



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Communicating In Christ

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

You might think that after almost 29 years of marriage a couple could communicate effectively and efficiently without substantial misunderstanding. You *might* think that if you have never been married or are only recently so, but you would be mistaken.

Karen and I often remark to one another about our apparent inability to communicate clearly about some of the simplest things. It is amazing how quickly presumption, defensiveness, selfishness, and a failure to listen carefully can turn an otherwise innocuous conversation into a tangled ball of tension. The Scriptural admonition to “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19) is *excellent* marital counsel.

Another good piece of advice was given to me by my Grandpa (Fred) Hennecke just prior to my wedding. He sidled up to me with that twinkle in his eye and slipped me a business card that said on the back, “Agree with your adversary quickly...Matt. 5:25.” I remember guffawing as I read it, and—though I am sure that he gave me his wry grin as our eyes met—I am now also sure that he meant it. That was neither disparagement of women in general nor of my bride specifically. It was sound teaching for those who wish to have a righteousness that exceeds that of religious hypocrites (Matt. 5:20).

Of course, the principles cited above from Jesus and James have application to more than just marriage. Relationships require communication. Yet, if any relationship is going to grow to its potential, communication is essential. It is not an option to just decide not to communicate simply because it is complicated. A decision to stop communicating would effectively be the end of any meaningful relationship.

One can see that the word *communication*

is related to other words such as *communion* and *community* which all come from the root idea of having things in common. Indeed, any meaningful partnership or fellowship is going to depend on communication despite its difficulty.

So, while I am not surprised by the difficulties that we all have with communication in our various relationships, I *am* concerned that saints who claim to have fellowship with Jesus Christ feel it is their liberty to refuse to communicate with their brothers and sisters in Christ about matters which impact their fellowship with Christ and one another.

Christians have generally been given the charge to be ready to give answer to those who question us about our hope in Jesus Christ.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet. 3:15)

Ours is not a private faith. “That’s none of your business!” should never be the reply of saints to those who inquire about what we believe and why. Indeed, Christians are all about communicating the message of the gospel in word and deed.

Since we have been called by our Lord to communicate with the *world* about matters of faith, it reasonably follows that we must be willing to do the same within our fellowship. That is exactly what we learn the first Christians did. Our fellowship is all about communication. We rejoice with one another. We weep with one another (Rom 12:15). We bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). We teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). We exhort one another (Heb. 3:13). We prod one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24). In short, we love one

another (1 Jn. 4:7-11) and hold one another accountable to the faith that we profess (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19,20).

It is the work of those who shepherd to look out for the souls of those entrusted to their oversight. Since these men are not gifted with knowing the minds of their charges, it is necessary for there to be communication (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11). When an elder seeks to communicate with you about your marriage, your children, your weaknesses, your abilities, your behavior, your priorities, your sins, your habits, etc., it is not appropriate to answer with, “That’s none of your business.” Refusing to communicate is unsubmitive and, ultimately, spiritually unprofitable (Heb. 13:17).

Jesus’ prescription for truly righteous behavior demands communication with one another *especially* if there is a history of conflict. God has no interest in our so-called worship of Him if we are unwilling to seek reconciliation with one another as brethren (Matt. 5:23,24). “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more...And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen...” (Matt. 18:15-17).

Communication is at the heart of our fellowship with God and one another. Without it, no fellowship is meaningful. Therefore, saints—in their marriages and their churches—must always be ready to communicate despite the complications. From giving a defense, to confronting a sinner, to seeking reconciliation, to holding one another accountable to the way of Christ...communication is essential.

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Sound Acronyms That Cannot Be Condemned

By AL DIESTELKAMP



Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, along with the popularity of texting on cell phones, are rapidly changing the way people communicate. I can't speak first-hand about texting since I have not succumbed to that form of communication. I'm still relying on that "old-fashioned" e-mail method. However, I do have a Facebook page, primarily as a lurker so that I am not completely out of the information loop.

I have noticed that a new vocabulary of abbreviations and acronyms is developing as a result of this phenomenon. In fact, sometimes I don't have any idea what some of my grandchildren are saying on their posts. I only hope that we don't raise a generation who cannot write in proper English, but I

digress from the points I want to make in this article.

I have become somewhat concerned with some of the language used, even among Christians, on their Facebook comments. Notably, the use of the acronym OMG seems to be creeping into the vocabulary of some Christians.

The expression "O, my God!" has become one of the most widely used expressions of surprise or amazement in our world today. These words would be perfectly good and appropriate if one were genuinely calling upon God for help. In fact, it is used by righteous men at least 21 times in some translations of the Bible (i.e., Ez. 9:6; Psa. 25:2;

Dan. 9:18), but never in the way it is being commonly used today.

Some, who would never think of actually uttering these words in vain, are beginning to use the substitute acronym. I can imagine some will be quick to defend this practice by saying that OMG can mean "O, my goodness," or "O, my gosh." We may want to discuss whether the use of such euphemisms fall within the category of "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:8), but no matter, the vast majority view OMG to mean "O, my God."

Among the things which grieves the Holy Spirit of God is "corrupt communication" (Eph. 4:28-29). Though the apostle was referring to that which proceeds from the mouth, I cannot imagine that the same would not apply to what is written. Words mean something! So, also do some acronyms.

"BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ELDERS"

By KARL DIESTELKAMP

No telling how many times brethren who are working hard to worship God in truth and purity and to preach the gospel and to work in every scriptural way have heard these words from brethren who move into their area. Wouldn't every faithful Christian prefer to be part of a local church with qualified elders? But that is almost never the lot of those who pioneer a new work in a needy area or who are trying to "hold the fort" when qualified elders have been lost to death or moving away. These hardy souls labor and sacrifice where they live, in behalf of the lost, often with less than a strong nucleus. Help from faithful Christians would be heartily welcomed and greatly appreciated.

"But, you see, you don't have elders." Quite right, *at the moment*. But where do migrating brethren think elders come from? If no one with ability and potential ever "stays put" long enough to help a local church develop qualified elders, then no church will ever have elders except those who have struggled through the process in the past and now have elders serving. How do you suppose the brethren in the first century managed until elders were appointed? Quite often there are complaints about having experienced ungodly behavior on the part of some in business meetings where there are no elders. That might well be a reason for leaving a congregation, *if* it will not correct the wrongdoers (Rom. 16:17), but do not assume that every church without elders will be a repeat of that. It takes time for men to develop and become qualified elders, but it is worth the effort and the wait. You could make a godly difference. Step up! Take a stand! Remember, "God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness (cowardice and timidity), 2 Tim. 1:7.

Of course we must do what we believe to be best for us and our families, but we must also "grow in grace and in knowledge" (2 Pet: 3:18) to where we are not only and always on the receiving end of the strength of others.

We sometimes hear a lot of similar discouraging words from those who choose to *worship elsewhere*: "But you don't have enough children... enough teenagers... enough eligible single people... enough whites, blacks, hispanics... enough college

grads... enough professionals... etc." Well, I'm reminded of Acts 16:9, "Come over into Macedonia, *and help us!*"

Oh, and by the way, if you should be one of those self-willed, strife prone individuals who turns necessary business meetings into personal vendettas that drive faithful brethren away—REPENT!

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Our *\$* Material PROSPERITY

By RAY FERRIS

In a previous article I challenged you to think about prosperity from some standpoints we do not normally consider when we think about the subject. In this article I want you to think about the subject in the usual realm—the way we are blessed in material things.

As we think about our total material prosperity, how many of us ever contrast the amazing blessings of our nation with most of the rest of the world? There are a few other rich nations, but we are blessed far beyond most. Part of that blessing is because of the freedoms we enjoy that are far superior to the rest of the world. Americans who have visited in some of the poverty-stricken nations—I need not name them—understand more realistically than other Americans what I mean.

People who are in “poverty” here, receiving some type of government “welfare”—state and/or federal—would be considered rich in much of the world. Even though the text of 1 Cor. 16:2 does not actually contain the word *God* in it, I think most Christians would readily agree that *He* is certainly involved in the prosperity we enjoy in such abundance. How often do we express the gratitude we should feel to the God who makes it all possible? How often do we think about that when we meditate on what portion of that *rich prosperity* should be shared in gospel work to reach lost souls?

Have you ever really asked yourself: “Am I living in selfish luxury, extremely grateful for the great blessing of spiritual freedom in Christ, while most of the world suffers in the bondage of sin, totally unaware of what the gospel could bring to them? Do we really believe “the gospel is for all” as we often sing? If so, what are *you* doing about it? How much of *your prosperity* are you now sharing so that someone can go tell them of Jesus and His love?

That question brings me to a point I believe most do not think about when prosperity is considered. Having spent more than sixty years as a gospel preacher, and thus having most of my income provided by churches, I realize there is a great difference in the “pay check” of the average worker in America and all who are called “self-employed.” For tax purposes a preacher has a dual status, and usually has to provide for *all* his taxes from the money received from churches—including income and Social Security taxes. It is similar for those who operate their own businesses. There are exceptions for some, but many workers in this

country have benefits in *their prosperity* that such people do not have.

When many people think of how they have been prospered, only the amount that they take to the bank is considered. Because I have had to supplement my income with various other work, and because I have prepared income taxes for myself, some of my family, and many others, I am fully aware that total prosperity for many people is much more than the actual check.

Every time a worker is paid he should receive some type of “pay stub” to show the total value of the benefits received. One half of the Social Security tax, the Medicare tax, the federal and state income tax, and any other taxes paid for him, are part of his prosperity. The premium for health insurance for the worker and his family, plus any life insurance, disability insurance, and any other insurance paid are benefits. The 401(k) benefits and other deducted retirement costs should be listed, and if he is setting money aside in any other savings plan it is prosperity. I am aware that all employees do not have all these benefits, but I am also aware that a high percentage do have many of them. For many such people the total wage is more than 30% higher than the actual listed wage. Thus many workers who make *only* \$30,000 per year are actually prospering far more than that.

I have emphasized the word “only” for two reasons: First, because most people with families are now struggling if the W-2 doesn’t show more than that for family income; Second, because my income *as a preacher* (with none of these benefits) never reached that level. After I “semi-retired” and began to draw Social Security income, so churches would not have to provide what I had provided for myself in Social Security taxes, I received my greatest income!!! My Social Security income was supplemented to a small degree in order to have livable income. For more than seven years I have had no regular income from churches. It is amazing how the Lord has blessed us, but I believe it is His promise to all who are “rich toward God,” and who seek “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Lk. 12:21; Matt. 6:33; Mal. 3:8-10).

All of this leads me to plead with you to consider seriously your giving when you worship each Lord’s day. I assure you I think often of my own responsibility in this realm. I have increased my contribution repeatedly in past years, and even since my “semi-retirement” as my cost-of-living increases have come, and I considered again my tremendous prosperity in every way. I am ask-

ing you to do nothing more than I do myself. When have you shared your cost-of-living increases with the Lord?

We all remember the record of Ananias and Sapphira (Ac. 5:1-11). The point of their problem was an effort to lie to God and His Holy Spirit about what they were giving (vv. 4,9). It seems to me that if one proposes to be giving “as God hath prospered him,” that he is asserting the amount given is an indication of that prosperity. Now, if that be true, my question is: Are you asserting what is not true? Can we lie by actions as well as words?

In Malachi 3:8-10, the question is: “Will a man rob God?” I believe we all know the implied answer would be: Of course not!!! But God asserted: “Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, ‘Wherein have we robbed thee?’ In tithes and offerings.” A few men who were Christians have stole church funds. Others have been accused. How would you feel if *the Lord* charged you with robbing Him?

The tithe for the Jews was required just to support the priesthood. By definition (both Bible and dictionary) the tithe is one-tenth. The tithe was required of all; rich and poor; those with large families and small families; all were commanded to give the tithe to support the priests. There were many, many other offerings and sacrifices required by the law of God. It is, of course true, that we do not live under the law of Moses, and thus tithing is not part of the law of Christ, but if one attempts to justify his theft, from God and His work, on that basis he is being totally irrational and thoughtless. The Jew did not tithe to evangelize; only to support the priests with his tithe and thus to “keep house” among his own people. But, he was required to *tithe* in order to do it.

God has charged His people now to preach the gospel to the whole world, and there is no way to do it except to support preachers (authorized—1 Cor. 9:1-14) and send the word to a lost world (Rom. 10:13-15). The *total prosperity* we enjoy is far superior to that of the Jews at any time. How could it possibly make sense that we try to justify giving less, and often far less, while we live in *luxurious prosperity*?

I believe every Christian ought to give more than one-tenth of his increase in prosperity. I would be scared to give as little as one-tenth of that with which God has made me prosper from time to time. How about you? Does *your* giving concern you? Could *you* be robbing God? Could *your* actions be a lie? Think on these things.

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HONORING PARENTS IN THEIR OLD AGE...WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

By RICK LIGGIN

By now, most of you will have probably already heard about the passing of Fred E. Pollock on Friday, December 10, 2011 at the age of eighty-five. Fred was a well-known, well-respected, and deeply devoted disciple of Christ, who spent his entire adult life in the service of our King. It was our privilege at the Paris Avenue church in Peoria, Illinois, to have Fred and his beloved wife Fran living among us for the last few years of his life. We were able to watch this man of moral courage and spiritual strength face down his last enemy, death, and gain the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. And let me tell you, as one who watched it personally, it was an inspiring thing to see.

My one regret for the church here is that we didn't really get to know Fred before his illness. You see, in 2008, when the Pollock's daughter, Mary Ann Grant, with her husband Bill, moved the older couple to live with them here in our area, Fred was already sick with Parkinson's and Lewy Body disease. His motor skills were already greatly diminished by his illness, and soon his cognitive abilities would be affected. That meant that we were only able to know Fred as a man who was physically ill, and not as the extremely capable man he had been all of his life.

We didn't get to know the man who was a chemical engineer with Proctor and Gamble; or the man who served on the board of directors at both Florida College and Guardian of Truth Foundation; or the man who was an elder for many years in at least two separate local churches. We didn't get to know the man who, together with his talented wife, taught marriage enrichment classes in congregations everywhere. I regret that this church didn't get to know that Fred Pollock...a man whose life of service was so apparent to all around him.

But this article isn't really about what we *didn't* get to see at Paris Avenue. Instead, it is about what we *did* get to see. And it's not really so much about Fred Pollock and his sweet wife Mary Frances. It's really about his daughter Mary Ann Grant and her husband Bill (one of our elders), who showed us how to honor our parents...even in their old age. The Bible clearly teaches us all to honor our parents (Ephesians 6:2; cf. Exodus 20:12), but what does that look like...especially when our parents are old? Let me try to help you with that by pointing to what we witnessed at Paris Avenue. Please understand that I do not want in any way to take away from how Fred and Fran's other children and grand children honored their

parents. I just want to tell you about what we saw at Paris Avenue and how it stands as an example to all of us as we help our parents in their old age.

It was amazing to watch Mary Ann and Bill as they served Fred and Fran. Always acting in Fred and Fran's best interest, Mary Ann and Bill did what ever it took to give their parents what they needed. At great personal expense, they brought their old, sick parents into their own home to live with them and to provide their care (Mark 7:9-13). They sacrificed so much...their social life, their finances, their energy, and their own health...just to do what was clearly a labor of love. Kevin and Emmy, the Grants only two children left at home, also made sacrifices...especially in terms of their parents' time and attention; yet they did it without complaint.

Both at home and in public, Mary Ann and Bill always treated Fred and Fran with the utmost dignity and respect. They were always tender, always loving, and always patient...even when it must have been very hard to do so. I never heard Mary Ann or Bill speak a disrespectful word to either Fred or Fran. Even when their mental capabilities and communication skills became severely inhibited, Mary Ann and Bill were still kind, still patient, and still respectful. I can still hear Mary Ann sweetly speaking to her mother, whose severe dementia keeps her in the same conversation over and over again; and I can still see her waiting ever so patiently for her dad to say what was clearly on his mind but so far from his uncooperative tongue. And it was so sweet to see them at church services, helping Fred and Fran to their seats, or with their coats, or with their song books. And it didn't matter what mishap may have occurred, there was no em-

barrassment or apology; just respect and dignity and kindness.

The day Fred died I was able to be there with the family; and maybe one of the more respectful and loving things that I ever saw was how Mary Ann patiently helped her mother understand that "daddy was gone." Fran's short term memory is so limited by her dementia that even taking a short nap means she wakes up with little or no memory of what happened before. When the funeral home finally came to take Fred's body, Fran had been sleeping. She awoke with no memory of Fred's death, and so wanted to know where he was. I can still see Mary Ann as she crawled on to the bed beside her mother, and once again, holding her mother close, helped Fran understand that "daddy was gone." She spoke to her mother with the same kindness and compassion that she had already used when her father first passed. It was heartbreaking on one hand; but on the other, it was so rich and so good. I can only pray that our children will honor Candy and me with the same kind of respect and dignity.

We may grow up and our parents may grow older, but there will never come a time when our duty to honor them will be relieved. Only when we have finally given them back to God will our responsibility to honor and respect them be complete...and then, we must continue to honor their memory. Yes, those of us here at Paris Avenue may have missed out on a valuable opportunity to witness the life of a great man who devotedly served the Lord. But I believe that in the end, we gained an opportunity of equal value! We got to see what it really means to honor your father and mother.

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