

We're 'On the Move'

The Lord willing, on or about June 16th, we will move to the nearby town of Cortland, Illinois. This is a local move and is not due to any change in our work with the church in Sycamore.

This also will require a move of my office, as well as the equipment used in the printing this paper.

Please take note of the new address in the publisher's box on the back page. Our telephone number will not change.

Al & Connie Diestelkamp

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 28

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Number 2

Set Your Mind On Things



By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

Many things in this life vie for our attention. All sorts of entities (commercial, political, social and spiritual) seek to attract us to their products or causes. They want just a moment of our time to make an appeal to our minds. Often we find ourselves being distracted from the things that matter most by the things that matter least. Setting proper priorities is essential to a Christian's spiritual survival.

In Colossians 3:1 the apostle Paul reasons that if we've been raised with Christ, then we should seek those things that are above. Clearly, his admonitions to these early Christians indicate that some of them were not continuing to seek spiritual things. They were being distracted by things of lesser importance.

Our being raised with Christ is an opportunity to walk in newness of life, not to continue in our old sinful ways (Rom. 6:1-4).

Paul commands, "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Col. 3:2). This does not mean that we live with a "couldn't care less" attitude about things pertaining to this life. It means just the opposite. We do have responsibilities in this life that demand forethought and planning, but we need to approach them with a spiritual mindset as opposed to a carnal mentality. This will have a direct impact on how we live and the quality of our lives.

The extent to which this spiritual mindset should permeate our lives is further described in Colossians 3:3,4. We, who were raised, died. In being buried with Christ in baptism, we put to death our old sinful selves. In physical death the body is hidden in the tomb or the ground. It is buried. After putting to death our old selves, we are hidden in Christ. Thus Paul could write of his own conversion, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now*

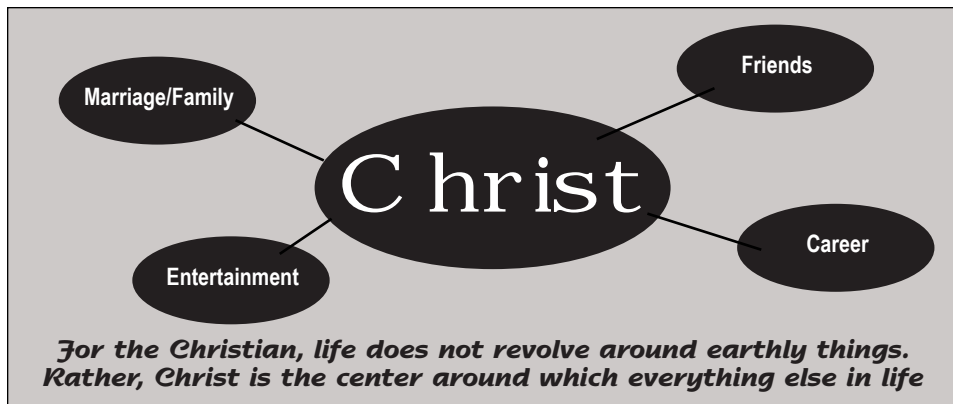
live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The true spiritual mindset requires the life that we now live in the flesh to be no longer a life focused on self. It is to be a life wherein Christ lives in us.

Christ is life! For some, football is life. For others it is basketball, baseball, hockey or golf. Some people's lives revolve around their careers. To others nothing is more important than family. For Christians, Christ and His will are of highest priority. This is the mindset of the Christian. For the Christian, life does not revolve around earthly things. Rather, Christ is the center around which everything else in life revolves.

For some it is hard to imagine anything being more important than their marriage or family. Yet, it is God who is the creator of marriage and family. He wants these to be very important in our lives, but not more important than His will. When we make Christ the focus of our lives, it will improve all other relationships that we have, if the others in those relationships will do likewise.

Ultimately, it is our goal to appear with Christ in glory. Accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord is not just accomplished by mere assent of some facts. It demands submission and obedience. Being born again is not just getting wet in the waters of baptism. It includes being raised to walk a new life seeking those things above. Spiritual mindedness is not accomplished by simply "going to church," but by living a life that has Christ as its center. On what do you have your mind set?

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764



'Spiritual Feminism' Is Making Her Move

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The feminist movement has had a dramatic and detrimental impact on our American culture. Its leaders have managed to cram their agenda down our throats in almost every aspect of our lives. They are not finished. They won't rest until the family and the church, as God intended them, are destroyed.

They have even "had their way" with much of the religious world. Instead of rejecting "Christianity" because of biblical restraints on their goals, they have tirelessly worked to change policies in various religious groups.

They received little resistance from mainline Protestantism. These groups had already rejected the authority of the Bible. Now the feminists have taken aim at the so-called "evangelical" churches. This task has proven to be more difficult because these

groups are made up of many who at least claim to believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.

However, headway is being made by feminists in capturing the minds of some "evangelical" churches. Billing themselves as "spiritual feminists" (an oxymoron if I ever heard one) they're exerting influence to bully Bible translators and publishers into using "gender-neutral" language in Bibles.

Already, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) boasts the elimination of masculine terms such as "mankind" in favor of "humankind." The popularity of this version has caught the attention of the publishers of the New International Version (NIV) and they have formed a committee to produce a revision using what they call "inclusive" language.

I have no doubt that the feminists will eventually capture the "evangelical" churches. Mega-churches such as the Wil-

low Creek Community Church in the Chicago area are leading the way in placing women in leadership roles. Fearful of losing their congregations, other groups will follow their lead.

As a "cheerleader" for "spiritual feminism," Gilbert Bilezikian, professor-emeritus at Wheaton College, is quoted as saying, "It is a quiet reform movement that is unstoppable. In two or three generations from now it won't even be an issue."

If we in the Lord's church think that we will escape the effects of "spiritual feminism" we better think again! Already, we have been affected. Those of us who dare to use passages such as Titus 2:5, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34 without explaining them away, or declaring them "not applicable," are looked upon by many brethren as part of a "radical fringe."

When will we learn not to follow the crowd?

Inconsistencies in Divorce & Remarriage Theories

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Theories relating to the divorce-remarriage issue abound, each having a slightly different twist to it. There are two popular theories, the net results of which are very similar in that they allow for remarriage after divorce as long as the divorce (for whatever reason) took place before one is a Christian.

However, both of these theories are fraught with inconsistencies, as we will note

'New Creature Theory'

One of the popular arguments used to try to justify remarriage after divorce is based on the apostle Paul's statement that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation..." (2 Cor. 5:17).

Proponents of this "new creature theory" argue that if the divorce was prior to baptism into Christ, the "old" marriage has "passed away." I know of one young woman who was told, "It is just like you were a virgin" when she questioned her elders concerning her right to remarry.

This, if it were true, would shed a whole new light on what baptism does!

Baptism changes our spiritual relationship, but we find no evidence that it changes our physical relationships, including marriage. We even have the example of how Onesimus, a runaway slave, was sent back to his master even after he had become a Christian (Phe. 10-12). It seems Paul was

not familiar with this application of the "new creature" theory.

However, even those who teach the "new creature theory" don't fully believe it. Let me relate a story. The names have been changed to protect the guilty party:

Hector and Helga married and had two children, Herman and Hortence. However, Hector grew tired of responsibility and abandoned his family. Helga divorced Hector because of abandonment. Later Hector married Olive and they eventually heard and obeyed the gospel. Must Hector provide financial support for Herman and Hortence? If so, why, since he is a new creature?

To date, I have not found a person who is willing to say that being a new creature in Christ absolves anyone of parental responsibility. Consistency, where art thou?! It's become "politically correct" to abandon a spouse, but even the world hasn't accepted child abandonment.

In reality, the "new creature theory," as it is applied to divorce and remarriage, bears a remarkable resemblance to the "annulment" option condoned by the Roman Catholic Church.

'Separate Covenant Theory'

In spite of the fact that Jesus used the word, "whoever," when speaking about remarriage after divorce (Matt. 19:9), some brethren don't believe he meant it. These brethren have invented a "separate covenant theory," claiming that Jesus was giving "kingdom

laws," and that the alien sinner is not subject to them. They note that "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13), and their conclusion is that these instructions apply only to those who are Christians.

However, their claim that Jesus was limiting his "whoever" to those already in the kingdom is pure assumption. They have inferred something which Christ has not implied. You never hear them make this application to the "whoever" found later in the same sermon (Matt. 7:24). What did Jesus say to make them conclude he was limiting his marriage law to Christians?

If this theory were true we would do well to quit complaining about the high divorce rate in our world. We would have no reason to speak out against homosexuality and other forms of fornication. They are part of the same law.

In fact, if we really believe this theory, we should be nice enough to congratulate Elizabeth Taylor every time she dumps one husband and marries another. We ought to support the right of Sen. Joseph Kennedy in his rejection of his wife of 12 years. There's no need to urge Oprah and Stedman to stop shacking up together. Until she obeys the gospel, Ellen and her lesbian lover should have our blessing.

But I suspect Jesus meant what he said. He said, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt 19:9, emphasis mine).

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

By ED BRAND

Sometimes difference, not similarity, is critical. A king snake and a cobra have many similar features. They are each reptiles, thus they share the characteristics of this family of animals. However, there is one deadly difference: the cobra is venomous, but the king snake is not. The bite of one is mostly harmless, the other, usually fatal. To pronounce that all snakes are alike can have tragic consequences.

Churches are the same. Like snakes, they have many common features. Most "Christian" churches profess belief in God, Christ and the Bible. They usually meet on Sunday for a period of "worship" and/or entertainment. These meetings are conducted in buildings called "churches," like the buildings school children meet in are called "schools." Some of these churches have roots which reach back to the Reformation; a few are more ancient than that, and some popular ones are more recent. Most every Western city has a number of differ-

ent churches its citizens choose to belong to. Our own city of Aurora, Illinois, has 40 different classifications listed in the Yellow Pages of the local telephone book. We are listed between the "Christian Science Church" and the "Church of God."

What is the difference? Our meeting houses have a common appearance. If we were all lined up side by side, we would not have a striking difference in the way we look. In fact, to many people, a "Christian" is a Christian. They think it is quite "un-Christian" to see them any other way.

The difference is not usually seen in outward appearances, but do appear in two basic areas:

1. *How does one become a Christian?*
2. *What is the standard of authority?*

These are not the only differences, but they are substantive.

The only way to become a Christian is described in the New Testament (Ac. 2:41). Each one of those who became a Christian did the same thing (1 Thess. 1:9-10). These disciples were "called Christians first in Antioch (Ac. 11:26). The only people who belong to Christ are those who wear His name. Faithful congregations will accept only those who were "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Conditions of acceptance vary in other religious groups.

The second great difference is our commitment to the authority of the New Testament. We want to submit wholly to the "apostles' teaching" (Ac. 2:42). Our goal is to do what early Christians did when they conformed to the apostles' words. It takes work to do that, for we must first learn what they taught (Eph. 3:4). Then we must be willing to accept and practice only what the word of God allows (Gal. 1:6).

Denying or relinquishing either of these two great principles is fatal. When men "obey not the gospel" (1 Thess. 1:8), they will be lost. When we no longer have the desire to "continue(d) steadfastly" (Ac. 2:42) in the apostles' teaching, Jesus "will move thy candlestick out of its place" (Rev. 2:5).

It is sad to see among our brethren an increasing desire to recognize denominations as God's own, and to cooperate with them in such recognition. We further see fellow-Christians who appear to be unconcerned about understanding the Scriptures and applying the apostles' word to their personal situations. The "hunger(ing) and thirst(ing) after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) appears to be satisfied with a shrug and a "don't confuse me with the facts" mentality.

When we have lost our distinctiveness we are like salt which has lost its savor: "good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13). We

need to be forever vigilant, personally and congregationally, that we do not allow the leaven of compromise and the fear of being different destroy us. We must humbly, but courageously, "Stand" (Eph. 1:4).

Otherwise, we have no right to exist.

Ed Brand has moved from Aurora, Illinois to Bratislava, Slovakia. See news item on page 4.

Wouldn't You Like To Be A Pepper Too?

By AL DIESTELKAMP

We are told that we are the "salt of the world" (Matt. 5:13). Salt is intended to bring out the flavor of food, thus making it more palatable. Therefore, Christians ought to make this world a better place to live. Indeed, true Christians do.

However, too many Christians would rather be the pepper of the world. Pepper is intended to spice up food, or to make it look more appealing. Many want to "spice up" things for the Lord, making His church more appealing to the worldly.

As a result we see brethren who are not careful about following God's recipe (pattern) dabbling in social causes, recreation, entertainment and other gimmickry to attract the world. A few examples will suffice:

- Perhaps thinking the mission of the Church is too confining for their taste, some have expanded the mission to include secular schools, day-care centers or social counseling services.

- Finding a cappella singing somewhat "bland," some are adding rhythmic clapping or replacing congregational singing with "gospel" performances.

- Claiming that gospel meetings (with preaching) are ineffective, a few have resorted to dramatic presentations in an effort to draw the crowds.

- Affected by societal changes and the "political correctness" crowd, efforts are being made by some to involve women in church leadership roles in spite of God's specific prohibitions.

The denominational world is calling us. Their appeal to us is: "He's a Pepper; She's a Pepper; Wouldn't you like to be a Pepper too?" But Jesus didn't call for us to "spice up his 'recipe.'" We must be content with being the "salt of the world."

Shoelaces & Christians

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Recently one of my shoelaces broke while I was in the process of tying it. As I fretted over the inconvenience I realized that I've never had a shoelace break while it was securely tied and doing what it was intended to do.

Christians are like that. Satan usually isn't able to break us when we are doing what is right. He waits until we're at loose ends and then he's there to pull us. If we're spiritually worn we're liable to snap.

Therefore, it's imperative that we not become vulnerable. Unlike shoelaces, Christians do not become worn out with use. Useful service in Christ makes us stronger, not weaker. Thus we are urged to "not grow weary while doing good" (Gal. 6:9; cp. 2 Thess. 3:13).

Even when we face mistreatment due to righteous living we have no legitimate reason to become discouraged, especially when we consider the hostility Jesus suffered for us (Heb. 12:3). Remember, the Lord never promised that the lives of His children would come with no strings attached.

A Tribute to E.J. Ebong, A Servant of the Lord

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

We regret to report that E. J. (Effiong John) Ebong of Uyo, Nigeria, died, January 3, 1997, at the age of 70 years. He is survived by his wife, Arit, six children, four grandchildren, a brother, a sister, numerous relatives, friends and brethren. Many readers of this paper know one of his sons, Emmanuel (Manny) Ebong, who is preaching in Lagos, Nigeria, but who attended school here in the U.S. several years ago.

E. J. Ebong was one of four younger gospel preachers who travelled with Leslie Diestelkamp from eastern to western Nigeria to evangelize the large cities of that area in 1960. The other men were E. Ekanem, D. D. Isong Uyo and Solomon Etuk of whom only Etuk survives. Ebong, as he was affectionately called by brethren, was widely known and respected throughout Nigeria. It is estimated that over fifteen thousand attended the funeral.

Brands & Barclays Replace Diestelkamps & Liggins in Bratislava, Slovakia

Ed & Pat Brand, of Aurora, Illinois, and Keith & Kathy Barclay, of St. Paul, Minnesota, left May 22nd for work in Bratislava, Slovakia. They will be building on the gospel work that was started five years ago through the joint efforts of David & Robin Diestelkamp and Rick & Candy Liggins.

The Liggins family will return to work with the Tenth Street church in Rockford, Illinois and the Diestelkamp family will move to Aurora, Illinois where they will work with the West Side congregation.

He once told me, "Other brethren taught us the first principles of the gospel, but it was Leslie Diestelkamp who taught us the second principles on the authority of the scriptures and how to apply them." In keeping with that he was known to frequently use the phrases, "prove all things scripturally," "thus saith the Lord" and to ask repeatedly, "by what authority do you do this?" On one occasion, during a heated discussion regarding Biblical authority, he rose from his seat to speak and one of his detractors was heard to say, "Oh no, old 'thus saith the Lord' is going to speak." What a fitting tribute to any man who preaches the word. Having been initially taught by brethren who embraced institutionalism and the sponsoring church, he took his stand unflinchingly for the truth even though it cost him many friendships. Those who differed with him on various issues respected his knowledge of the scriptures, and his ability, and were not anxious to engage him in debate.

Not A Heart Attack

Karl Diestelkamp was hospitalized May 10th because of chest pains. Although tests found he had a 95% blockage of one artery, he did not suffer a heart attack.

On May 13th he underwent surgery (often referred to as the balloon procedure) to open up and to insert a stent in the blocked artery.

He returned home from the hospital on May 15th and is doing well.

The family wants to thank our brethren for their prayers and other expressions of concern.

Ebong will be remembered, as well, for his generosity to others and his willingness to be used up in the service of the Lord and to his fellow man. He will be sorely missed among the ranks of those wielding the sword of the Spirit and we express our sympathy to his family and all our brethren who will now be deprived of his smiling, positive disposition and warm association. Others must now step up to fill the gap left by his death.

8311 - 27th Ave., Kenosha, Wisconsin 53143

Voluntary Partners

Cost of last issue:

| | |
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| Printing & Supplies | \$ 85.00 |
| Domestic Postage (permit) | 394.50 |
| Foreign Postage & Bundles | 85.18 |
| Return Postage (43) | 13.76 |
| TOTAL COSTS | \$578.44 |
| Funds Available for last issue | 393.93 |
| Deficit | \$184.51 |

Donations (as of 5/15):

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Lowell & Nina Kibler, IL | \$ 5.00 |
| Anonymous, MO | 50.00 |
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| Billy & Allyn Conway, MO | 20.00 |
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| Robert Alley, IL | 20.00 |
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| TOTAL DONATIONS | \$265.00 |
| Deficit from last issue | 184.51 |
| Funds for this issue | \$ 80.49 |

Many thanks to those who have voluntarily donated money to help defray costs. Without such help we would not be able to continue publication. This issue is expected to cost approximately \$580, which will leave a deficit of \$499.51.

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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

E-mail AlDiestel@aol.com

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

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