

*“For God has not given us
a spirit of fear,
but of power and of love
and of a sound mind”*

2 TIMOTHY 1:7



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What God Has NOT Given Us

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

We talk a lot about what God *has* given us in Christ, but we don't think as much about what God *has not* given us.

We might wonder what the point would be since God hasn't given it. So we don't have it; so what? However, the point is that we are to accept, embrace, and live what God *has* given—so the converse is also true; we are not to accept, embrace, and live what God *has not* given!

In the context of 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul is reminding Timothy to “stir up the gift of God which is in you” (1:6). “Be all you can be” and “Serve God with your all” is what he's writing.

What could stifle that? *Fear!*

God Has NOT Given Us A Spirit of Fear

Yassar Arafat was a leader of several Islamic nationalist groups which influenced Arab countries from the 1960s to about 2000. He was accused of masterminding Middle East violence and terrorism. A man tells of meeting Arafat and talking about Jesus. He was surrounded by heavily armed men at an undisclosed location. He said he didn't know if he would live or die. Some present tried to stop him, yet he continued. Arafat silenced those who interrupted. Arafat was kind and appreciative and continued contact afterward. When asked about being scared, the man said he wasn't afraid. He said, “If I died, what better way to go to the Lord?”

What would fear have done to the above story? Sometimes what we call “political correctness,” “tact,” and “taking it slowly” is really just fear on our part.

In order to “stir up the gift of God which is in you,” we are going to have to stop being afraid. Fear causes reluctance. It causes us to hide our lights.

*“Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good
works and glorify your
Father in heaven”*

MATTHEW 5:16

Our spirit is the thinking, reasoning, choosing part of us. It's that part of us that makes us what we are: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). That inner part of us is not afraid because God has re-created our spirit to not contain fear—fear is contrary to its nature. God has not simply emptied our spirit of fear, He has replaced it with a spirit that doesn't contain fear. He has crowded fear out by giving us a spirit “of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

God HAS Given Us...

Power — We aren't afraid like other people because God has given us not a spirit of fear but a spirit “of power.” Thayer's Lexicon tells us that this word has the idea of “strength, ability, power”; and then he says, “power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature.” When we plug this into 2 Timothy 1:7, we see that the power to overcome fear doesn't reside in our own abilities. We don't fear because God changes our inner person and the inner person He creates in us is not by nature fearful. It is by nature strong, able, and powerful! Do we open ourselves up enough in faith for God to change us at this level? What, that God asks of us, can we not do if our spirit is 100% of God and for God?

*“I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me”*

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

Love — It's easy to welcome the spirit of love God gives us, but we may fail to recognize how it removes fear and

motivates action. Having a spirit of love means more than not hating. It moves us to do positive acts of love. We love God and others because who we are has changed and there is now no place for hatred in us. When our spirit is given us of God and is “of love,” our thoughts and actions will follow!

*“By this all will know that you are My
disciples, if you have love for
one another”*

JOHN 13:35

A Sound Mind — Disciples of Christ aren't crazy. We haven't abandoned reason. We are clear thinking and self-controlled. We don't live in fear, not because we avoid all fearful situations, but because we remain clearheaded even in intense situations; and we know something that fearful-spirited people don't know. We know that we don't live for this life. We know our hope is based on infallible truth and the guaranteed promises of God. Nothing can shake our spirit to divert attention from the Author of our faith or separate us from His love. What fear could intimidate a spirit like this?

*“looking unto Jesus,
the author and finisher
of our faith, who for the
joy that was set before Him
endured the cross,
despising the shame,
and has sat down at
the right hand of the
throne of God”*

HEBREWS 12:2

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

A TIME TO DIE

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Early in his list of things for which there is “a time,” Solomon reminds us of what we already know, that there is “a time to die” (Eccl. 3:2). Indeed, as I remember my father saying on many occasions, “The old *must* die, and the young *may!*”

Regarding our physical bodies, we tend to try to extend life as long as possible, even sometimes utilizing artificial life-supports when available. However, there comes a time when it is “time to die”; and, for one who has “kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7), it is far better to “depart and be with Christ” (Phil. 1:23). In such cases, even though the deceased will be greatly missed, there will be no need to “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

History has shown that what is undeniably true regarding the demise of our physical lives is also true regarding local congregations. Seldom will you find a local congregation of the Lord’s people

Editor’s Note:

Think and the Diestelkamp Name

From the very beginning, our masthead has indicated that this paper is published “by the Diestelkamp family.” We assumed that our readers understood that not everyone who shares our last name is responsible for the content of this publication.

Those who are familiar with our “branch” of the family tree know that there are a few issues even among us about which we have differing convictions. Occasionally these differences show up in articles published in *Think*.

We wish to remind our readers (including family members) that the views expressed in any particular article are those of the author and are not *necessarily* shared by everyone with that last name.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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Editor AL DIESTELKAMP
260 N. Aspen Drive
Cortland, IL 60112
(815) 756-9840

E-mail aldiestel@gmail.com

Web Page www.thinkonthesethings.com

that has survived much longer than two or three generations without abandoning scriptural authority. Even some of the vibrant churches of the first century which had been taught by the apostles of our Lord soon apostatized or ceased to exist, so we should not be shocked when it happens in the twenty-first century.

Some may wonder why any group of faithful Christians would ever reach a point when disbanding a local church would even need to be considered. I cannot speak to the situation in other parts of the country; but in the upper Midwest, where I have lived and worked most of my life, I have seen times when churches were growing and new congregations were being established. This was especially true in the 1950s and ’60s when many Christians from the south moved in and provided local churches with a greater working nucleus that made evangelism more effective. Eventually, with the migration of industry and business more to the south and with the resulting changes in the economy, some churches that were once vibrant have dwindled down to a handful of Christians.

Perhaps another contributing factor in the decline of faithful churches is the changing expectations of the general public as to the real purpose of the church. With the emergence and popularity of independent community churches that put less emphasis on doctrine and more on entertainment, those who visit our assemblies are often expecting something we cannot scripturally provide. Thus, they don’t have any interest in serious Bible studies that would lead them to salvation.

Probably the biggest factor in the decline in local churches is a decline in commitment toward the work of the church. Anyone who has been intimately involved in the beginning of a new congregation will remember the zeal that accompanied it. It was an exciting time that produced a commitment to the work even as they struggled to survive. Unfortunately, that “honeymoon” period often does not last and devolves into a period of “status-quo” that leads to discouragement and eventual stagnation.

Often declining churches have to depend almost totally on men from other congregations to do the preaching and teaching. This, in turn, adversely impacts the work of the congregations where these men are members and also need them for teaching and leadership.

As with the physical body, when a congregation reaches the point that it is merely “keeping house” and is in an area where there are other congregations available, perhaps it is “a time to die.” Of course, that decision cannot be mandated

from without and is strictly up to the members of that local church; but they would do well to base their decision on what is in the best interest of Christ’s kingdom rather than on pride or convenience.

Please understand, I am not referring to churches located in remote places where they have no choice but to continue as is. That is commendable! I’m referring only to those who are reluctant to let a dying church die when they have other reasonable options.

I anticipate that I may receive some criticism for the opinions I am expressing in this article (and I readily admit they are opinions). I have already acknowledged that any decision regarding the future of any congregation must remain with its own members; but I would hope that, should they choose to continue on, they recognize their need to do more than merely keep the church house doors open.

I realize that, just as it is hard to accept the death of a loved one, it is also hard to accept the need to “let go” of a once-successful congregation that is now only functioning due to being on “life-supports.” I suspect that some may view the death of a congregation as an acknowledgement of failure, but perhaps they ought to rejoice in past accomplishments and recognize the reality of the current situation. After all, that puts them in the same category as the first century churches of Antioch, Smyrna, and Philadelphia—all good congregations that finally died.

GOD AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

“A righteous man regards the life of his animal”

PROVERBS 12:10

From the beginning, the Lord gave humanity dominion over the animal world (Gen. 1:26). Prior to the flood, God limited man’s diet to fruits and vegetables (Gen. 1:29) but later authorized him to eat meat if the animals were properly bled (Gen. 9:3-4).

From ancient times, man has used his God-given right to own animals and has even domesticated some of them. However, man’s dominion over animals does have its limits. It is clear that God is an animal lover. Even beasts of burden were protected by the Lord who said, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” (Deut. 25:4).

Our featured proverb reveals that the abuse of one’s animal is not right but is an act of wickedness.

—Al Diestelkamp

SUPPER...MORE THAN A MEAL

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Eating out has become much more commonplace than it was years ago. Karen and I rarely go out to eat. Certainly, we eat out more often now that we are not paying for seven people each time. Still, to me, eating out is an event. It's a date. It's special. When I eat a meal, it is almost always with somebody, and I despise eating at a restaurant by myself.

Whenever I eat out and see someone eating by himself, I think, "That's sad." Who wants to experience an event by himself? I realize that for many, eating out is not a special event. For some, food is just fuel for the body, and eating is a chore. But when I see a guy sitting at a booth in Panera Bread with a beautiful-looking salad and he's *by himself*, I ask, "Why?" If you are really *just* fueling the body, then why eat something beautiful? And if you are going to eat something beautiful, don't you want to share the event with others? "Wow, that's a big, beautiful salad!" "Isn't it, though? Hey, that soup smells good. What kind is it?" "French onion. It's my favorite!" Before the meal is over, you have talked about work, the kids, concerns, controversies, fun times, etc.

A SHORTAGE OF HEADLESS CHRISTIANS

We read with admiration (in Matthew 14) about a brave man of God. He always put his personal safety and feelings aside when the need arose to teach someone the truth. John, the baptizer, saw the need to warn and teach King Herod concerning a matter which pertained to Herod's personal life. "It is not lawful for you to have her," was John's remarks to the powerful leader.

As a result of this truthful rebuke, John was eventually beheaded. He surely must have known the risks of rebuking such an official, yet he did what was right.

Today, many Christians refuse to discuss controversial subjects because they are afraid! Oh, they're not in danger of losing their heads, but they are afraid they will be disliked by some (and they're probably correct). Or, they're afraid some might get their feelings hurt and quit attending or quit giving.

No matter what the reason is for not teaching those who need instruction (even if the subject is personal or embarrassing), it is not a good enough reason. The passive attitude that is so prevalent today indicates that not many Christians are willing to put their heads on the block for truth. Isn't it a pity?

~Al Diestelkamp



Such is the nature of eating in general. The supper table is a place for the sharing of things from the mundane to the divine. It is a place where we connect and bond as a family. Lest we think this is only a modern idyllic image, notice Psalm 128:1-4 which uses eating at a table with wife and children to symbolize the blessing of one who fears the LORD.

In Scripture, suppers are typically presented as a gathering to share in something more than the literal food. This is true whether the people involved are worldly or spiritually minded. Herod threw himself a birthday party and invited the important people in his domain to his supper (Mk. 6:21). When Jesus went to the home of Mary and Martha, "they made him a supper" and "Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him" and others were present to witness Mary anointing Jesus' feet with oil (Jn. 12:1-3). Supper was an event.

Notice how Jesus used suppers as illustrations in His teaching. On one occasion when He was at the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees, He challenged the one who invited Him to, "When you give a dinner or a supper...invite the poor, maimed, lame and blind," encouraging him that he would "be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Lk. 14:1-14). It was then that one sitting at the table with Jesus observed, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" The assumed blessing was not eating bread by oneself in the kingdom of God but eating bread with others.

In response, Jesus told a parable about a great supper to which many were invited but from which many excused themselves with a variety of lame reasons. In response to the rejection, the master instructed his servants to invite the poor and lame and as many others as they could so that his house would be filled. The point of Jesus' parable was to warn those with whom He was eating "that none of those men who were invited [but rejected the invitation] shall taste my supper" (Lk. 14:15-24). The warning was not about missing an opportunity to taste food but about not being able to share in the event. Specifically, Jesus was warning His Pharisee host and all present for that

event that if they rejected His invitation, *they* would not "eat bread in the kingdom of God." Again, it's not about not eating bread as much as not sharing in the event.

Of course, one of the most famous suppers was the Passover meal that Jesus shared with His disciples the night He was betrayed by one with whom He supped (Lk. 22:15-22; Jn. 13:3,4,26). It was in this context that the Lord took the bread and the cup and gave special significance to them in what would become a memorial supper of His body and blood "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Jesus said He would not drink that cup again "until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (v. 29). Paul connects this event to what he calls "the Lord's Supper" in which saints came together as a church to "eat this bread and drink this cup" "in remembrance of" Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:18-25). Again, this supper is not merely the breaking of bread but involves a sharing with one another in remembering and proclaiming Christ as He instructed. This is the fellowship meal of the Lord that proclaims His death until He comes (vs.26).

Finally, regardless of how you interpret the book of Revelation, there is the "marriage supper of the Lamb of God" to which all the blessed ones have been called (Rev. 19:9). It's not about the food. It's about being together before the throne of God for eternity. It's an event that you do not want to miss.

Unfortunately, modern concepts of "fellowship meals" or "church suppers," though encouraging togetherness, are more carnal than spiritual as they support feeding fleshly appetites to attract people to the church and keep them in the fold. This institutionalizing of hospitality and the breaking of bread that ought to be happening from house to house (Ac. 2:46; 1 Cor. 11:22) burdens churches with much more than the physical needs of destitute saints (cf. 1 Tim. 5:16). It distracts its participants from the primary spiritual work of the church which is promoting growth through feeding on the word of God (cf. Ac. 2:42; 20:28; Heb. 10:24,25; 1 Pet. 5:2, etc.). A feast upon the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:48-58) ought to arouse more meaningful fellowship and stronger bonds than anything that physical food can offer. That it often does not is not a failure of the word but of those who have not developed a taste for the word (cf. 1 Pet. 2:2,3) and, therefore, do not hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6).

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764
e-mail: andydiestelkamp@gmail.com

The First Human Relationship

By STEVE FONTENOT

In the beginning, God made man. But God saw that man was “alone” and it was “not good” (Gen. 2:18). So He created from man a “helper” to relieve the loneliness—the woman. He brought her to the man and they entered into the *first* human relationship.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife.” (Gen. 2:24, ESV). When daughters marry with their parents’ approval, they are “given” in marriage (Deut. 7:3). The man “leaves” and the woman is “given.” Although the parent-child relationship remains and should be cherished, the “leaving” and the “giving” make the husband-wife relationship *first* by God’s plan and decree.

This “leaving” and “giving” needs to be more than a ceremony at the wedding. Parents need to understand and prepare *themselves* for this change in relationship. When parents cling to their children, interfere in their relationships, and pout because they are no longer “first” in their little darling’s eyes, they are *wrong*. Instead of “running home to momma and daddy”

to parents standing by with welcoming arms, God’s plan is that the husband and wife be committed to one another and to this relationship that has now become *first*.

The couple getting married needs to understand this change in relationship. When husbands and wives make their parents’ wishes and happiness their first priority, they are *wrong*. When parents’ wishes and happiness still dominate, it robs the husband-wife relationship of the closeness and devotion that will promote security, love, and warmth *between them*.

A man wants and needs to know he is “first” in his wife’s heart, and a woman likewise needs the assurance that she is the priority of her man’s love. If both parties are not ready for this change in allegiance when they marry, *they are not ready for marriage*. Men and women who are not demonstrating and cultivating this priority to their mates, need to *repent*.

While children are expected to honor and care for their parents (Ex. 20:12; Matt. 15:4-6), honor and care should *first* be shown to their *mates*; and the evidence ought to be such that a mate is confident he or she is *first*. We joke about “daddy’s girls” and “momma’s boys,” but the *first* “girl” in man’s heart ought to be his *wife*; and the *first* guy in a woman’s devotion ought to be her husband.

Likewise—while parents are expected to provide for their children’s material, emotional, and spiritual needs—the *first* relationship they entered into and the *first* one God made, was the husband-wife relationship. Devotion to children should not be allowed to rob either the man or the woman of the love, devotion, tenderness, and care that was pledged when they married and entered this sacred relationship. It should remain “first.”

Men must work to provide for their

families. Women are “workers at home” (Tit. 2:5)

and may also work outside the home to help provide.

But secular jobs and careers are not *first* to

a godly man, nor will secular work be the *first* priority of a godly, informed woman. After people have been married for a while, they often tend to assume the love that was enjoyed in their early years will always be there and allow themselves to neglect one another for careers and “being a good employee.”

Just as a relationship with an employer may deteriorate if attention and devotion to job declines, so the relationship with a mate will deteriorate when it is no longer given *first* priority with the daily devotion and attention that demands.

Note that this article is about the first *human* relationship. Commitment to the *first* relationship of *all*, and the responsibility that demands, will provide the solid foundation for a long, loving, and satisfying relationship between a husband and wife: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the *first* and great commandment” (Matt. 22:37,38).

Yes, it may be difficult to juggle everything, but that doesn’t change the basic responsibility we have to put our mates *first*. If we can’t because we are “too busy,” then *we are too busy!* Let’s get back to putting “first” things *first*.

18542 Crestline Rd., Humble, Texas 77396
e-mail: sp63@mac.com



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