit there and “let it happen”! They see worship as a kind of “spectator sport,” which is supposed to do something for them. If you don’t think this is so, just listen to how many folks complain about “not getting anything out of it.”

Don’t you dare look at the worship period as a time when you come to be “served” or served in some way. Worship to God is not a “spectator sport”! It’s not something that happens to us! It’s something we do to God! We must never forget *just who is serving whom* when it comes to worship. In our “worship services,” we serve God! And that, folks, takes energy and activity and zealous participation on the part of all those who claim to be worshipping.

Make no mistake about it: God is looking for true worshippers—spiritual people who will worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23-24). If you’re looking for a church where the worship services somehow serve you, then you’ll need to go find another church. Why? Because in the church of our Lord, the “worship services” are for serving God, not ourselves!

315 E. Almond Drive, Washington, IL 61571
e-mail: rcliggin@gmail.com

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Web Page Renewal Fees	80.00
Domestic Postage	407.63
Canadian Postage	3.60
Return Postage (37)	13.69
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 589.92
Shortfall from past issue	3.20
Deficit	\$ 593.12

Donations (as of 12/9):

Jim & Nora Woolbright, AZ	\$ 100.00
Charles & Elaine Gipp, OR	100.00
Anonymous, TN	50.00
Robert P. Shreve, OH	50.00
Bernice Wanous, MN	20.00
Larry R. DeVore, OH	10.00
Anonymous, OH	50.00
Richard & Dorothy Regel, IL	50.00
Anonymous, WI	50.00
Robert & Sue Ackley, IL	100.00
Anonymous, FL	25.00
Tim & Sue Hetzer, WV	1,000.00
John Dudley Crutcher, MO	50.00
Bob & Faye Breuer, MO	100.00
Lindy & Alice McDaniel, TX	5.00
Bobby Graham, AL	25.00
Anonymous, TX	25.00
Mary N. Mayhall, AR	50.00
Krystal A. Jackson, IL	50.00
Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	50.00
Lon & Melody Marshall, MI	45.00
Anonymous, MN	100.00
Anonymous, IL	50.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 2,155.00
Deficit from past issue	593.12
Funds for this issue	\$ 1,561.88

Wow!

We are humbled and grateful to all of our voluntary partners who obviously took note of our deficit and responded generously to enable us to publish this paper. This issue is expected to cost \$560, which will leave a healthy surplus of just over \$1,000 for future issues. Thank you very much!

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Published in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice by the Diestelkamp family. Distributed free as often and in quantities as ability permits.

Editor AL DIESTELKAMP
P.O. Box 891
Cortland, IL 60112-0891
(815) 756-9840

E-mail al@thinkonthesethings.com

Web Page www.thinkonthesethings.com

THINK ON THESE THINGS

P.O. Box 891
Cortland, IL 60112-0891

Return Service Requested

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Cortland, IL
Permit No. 11