



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Doing Good To All

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Wow! Does God really expect us to do good to *all*? That’s a tall order, to say the least. On the surface it may seem to be an impossible task, but we know that God doesn’t require the impossible, so instead of wasting time lamenting about the difficulty, let’s look for opportunities to fulfill this noble command.

Too many times we think of Galatians 6:10 as applying only to doing good deeds, such as benevolence toward the poor and needy. While that is certainly *part* of the good that we should do, the command involves much more.

It’s The Godly Thing To Do

Actually, the opportunities for doing good abound. The problem is that many times we close our eyes to situations wherein we could “do good.” Even more than others, Christians should look for opportunities to do good since we are children of a good God—and striving to be like our Father.

Everything God does is good, and is for the benefit of those He created in His image. Even in the beginning, during the six days of creation, God declared that what He had made was “good” (Gen. 1:4,10,12,18, 21,25), and then when it was completed He declared the total of His work to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Jesus makes an argument for doing good to all based on our relationship to the Father, noting that “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

David, throughout the Psalms declared and praised the goodness of God. The

phrase, “His mercy endures forever” is stated 41 times in the Old Testament (33 in the Psalms) as God is praised for his goodness.

Not only is God good, but he *does* good. The psalmist declared, “You are good, and do good...” (Psa. 119:68). God’s goodness is offered to all of humanity. Indeed, “The Lord is good to all...” (Psa. 145:9).

Jesus not only taught people to do good, He “went about doing good” (Ac. 10:38). While we don’t have the power He displayed by healing and casting out demons, the lesson we learn from His good work is to do what we can.

Jesus recognized that we have differing means and opportunities for doing good. When an unnamed woman was criticized for doing good to Jesus by anointing His head with an expensive oil, Jesus said, “She has done what she could” (Mk. 14:8). The critics of this woman claimed she should have sold the oil and the proceeds given to the poor, but Jesus justified her actions by noting that “you have the poor with you always” (Mk. 14:7).

While Jesus’ statement shows that there are other priorities which may limit one’s help to the poor, care must be taken not to use this as an excuse to neglect the needs of the poor and unfortunate.

Let’s look at a couple of other opportunities we have to do good:

Doing Good As “Heirs Together”

The apostolic instruction for the husband to “give honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel” follows closely behind the admonition for wives to “be submissive to your own husbands.” To the extent that both heed these instructions, they become “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:1,7).

Clearly implied is that the ideal marriage is one in which both are Christians, working together as partners for happiness in this life, and toward a reward in heaven.

Of course, not all marriages enjoy this advantage, with only one being a Christian. In

some cases this is because one of the partners has come to know the Lord after being married, but the other does not. In other cases, a Christian has chosen to marry one who does not share his or her faith and commitment to Christ. In either case, the most “good” the Christian can do for the unbelieving spouse is to remain faithful to the Lord, being a great husband or wife, in the hope of leading the unbeliever to Christ.

Doing Good As Parents

The old saying, “Charity begins at home” is not from the Bible, but it is consistent with biblical principles. It is “at home” where we first learn to “be good” and hopefully where we learn to “do good.” Many of the greatest opportunities we have for doing good are within our own families.

Parents must lead the way in doing what is good for every family member. The way fathers and mothers treat each other is a training ground for their children. When children witness their parents treating each other with loving honor and respect they are more likely to respond in kind.

Speaking of which, as children, we need to make sure to care for elderly parents and grandparents, and look for opportunities to do good to other elderly people—especially those who lack nearby children to look after their needs.

To Be Continued

The apostle Paul said we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). In this brief article I have only scratched the surface of the many opportunities out there to do good. For that reason, I’m planning future articles in which we will explore good we can do in many other areas of life—some of which we may have forgotten. Among other things, I want us to look at opportunities to “do good” for our brethren, as well as the good we can do in the workplace, for our nation, the lost, the poor, our enemies and even ourselves.

When All The World Comes to Us



By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Advancements in transportation and communication, as well as the fall of some oppressive governments, have made it possible to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15) with an ease rarely, if ever, seen before. “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matt. 9:37-38). We need to go and we need to send.

In recent years the United States has seen a large increase in immigration. Government, schools, and society in general have responded to meet their needs. What about the church? We know we are to be interested in foreign evangelism, but what do we do when the world comes to us?

As Christians, our love of the lost must cause us to rise above the political, social, legal, and prejudicial controversies which surround the allowance of immigrants into the country. If you think they should not be here, it doesn't change the fact that they are, and that they need the gospel.

If their customs seem different, they still need the same Savior you need. You may feel they should learn English, but how will you get the gospel to them until they learn (or if they never do)? If there are changes in our country which you don't like due to immigration (laws, culture, jobs, schools, etc.), what is the ultimate loving response to the immigrant? The responsibility to preach is in our hands and we cannot expect the circumstances in which we find the lost to be ideal. Will we wait around, as the lost die in sin, for the conditions to change to suit us, our teaching methods, our politics, our culture, our language, etc., or will we join Paul in becoming “...all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22)?

We desperately need brethren who will prepare themselves and go to preach in foreign fields—abroad *and* here. And churches must keep this as a high priority. There are a good number of men who need support to do foreign evangelism in the U.S. They are strong, motivated and bi-lingual. They require no travel funds or long journeys. There are no customs problems or difficulties in them reporting what they are doing. They are ready to go. Are we ready to send? More of us need to be.

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My Body, My Slave

By RICK LIGGIN

In talking to the Corinthian Christians about the importance of self-discipline, the apostle Paul said: “...I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27).

When I read this text, the words, “buffet my body and *make it my slave*” [NASB] grab my attention. This expression suggests a distinction between my body and the real *me*. Obviously, my body is not the real *me*. It is only the outer physical shell that houses the real *me*.

This fact is confirmed in other Bible texts, like Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (4:16-18; 5:1-9). Here Paul tells us that the “outer man” (our mortal body) is decaying day by day, while the “inner man” (the real *me*) is constantly being renewed (4:16). This “outer man,” Paul says, is only an earthly tent that houses the real *me* (5:1-4).

We note this distinction because of what Paul said about controlling our bodies. The real *me* must control my body, even if I must “buffet” it to get the job done (9:27)! To “buffet” a person literally is to give him a black eye [Zerwick]; it is to treat him roughly. Metaphorically, it essentially means what we mean today when we speak of “whipping ourselves into shape.”

Our text tells us what Paul did to ensure his salvation; and it suggests what we must do as well! We need to “whip our bodies into shape” and make them our slaves...a slave of the real *me*...the inner, spiritual *me*! If I'm serious about my own salvation, I need to exercise some rigid self-discipline over my body, and I need to do it no matter how

Dead, or Alive?

By AL DIESTELKAMP

A preacher at a funeral service, referring to the deceased, once said, “This corpse has been a member of this congregation for 17 years.” While this was a “slip of the tongue,” it may reflect the spiritual condition of some lukewarm members of the church who are “dead” while living (see Rev. 3:1).

Another preacher said in all seriousness, “There's nothing wrong with this church that a few funerals would not cure.” As morbid and disheartening as that sounds, it may be true that some people become such a drag that the congregation would actually be better off without them. Hopefully no hearse is backed up to our church building doors!

bad it hurts. I must make my body “my slave”! I have to let my body know just who in this relationship is going to control who...really; who the real boss is going to be! And folks, it *must be me*! I must not allow my body to dictate to me! I must dictate to my body!

Unfortunately, too many of us have this exactly backward! We let our bodies control us! Instead of telling our body what it must do, we let the body tell us what to do! Instead of making “my body my slave,” we let our body make us its slave! Instead of controlling the flesh, we indulge the flesh!

Let me tell you: the man who “vents all his feelings” or “always speaks his mind”—that man is letting his body rule him (Prov. 29:11).

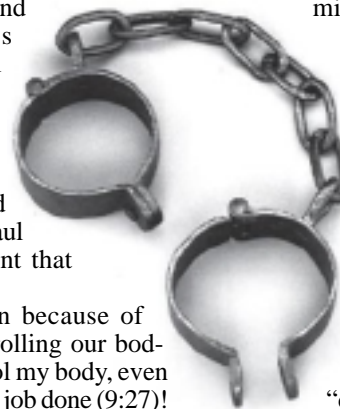
The guy who gets angry or gets his feelings hurt every time someone looks at him cross ways—that guy's body has made him its slave! The person who says, “I couldn't help it! It felt so good, I just couldn't help myself”—again, that man is one whose body (passion) has taken control of him! In fact, anyone who “can't stop it” or “can't control it” is really just allowing his own body to enslave and rule over him.

“Well, it's my body! I'll do with it what I want to!” Not *if you're a Christian, it's not!* If you're a Christian, your body now belongs to God! “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Now that we're Christians, we are “under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh,” but to God, to live as He wants (Rom. 8:12). And if it's now God's will that we must do, then we're going to have to stop indulging the flesh and start making our bodies our slaves...even if that means we will have to do some serious body *buffeting* to get it under control!

How serious are you about making sure that you're not somehow disqualified from receiving the incorruptible crown of life (1 Cor. 9:24-27)? If you're really serious about it, then you'd better take steps to get your body under control! Your body cannot control you unless you let it control you! Don't do that! I know it might hurt, but buffet your body and make it your slave, lest possibly, after you have served others, you yourself should be disqualified!

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Putting CHRIST Back in CHRISTIAN

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

It seems to happen earlier every year. The stores begin displaying their Christmas merchandise. Many bemoan the crass commercialization and blatant materialism often associated with what some declare to be a holy day. It won't be long before we will again hear the plaintive cry to put Christ back in Christmas. Ironically, from a scriptural perspective Christ has never been in Christmas. This annual festival is a conglomeration of human traditions that has evolved into a sentimental event with a smattering of spiritual jargon sufficient to tickle the ears of those who desire a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). With that kind of background, it was inevitable that it would turn into something more carnal than Christian.

O come all ye faithful! If we are really interested in putting Christ back into something, then let's forget about Christmas and start by putting Christ back into *Christian*. Those who wear the name need to be primarily concerned with putting Christ back in their daily lives. Christ is not the reason for a season but for eternity. The term *Christian* is so glibly used these days. It may be attached to the most carnal of things from merchandisers to political parties. As a result of its flippant overuse, its scriptural meaning is being lost.

The term *Christian* is used in just three places in God's word. The first is Acts 11:26. There we learn that the disciples in Antioch were the first to be called Christians. There is some debate about who was calling the disciples Christians. Some see in the word "called" a divine calling (and this is possible), but regardless of the originating source, the term fits as a legitimate designation. We know this because the Holy Spirit inspired this observation to be made to Theophilus. Calling attention, in a positive context to the significance of when the term *Christian* began to be used, without any further explanation, gives tacit approval of its use. There is no shame or inaccuracy in disciples of Jesus being called Christians.

If we are going to scripturally put Christ back into *Christian*, then we who identify ourselves as Christians must be disciples of Jesus Christ. What it means to be a disciple of Jesus is what it means to be a Christian. They are synonymous. Therefore, whatever Christ taught about being His disciple is what it means to be a Christian.

A disciple is not above his teacher. A disciple is satisfied to be like his teacher. The world rejected Jesus. Putting Christ back into

Christian means being content to be treated like Christ and, therefore, to not be above being rejected (Matt. 10:24,25).

A disciple follows his teacher. To follow Jesus we have to deny ourselves. We are not following our own selfish inclinations, but Christ, as Lord. We have to follow Him to the cross. That means bearing the burdens of this life, the burdens of others, and being willing to die with Christ (Matt. 16:24,25). The extent of what it means to bear a cross and follow Jesus is clear. Our love and loyalty to all others (family, country, community, self) must be less than our love for Christ (Lk. 14:25-27). Putting Christ back into *Christian* means forsaking all that we have to be His disciples (vs. 33).

True disciples of Jesus Christ abide in His word because the truth He taught has the power to make us free (Jn. 8:30-36). When Jesus taught this to His fellow Jews, they protested, "We've never been in bondage to anyone." In other words, they thought they were already free and didn't need to be given freedom. Americans in this so-called "Christian nation" might have a similar response. However, Jesus is not talking about civil liberties but freedom from the bondage of sin. Unfortunately, even many who call themselves Christians believe they are at liberty to live as they wish and ignore Christ's word. Putting Christ back into *Christian* means obeying His word.

A disciple views himself as part of Christ as a branch is to a vine (Jn. 15:1-8). If we are not willing to be connected with Christ, then we will wither up and be destined for the burn pile. Yet, even those that claim such a connection but do not bear fruit will be cast into the same fire as those who reject the Name. Putting Christ back into *Christian* means bearing good fruit to God's glory.

The word *Christian* appears in Scripture a second time when used by King Agrippa in response to Paul's powerful message about the resurrection from the dead (Ac. 26:21-29). Festus had interrupted Paul to declare him crazy. Paul countered that he spoke words of truth and reason and subsequently pressed Agrippa about his faith in the prophets of old concerning the Messiah. When Paul expressed confidence in

Agrippa's belief, Agrippa said, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

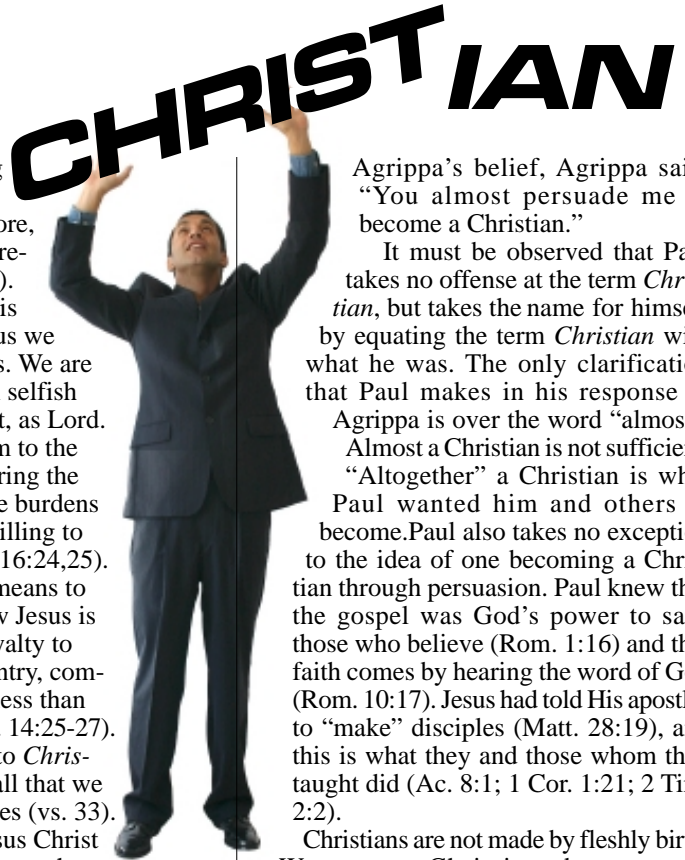
It must be observed that Paul takes no offense at the term *Christian*, but takes the name for himself by equating the term *Christian* with what he was. The only clarification that Paul makes in his response to Agrippa is over the word "almost." Almost a Christian is not sufficient. "Altogether" a Christian is what Paul wanted him and others to become. Paul also takes no exception to the idea of one becoming a Christian through persuasion. Paul knew that the gospel was God's power to save those who believe (Rom. 1:16) and that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Jesus had told His apostles to "make" disciples (Matt. 28:19), and this is what they and those whom they taught did (Ac. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Christians are not made by fleshly birth. We are not Christians because our parents were, or our spouses are, or because we associate with Christians, attend their assemblies, and/or embrace their lifestyle. A Christian is one who has been persuaded and, therefore, believes and is obedient to the gospel. This is a spiritual birth (Jn. 3:3-5). Putting Christ back into *Christian* means believing in the power of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross, His subsequent burial, and His resurrection from the dead. It means being buried with Him through baptism into His death and rising to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3,4).

The final time in Scripture the word *Christian* is used is in connection with suffering as one (1 Pet. 4:14-16). It should not come as a surprise that we might be called upon to suffer for the name we wear (vss. 12,13). It is to this that we have been called (2:20-24). Like our Lord, we have not been called to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:24-28; Jn. 13:1-17) and glorify God in this Name. If that be through persecution, let us rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Name (Ac. 5:41).

There will be those who will blaspheme the noble name by which we are called (Jas. 2:7), but let it not be because we are Christians in name only. Putting Christ back into *Christian* means departing from sin (2 Tim. 2:19) and living lives of selfless service to the glory of God.

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Truth or Ignorance?

By AL DIESTELKAMP

One of the tactics being employed by some who say homosexuality should be considered an acceptable "lifestyle," lament the "ignorance" of those who disagree. I recently heard a popular talk-show host, while trying to console a liberal activist, explain that Bible believers are acting on ignorance. Her point was that given enough time and patience we would "come around" to their way of thinking.

Obviously, none of us want to be viewed as ignorant, but perhaps we ought to get used to it. No amount of education will make

proper what the Bible says is "shameful" (Rom. 1:27).

For some time those who hold to what the Bible says on this subject have been accused of being "homophobic." A phobia is the irrational fear of something. I deny having an irrational fear of homosexuality. However, attempts are being made to change the definition to include "hatred of homosexuals." I deny hating anyone, even though I may hate what they do.

We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by those who call us ignorant or accuse us of hating them. God's word must be our teacher.

SAINTS WHO'VE GONE HOME

We don't pretend to report, in this publication, every death of fellow gospel preachers. However, when those who have had a significant impact on us pass from this life, I feel the right to give "honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). In the past few months we have heard of the deaths of at least three such men:

ROBERT TURNER

Though Robert Turner did not do much preaching in areas where I have worked, I benefitted greatly from his writings. As the long-time editor of *Plain Talk*, he wrote brief articles that communicated long-lasting messages of truth. Due to prolonged illness his pen has been stilled for a number of years. He went to be with the Lord October 17th of this year at the age of 90.

JAMES L. MCGOWAIN, SR.

We learned of the death in mid-September of James L. McGowain, Sr., who preached most recently for the Long Avenue church in Chicago, but earlier worked with churches in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Rockford, Illinois. His good influence in the greater Chicago area will be greatly missed.

BRYAN VINSON, JR.

On July 24th, Bryan Vinson, Jr., died. In 1956, while preaching in Aurora, Illinois, he, along with Leslie Diestelkamp, Gordon J. Pennock and others, started publishing *Truth Magazine*. He served as the paper's first editor. In more recent years, until his last hospitalization, he preached for the church in Lavon, Texas, which he helped start. He lived to see it grow and have elders, which was a real joy to him in his final days.

~Al Diestelkamp

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Deficit	\$ 336.59

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As always, we greatly appreciate the fellowship of our voluntary partners who make this publication possible. I expect this issue to cost about \$540 which would put the deficit at about \$317.

Last Call for Directories

Those who still would like to have copies of *The Lord's Church in the Upper-Midwest*, have only a little while to request copies. To avoid having to file sales tax reports in 2008, I will only take orders until December 15, 2007. The 64-page booklet contains directory information and brief histories of non-institutional churches in northern Illinois, northwest Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Single copies are \$7 including sales tax, postage and handling, if mailed. Additional copies in the same mailing (or copies not involving shipping) are \$5 each. Order from:

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