



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

July-August-September, 2011 • Volume 42, Number 3

Don't Let Them Bring You Down

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Bringing children up in the training and admonition of the Lord requires faith, intent, and perseverance. It has been correctly observed that raising children "isn't for wimps." For some, the level of the challenge is an excuse to compromise, while for others it is a perfecting and purifying upward calling.

Tests of godliness are greatest when they involve close relationships. The closer the relationship, the greater the opportunity for epic failure and spectacular success. This is why the sacrifice of young Isaac was such a faith demonstration for Abraham (Gen. 22; Heb. 11:17). Parents must not allow the bond they enjoy, and even crave, with their children to compromise the bond (fellowship) they have with God.

When a child is very young it is hard to imagine it could be anything but a joy to "bring them up." However, when a child develops a will of its own, parents at times must choose between God's will and the child's will. Often it will be physically and emotionally easier to leave them to their own devices. Proverbs warns that this "child left to himself brings shame..." (Prov. 29:15). Although it can be exasperating and create fissures in our relationships, we must not waver in our efforts to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Bill Cosby jokes that a parent's true goal is really just one thing: quiet. Unfortunately there is more truth to this than we may like to admit. It is certainly quieter physically, emotionally, and relationship-wise to allow our children to have their way. Training and discipline require effort and sometimes conflict, both of which we usually try to avoid in life. It's at times like these that we need to remember that doing nothing is doing something! "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13:24).

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord"

EPHESIANS 6:4

Children will attempt to wear you down. They learn early the effectiveness of crying, then tantrums, then pouting, then begging, then threatening and shaming. They are testing if "no" means "no." They are testing if this is the "training of the Lord" or just the parent's selfish whim.

Children are supposed to be learning that honoring their father and mother is "...the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3). They are being taught to obey "...in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). It isn't about them always understanding why right is right. It certainly isn't about them always agreeing that something is right. They are learning that you do things because they are right.

Right things aren't changed by crying, tantrums, pouting, begging, threatening and shaming. When such reactions wear parents down, resulting in compromise, children learn that "right" can be negotiated, compromised and changed. In the end, parental compromise of what is right in the name of peace can produce in children a sense of lawlessness and anarchy which touches both their physical and spiritual lives.

We're to "bring up" our children, but if we're not careful they can "bring us down." Perhaps the greatest threat we face is in allowing parental love and loyalty to be perverted so as to train and admonish parents in the ways of the world. For example, parents may swallow the line: "I love my child too much to tell them 'no'" or "I couldn't bear to discipline my child." Although these

wear the mask of love, they are not of God, but of the world.

We know that parents are tempted to change their convictions about modest clothing because their children want to be considered in style, attractive or popular. Heart strings are pulled when children say they are considered weird because they can't stay out all night, go to a dance, or go to an immoral movie. Parents may see tears when they refuse to buy into the latest materialistic trend, opting for contentment with what they have. Refusing to miss church assemblies for school events, sports, and vacations will seem unreasonable to most, but not to godly parents. Even in worst case scenarios, teaching and rebuke will not be opposed, moral teaching like God's law on divorce and remarriage will not be rewritten, and church discipline will not be rejected by Christians, even when application is made to their children. And when children decide that the God of the Bible too strict or politically incorrect, godly parents will not welcome the diluted idol god invented by modern religion to deceive children and parents alike.

Parents of faith are convinced that application of God's will to their children's lives is right and therefore must not be compromised. Parents of faith are intent in their unwavering active training of their children in the way of God because it is what is best for them. Parents of faith persevere, holding to the application of truth no matter what the real or threatened consequence to self, child, or others.

Godly parents bring their children to Jesus because there is no other One to "bring them up." "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). Parents, bring up your children in the training and admonition of the Lord. Do not let your children bring you, and them, down in the training and admonition of the world.

940 N. Elmwood Drive, Aurora, Illinois 60506
e-mail: davdiestel@yahoo.com

GIVING UP ON THE BIBLE CHURCH

By ROBERT E. SPEER

Many years ago—Ouch! Has it really been that long?—my family and I responded to a plea from another family to join them in a work they were trying to establish on the southern shores of Lake Superior. When we arrived the number of families, including ours, was two. Several months later, the man in the other family was given a job promotion, so he and his family moved away, leaving us alone. The nearest church in the state was 200 miles away.

We invited another family to join us, and then a third, and not long after that a young couple came to join our ranks. The numbers grew slowly at the time, and the church continues to meet in that community. It is still comparatively small but, small or not, a faithful band of saints is the legacy that began 52 years ago.

Two things stand out in memory: The closeness we felt among those few members, and the difficulty of maintaining survival level support. The common reply among those who bothered to respond, with variations, was, “You don’t have enough people to justify our financial support.” I struggled with this for five years, occasionally falling back on part-time secular work to feed the family and pay the rent. And then, with regrets, I moved on.

This would be a pitiful story if I were the only preacher to face this indignity. More the pity, however, with others involved, this story has been repeated many times over the years. And the attitude continues. I hasten to say that our brethren, when adequately informed, are the most generous people in the world. Yet, far too often, far too many who are capable of supporting men in difficult places have given up on the “little”

church; the numbers, they say, do not justify supporting preachers working among saints so few.

That attitude is still with us, as proved by two recent situations coming to my attention: two different states, two small congregations and two experienced preachers willing to work with them. It has been suggested that if the numbers were larger—say, 75 or 80 people—and/or the preacher better known, support would be provided.

What is wrong with this picture? Several things, and it is observed that there are preachers who contribute to the baleful situation. To illustrate: A young preacher begins his work with a small church. Then, after getting some experience and some “pulpit polish” he moves up; that is, to a larger congregation, one that is self supporting. Then, with a bit of ambition and a little more time he is able to obtain a position with a still larger church, one not only self supporting but one with elders and deacons. This is not an indictment of all young preachers, but if you are able to read this you are able to recognize that it does happen.

Swinging the pendulum the other way, I am aware of a congregation that has grown to the point that it is not only self supporting and guided by the wisdom and example of godly elders but has also determined to have a young preacher join them and their seasoned preacher. In a time frame to be determined they will be instrumental, after the young preacher has gained experience, knowledge and confidence, in sending out one of these men to begin a new work. Which one? The older, seasoned preacher will be sent out to begin and work with a church without elders while the younger one will remain under the tutelage and encouragement of elders. This case is rare. What a wonderful thing it would be if it were emulated over and over!

My appeal is that congregations capable of supporting a preacher “in the field” not judge the worthiness of the work on the basis of head count. Assuming Jesus knew what He was talking about when He said “a labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7, KJV; or, “a laborer is worthy of his wages,” NKJV), I plead for the support of competent men who are willing to work with smaller numbers in view of development and growth of those groups. Please don’t make beggars—and paupers—of those who are willing to go where others will not.

Indeed, preach the word! May God bless you in this effort.

596 Marseille Blvd., Winchester, KY 40391
e-mail: robertspeer596@bellsouth.net

Saved Like The Thief

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Whenever we have opportunity to study the Bible with people who have been taught in sectarian churches, a discussion about the necessity of water baptism for salvation is often met with the question, “But what about the thief on the cross?”

Occasionally one will even say, “I just want to be saved like the thief on the cross.” For many years I employed the usual argumentation to show that thief lived and died under a different dispensation. While that is a legitimate argument, and one that eventually must be made, lately I’ve taken a slightly different approach: I agree with them that the only way *anyone* can be saved is the very same way the thief was saved.

Having their attention, I remind them that the thief was not the first to be saved by Jesus speaking their sins forgiven. Three of the gospel writers tell how a paralytic was brought by some friends to Jesus (probably for physical healing), who seeing their faith, said to the man, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Matt. 9:2; also Mk. 2:5 and Lk. 5:20).

On another occasion, Jesus, after allowing a sinful woman to kiss and anoint His feet, said to her, “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (Lk. 7:48-50). Her faith, combined with Jesus’ words provided her salvation from sins.

Even though Jesus didn’t use the words, “Your sins are forgiven” to the thief on the cross, He definitely implied it when He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:43).

So, what was it that saved the thief on the cross? It was the faith he expressed when he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Lk. 23:42), combined with Jesus’ words.

Now back to my declaration: The only way *anyone* can be saved is the very same way the thief was saved—by Jesus’ word! Jesus isn’t physically with us here on earth to speak our sins forgiven, but he left His word in His last will and testament. That word is just as powerful as it was when He walked on this earth. Listen to the words of Jesus: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk. 16:16).

Jesus, in commissioning His apostles to “make disciples of all the nations,” not only told them to baptize them, but also to teach them “to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19-20). Later we find His disciples telling sinners to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” That is the word of Christ!

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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

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

E-mail aldiestel@gmail.com

Web Page www.thinkonthesethings.com

The Night We Cancelled Bible Study

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

“It was a dark and stormy night...” Wednesday, May 25th, 2011, tornado warnings had been issued for our immediate area. At 6:30 p.m., a glance at the weather radar on my computer revealed a line of angry red storms headed right for us. My guess was that they would hit Pontiac close to 7:00 p.m...Bible study time. I made a quick phone call to the other elder just moments later, and we decided to call as many as we could and tell them to stay home. I knew we would not catch everyone, so I went to the church building. Sure enough, one was already there waiting in his car. As he left, another couple from out of town drove up and parked a good distance away and walked to the building. As I apologized and explained our rationale for canceling, the wind picked up mightily and it started to pour. “Right decision,” I thought to myself. (The previous Sunday night’s devastation in Joplin, Missouri, was still fresh on my mind.) I invited the couple to go to our house (three blocks away) to wait out the storm. The power flickered off and back on again. I stayed at the building until about 7:05. As I got in the car to come home, the winds had already subsided, and I got a phone call saying the warning was called off. “Wrong decision?” I wondered to myself.

This article is not about my brief second-guessing of our decision to cancel a Wednesday night Bible study. We’ve done that before, we’ll likely have occasion to do it again. Yet, this caused me to give consideration to the motives behind the choices we make.

As beings created in the image of God, we have been given the responsibility to make choices and decisions. God could have preprogrammed us to do only what He wants us to do, but it is obvious that the sovereign God chose to grant us free will. To suggest that human free will is an affront to God’s sovereignty is itself an affront to the sovereignty of God because it ignores the fact that God has consistently given man the responsibility to discern and choose between good and evil (e.g. Deut. 30:15-20; Josh. 24:15; Prov. 1:28-33; Heb. 5:12-14, etc.).

From the beginning, man has demonstrated a propensity for rationalizing his evil choices. Scripture abounds with examples of how we do this. Eve knew God’s expectations (Gen. 3:2,3), but she allowed her own lusts to cloud her decision-making. She rationalized that the fruit was *good* for food. She figured that something that appealing could not be wrong. She reasoned that the wisdom acquired would be a *good* thing (vs. 6). However, such lust-laden decisions are



not limited to choices between inherent good and evil but include what many would categorize as liberties. Beware, it is not wrong for things to be tasty, beautiful, or mind-expanding; but if those are the primary motivations for our rationale to partake of them, then we are ripe for being seduced by evil.

While we are capable of offering what we think are *good* reasons to justify our actions, God is not mocked. He knows the difference between our *given* reasons and our *real* reasons. When Saul was confronted about his failure to destroy the Amalekites, his *good* reasons included the opportunity to make sacrifices to God, but the *real* reason was that he feared the people more than he feared God (1 Sam. 15:13-24). When God asked Adam why he was hiding himself, Adam said it was because he was naked. That sounds like a good reason. When God asked Adam if he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam explained that the woman God had given to him gave it to him. This was true! However, the *real* reason that Adam ate of the fruit and hid himself was because he listened to his wife rather than listening to God (Gen. 3:17).

Let’s face it. Sometimes we make the choices that we do simply because we are afraid to lead as we ought. This applies not only to kings and husbands but to parents, elders, preachers, and all our varied roles in relationships with others. We have to make it our aim to be well-pleasing to God (2 Cor. 5:9), for if it is people that we are *primarily* seeking to please, then we are not Christians (Gal. 1:10).

As noted before, our approach to godly decision-making does not apply just to choices between inherent good or evil. Decisions between two or more permissible options *still* require us to keep spiritual principles foremost in our decision-making. What may inherently be a liberty may not be helpful or even right to do, depending on the circumstances (1 Cor. 10:23,24). Are our choices simply based on what’s best for us? Do we consider and give preference to what might be best for others? We should (Rom. 12:10). We do not glorify God when we exercise a “right” without consideration of whether or not it helps others and is in harmony with godly principles.

Christians sometimes refer to a person’s scriptural “right” to divorce. However, the action of divorce is never presented as a

“right” in Scripture. We infer the “right” from Jesus’ exception to His teaching against the violence of divorce (Matt. 19:9). However, Jesus never intended that inferred “right” to be used in violation of the rest of His teaching on how we treat others (cf. the Sermon on the Mount—Matt. 5-7 or His teaching immediately preceding—Matt. 18:15-35). Indeed, some will use (and creatively expand) Jesus’ exception as *their* reason for divorce, even though they have *real* reasons for which Jesus did not give exception. To allow men to separate what God has joined together without challenging their motives simply because they have “the right” is a violation of the spirit of our Lord’s teaching.

When Martha on one occasion entreated Jesus to tell Mary to help with the serving, His response was that Mary had made the better choice in sitting at Jesus’ feet to hear His teaching (Lk. 10:38-42). I know that many people bristle at this story because Martha was doing good in showing hospitality. Serving others is not only praised in Scripture; it is commanded. However, the truth is Martha was “*distracted with much serving*” and was “*worried and troubled about many things*” that, while good, were not as important as what Mary had chosen to do.

Often our lives are so cluttered and consumed by things that are “good” that there is little room for the things that are *better*. We may have the liberty or the “right” to do a host of things, but if those *things* distract us from doing what is better, then we are abusing our liberties and rights.

Whether or not to meet on any given evening for Bible study is a matter of liberty. Therefore, whether or not to cancel such a study as we did is a matter of personal judgment. Perhaps you would not have made the call we made. Let us be careful about judging one another on these matters of liberty. However, if the *real* reason I wanted to cancel Bible study that evening was to avoid the embarrassing fact that I (the preacher) had not done my Bible lesson (saved by the tornado warning!), then surely you see that I would have abused a liberty.

The realm of liberty is not a spiritual vacuum wherein God has no opinion about the choices we make and our reasons for them. Indeed, it is into that realm that Christ has called us. Therefore, His principles must accompany us. There is no realm of liberty where Christ does not go with us. Therefore, let us be careful about the choices we make and the reasons we give because God knows if the *real* reason is to love and serve or if it is simply an occasion for the flesh (Gal. 5:13).

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764
e-mail: adiestel@frontier.com

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CONGREGATION

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The words in the title of this article are sometimes used when trying to justify some decision. Brethren might suggest a preacher ought to find another place to work, ostensibly “for the good of the congregation.” Or, without any suggestion from the brethren, a preacher might decide that it is in the best interests of the congregation for him to move on to other challenges. Sometimes these are just an excuse, while at other times they may legitimate reasons. Certainly, the good of the congregation should affect all our decisions.

We have some biblical examples of individual as well as collective decisions that were made based on “the good of the congregation.” Some of these were wise choices; others were not:

God used this argument when He called Moses to leave his comfortable surroundings to lead the Hebrew children out of Egypt (Ex. 3:7-10). Admittedly, Moses was somewhat resistant at first, but eventually came around to God’s point of view. At age eighty, Moses’ willingness was for the benefit of the congregation—not himself.

After God miraculously freed the Hebrew children from bondage, and challenged them to take possession of the promised land, they had a choice to make. They undoubtedly thought it in the best interest of the congregation to believe the ten unfaithful spies and reject the minority report of Joshua and Caleb (Num. 13-14). This, of course, proved to be an excuse that led to 40 years of wandering, instead of great blessings.

Much later, the shipmates of Jonah de-

ecided, “for the good of the congregation,” to throw the prophet overboard (Jon. 1). On the surface that might seem to have been the wrong decision, but since it was part of God’s plan, it was the right decision.

When a problem arose in the Jerusalem church over the perceived neglect of a minority group among them (Ac. 6), the apostles proposed a solution that proved to be not only in the best interest of the congregation, but also “pleased the whole multitude” (v.5).

I’m sure the disciples in Jerusalem thought they were acting in the best interest of the congregation when they failed to believe that Saul of Tarsus was a true disciple. To their credit, when presented with the evidence from the mouth of Barnabas they accepted him among them “for the good of the congregation” (Ac. 9:26-28).

After the apostle Paul was resisted so

much by the Jews in Corinth, he shook his garments and declared that he would “go to the Gentiles” (Ac. 18:6). Later Apollos went to that same area and was able to “show from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Ac. 18:24-28). Here we have an example of two very different decisions, both proving to be “for the good of the congregation.”

The apostle Paul’s instructions to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:1-13) regarding discipline, telling them to “purge out the old leaven” and to “put away from yourselves that wicked person,” was “for the good of the congregation.”

Each Christian, when making decisions, ought to take into consideration the good of the congregation of which he is a member. This may require some sacrifice of desires or ambitions. It’s not too much to ask, considering all our Lord sacrificed “for the good of His congregation” (Jn. 3:16).

Men’s Weekend Bible Study

The eighth annual *Men’s Weekend Bible Study* will be held Friday night through Saturday afternoon September 16-17, 2011 at Ross Camp near Lafayette, Indiana. For the past several years there have been two annual men’s studies, one in Illinois and one in southern Indiana. The two groups will combine efforts into one weekend at a central location. Following are the topics and speakers:

Blessed Are The Peacemakers

Challenging Us to Resolve Conflict Through Christ

Friday PM: *Introduction* ~ Boyd Sellers

The Four G’s ~ Joe Novak

Saturday AM: *The Progression of An Idol* ~ Jeremy Dehut

Confession Brings Freedom ~ Allen Roth

The Role of the Church ~ Andy Diestelkamp

Forgiving As God Forgives ~ Jeremy Dehut

Saturday PM: *Panel Forum* ~ moderated by Rick Liggins

For more information and online registration go to www.menswbs.com, or contact:

Jeremy Dehut - (317) 670-8927 - email: dehut@gmail.com

Andy Diestelkamp - (815) 844-5100 - email: adiestel@frontier.com

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Postage (U.S. & Canada)	402.75
Foreign Postage	39.20
Return Postage (22)	9.68
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 536.63
Funds available for past issue	954.27
Surplus	\$ 417.64

Donations (as of 8/8):

Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	\$ 50.00
Anonymous, FL	20.00
Anonymous, IL	300.00
Anonymous, IN	25.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 395.00
Surplus from past issue	417.64
Funds for this issue	\$ 812.64

Our thanks to those who voluntarily help to cover the costs of publication. Because we must renew our annual mailing permit (\$185) this issue is expected to cost about \$685, which would leave a balance of approximately \$128 toward the cost of the next issue.

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