

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and depart from evil.
It will be health to your flesh,
And strength to your bones."

PROVERBS 3:5-8

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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No Time To Draw Back

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Congregations which are known to be able to support their local preacher, pay other expenses and still have money left are constantly being asked to help support preachers in needy areas.

No doubt, having to consider these requests and judge between them has to be a wearisome task. As a result, some congregations have begun to draw back when it comes to supporting preachers other than their own.

There may be the feeling by some in the larger congregations that they don't see enough progress in the needy fields. Before you reach that conclusion let me challenge your thinking.

Look at the progress locally. I'm talking about the progress you've had where you worship. Don't expect more growth (proportionally) than what you've experienced. Theoretically, a congregation of 100 should have at least twice the potential as a congregation of fifty. Do you expect more from others than you do of yourselves?

Consider circumstances fairly. Many circumstances are somewhat beyond our control. The cost-of-living in one area may be much higher than in another. This may be due primarily to the cost of housing. The higher the cost-of-living, the more it costs to have a preacher work there. Not only that, but it probably costs more for a meeting place, which gives the small congregation less to pay a preacher.

Suppose you had to start over in your community with only a handful of members. Most likely you would be forced to meet in a home or rented space, lacking full use and only make-shift classrooms. Whether you like it or not, the people you are trying to reach judge you as a "fly-by-night" group, not giving you a chance to teach them. Now, suppose you decide you need a building. You look hard and long but there are no

existing buildings in your price range and a bare lot large enough to have a modest building costs \$65,000. How long do you think it will be before you can support a preacher?

This kind of situation exists in many cities across our nation. In fact, I have used the situation where I work as a model for the preceding scenario and it has been our experience that land prices are rising faster than we can save. If churches in areas like this are ever to be self-sufficient they will have to have some long-term help in the support of preachers.

Some have suggested that churches in that kind of environment should not build buildings. That would be fine except that the cost of rented commercial space is usually prohibitive. If a permanent meeting place is not an asset in the work of the Lord then self-sufficient congregations would do well to sell their buildings and meet in schools and lodge halls.

The other solution I have heard on occasions is that congregations which are not able to support a preacher should do without. Of course, there are congregations where this would work well. When there are several local men who have the time and ability to preach, teach and work another job, this is a viable alternative, but that is the exception—not the rule. It is more likely that larger congregations which are able to support a preacher could do without one easier than a small, struggling group. I am not suggesting that large congregations should do without a preacher, but trying to show the absurdity of suggesting that small congregations should be satisfied to do without.

Occasionally a question is raised concerning the support of a preacher in a congregation which is trying to buy or build a meeting place: "If we support their preacher so that they can afford to get a church building, aren't we paying for their building?" The answer is no! There is scriptural authority

for a preacher to "rob other churches" in order to serve another (2 Cor. 11:8). The context indicates that Corinth could have supplied "what was lacking," but that other brethren supplied it instead (vs. 9).

There is no doubt that the task of raising and maintaining support has become more difficult in recent years. This has caused many capable preachers to leave the more needy fields in favor of places where support is not a problem. The Macedonian call, "Come over . . . and help us" (Ac. 16:9) is most often met with the preacher asking, "Are you self-supporting?" Of course, the preacher has to know the answer to that question, but too often the answer causes him to look elsewhere rather than to consider the possibilities.

Respond to the world's apathy. Congregations large and small have likely noticed declining interest among people of the world toward the pure gospel of Christ. Most are looking for "a church of their choice" rather than the Lord's church. Our reaction to this must be increased—not decreased—activity. It will not be to God's glory if we maintain large churches where they have existed for decades and neglect the work in other areas of the nation and world.

On one occasion the apostle Paul urged a congregation to be doing what they began, and to complete the doing of it (2 Cor. 8:10-11). Though he was writing about a different matter, I believe the same needs to be said of our efforts in the support of the gospel.

Churches which have preachers who are supported by other brethren need to show their appreciation. They would do well to express their gratitude to the churches which are supporting their preacher. They also should resolve to do what they can to do their part. This should include eagerly looking forward to the day when they are able to "return the favor" by actively seeking out faithful men to support in gospel work beyond their own walls.

C O S M I C L O N E L I N E S S

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Decades ago, entire cities flashed their lights hoping to signal distant creatures in space. When the technology developed, radio signals were beamed into deep space. Men hunkered over radios twenty-four hours a day, dreaming of receiving an alien reply. A recent report stated that the total lack of extra-terrestrial response has led to mankind feeling "cosmic loneliness."

Upon hearing this I couldn't help but think of Ephesians 2:12, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from

the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." This is a description of the ultimate loneliness! I believe mankind feels this emptiness and is looking for the solution. It's good that man is looking "up," but it is unfortunate that he doesn't realize that it is he who is the alien; he who is the stranger; he who is without Christ, without hope and without God in the world.

Mankind's most recent widely publicized attempt to solve its "cosmic loneliness" comes in the form of some material about the

size of the period at the end of this sentence, on a rock supposedly ejected from Mars many thousands of years ago. It's going to be tough to develop much of a relationship with this questionable matter, but some will try. Scripture goes on to provide the true solution: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Christians don't fear the loneliness in which the world is floundering.

Man's relationship with a dot of matter supposedly from Mars cannot compare to the relationship we have with God through the blood of Christ! Yes, look up to learn that we are not alone. But look beyond Mars and this universe to the living God.

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Follow-Up On Birth Control Pills

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

Earlier this year I wrote an article (Another Way to Kill Babies, Think, Vol. 28 No. 1) in which the abortifacient potential of the common birth control pill was documented.

While these pills are designed to prevent ovulation (the monthly release of an egg), they also "change the characteristics of the uterus so that it is not receptive to a fertilized egg" (FDA Consumer, May 1976). This secondary mode is abortive. Should ovulation and fertilization occur (and they do occasionally), the newly conceived child would not likely successfully implant in the womb. It is this method of making the womb inhospitable that is the primary mode of RU-486, the mini-pills and the IUD.

These latter methods have been appropriately opposed over the years by those who value life from conception.

Consistency demands that we therefore oppose the ordinary birth control pills which also have the same potential mode of operation.

It is possible that you may think that I'm not talking about the birth control pills that you, your wife, your sister or your mother are taking, but I am. I know of no birth control pill that only attempts to stop ovulation but leaves the womb hospitable just in case fertilization takes place. In the inset box is

a listing of all the current brand-names of which I am aware. If you take these pills, then you should stop immediately if you are sexually active! How odd that last sentence must look to the worldly, but it is just one way in which our peculiarity as Christians is manifested. We are more concerned about potentially aborting an unintended pregnancy than having the convenience of "sex without consequences"...aren't we?

Of course, I stand ready to be corrected. If you have information that contradicts

what I have said, then please educate me. This sincere plea accompanied the first article that I wrote on this, and I have received no information to the contrary. It is not my intention to make this issue a hobby of mine, but as long as I know of such practices among saints and don't hear of it being denounced by others it is a hobby that I'll ride into the sunset without apology.

How bold we can be against those who operate the abortion clinics and those who seek the approval and production of RU-486 here in this country! How silent we have been with regard to our own practices. "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:3). Brothers and sisters, it's past time to speak up.

Birth Control Pill Brand Names

Brevicon	Mini-Ovral	Ortho Tri-
Demulen	Modicon	Cyclen
Desogen	NEE	Ortho-Novum
Enovid	Nelova	Ovcon
Genora	Norcept-E	Ovral
Jenest 28	Nordette	Ovrette
Levlen	Norethin	Synphasic
Loestrin	Norinyl	Tri-Levlen
Lo/Ovral	Norlestrin	Tri-Norinyl
Micronor	Nor-Q.D.	Triphasil
Minestrin 1/20	Ortho Cyclen	Triquilar

(Source: *The Essential Guide to Prescription Drugs* by Rybacki and Long, Harper Collins, 1996).

NOTE: This should be considered only a partial list. If you know of a current brand that is not listed here, please let me know.

Accepting & Speaking Truth

By AL DIESTELKAMP

A three-year-old grandson was staring at me. Finally, he said, "Grandpa, you're big!" For some reason, I had a feeling that he wasn't referring to my five-foot-nine stature towering over him. Then, as if to clarify, he said, "You have a big tummy."

As if that "pot shot" wasn't bad enough, another three-year-old grandson was recently being quizzed as to the age of different people he knew. Finally he was asked, "How old is Grandpa?" He looked at me and said, "He's a bunch of olds."

I couldn't help but marvel at how naturally little children speak the truth, and how we don't take offense when they point out something obvious. They hadn't told me anything I didn't already know. There are mirrors in my house.

One reason we can accept the unvarnished truth from a child is that we know he means no harm. If only we could learn to have the same attitude toward the preaching of truth. If preaching is from God's word we can rest assured that God means no harm.

The apostle Paul had to tell some Galatian Christians the truth that he feared for them because they were putting confidence in observing "days and months and seasons and years" (Gal. 4:10-11). He must have anticipated that some would be insulted by this truth so he asked the rhetorical question, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

Perhaps telling the truth concerning people's spiritual life is just another way we could learn to "become as little children" (Matt 18:3).



By AL DIESTELKAMP

I've noticed in my dealings with people associated with so-called evangelical churches that they are much more verbal about their faith than most of us in the Lord's church. It is not uncommon to hear them give praise to God for good things which happen in their lives.

Of course, in our worship assemblies we will praise God as long as it has a tune to it. And, among ourselves, we won't hesitate to refer to God's providence in our lives—but even then, we are rather “discreet” about it. It's almost like we are “closet Christians.”

I recognize there are some whose use of “Praise the Lord!” and similar expressions is over-done, bordering on use of it in vain, but maybe we've gone to the other extreme.

We are so afraid we will be looked upon as “pentecostal” or identified with the “evangelical movement” that we steer clear of perfectly good opportunities to praise God and/or give Him credit in front of people who need salvation.

Lest anyone think the expression, “Praise the Lord” is an invention of pentecostals, be aware that there are 49 occasions in the Bible where these very words are used. Then there are two places where “Praise God” is used. Granted, most of these are in the Old Testament, but surely that doesn't make it any less appropriate for us.

The apostle Paul, quoting from the Psalms, wrote, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples” (Rom. 19:11). Can we afford to turn this worship over to sectarians?

Just prior to our Savior's triumphal entry, as they drew near, “the whole multitude of disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen” (Lk. 19:37). The Pharisees wanted Jesus to stop them (vs. 39), but Jesus said, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out” (vs. 40).

Maybe that explains it! God's people, who have been given new life from the Lord, are not praising Him in the streets. But God will be praised, so sectarians (who spiritually are as “lifeless” as stones) cry out.

Praise the Lord!

Calling All Evangelism Specialists! Come Show Us How It's Done

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Every faithful child of God rejoices when other Christians experience success in evangelistic efforts. It is only natural that our desire to bear fruit should prompt us to want to develop and use any authorized techniques which would bring similar results in our own areas.

As a result, a few preachers have a reputation for being “specialists” in evangelistic techniques and church growth. They have developed series of sermons or classes to train and motivate Christians to greater service. Churches all over our nation call them in to train their members.

This is good, and to the extent that it has caused increased efforts in evangelism, I rejoice. Each soul who has been saved was worth the time, effort and expense (see Matt. 16:26).

However, along with the good, a very few of these specialists have done disservice on occasions. Instead of teaching us additional methods of evangelism, they “put down” methods which have stood the test of time.

Instead of being an encouragement to the local preacher, implications are made in remarks to members of the congregation that he is not doing his job. There may be cases where the preacher isn't working like he

should, but I doubt someone from outside can fairly make such a judgment after being around him for a few days.

Occasionally there is displayed a condescending attitude toward preachers and teachers who do not employ “cutting edge” methods. I welcome and applaud (silently) the new breed of teachers, but I resist the idea that every preacher must conform in style in order to be effective.

If there is any general criticism I would raise about those who go around teaching evangelism workshops, it is that they seem too careful where they locate. If they are as effective as they are regarded it seems that they should be able to be especially helpful in areas where the church is numerically weak.

Will any one of them come to one of the many struggling congregations, some of which are forced to meet in rented halls or homes, and show us how to be effective?

I'm not suggesting a weekend workshop where he tells us how to be evangelistic. I'm asking if he'll join us “in the trenches” at least long enough to show us how it is best done.

I will be happy to supply a list of congregations where such a person might be welcome if he were of a mind to accept the challenge.

Lies, Lies and More Lies

By AL DIESTELKAMP

For many years now Satan has been using the subtle approaches of humanism to spread lies in an effort to subvert God's will concerning the family.

Perhaps one of his most effective modern dispensers of deception is the news media, especially television network news programs. Long ago they ceased reporting news and started doing commentary to support almost every agenda of humanism.

Hardly a day or two goes by between destructive lies about sexuality, marriage or parenting. If a “scientific” study fits the liberal agenda they give it full coverage without rebuttal. However, if it happens to agree with biblical truth it is either ignored or briefly reported and followed by long interviews with “experts” who cast doubt on the findings.

Just recently Tom Brokaw reported that “Studies show it's not as important for parents to be home as it is that they be available.” Translation: Go ahead, mom, have your career without guilt, but make sure your children have a “beeper.” God

answered this lie: “...a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” (Prov. 29:15).

Satan has pretty well had his way with the media and is well on his way to having his way in society in general. People are swallowing these lies “hook, line and sinker.” I guess what distresses me most is how effective Satan has been in deceiving Christians into believing some of these lies.

For a people who are known for our strict adherence to the scriptures on some issues, we sure can circumvent others!

Believe it or not, the message commanding older women to teach younger women to be “keepers at home” (Tit. 2:5) is still in the Bible! Of course, very few older women can teach that because they don't believe it (and they're too tired when they get home from work).

From an early age we teach our children to memorize verses from the Bible. Maybe, before they learn Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 they ought to memorize Titus 2:5.

The world, and many brethren, think that I ought to be ashamed to write an article such as this. But, “I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16).

'There's a Church In The Valley...'

By **ED BRAND**

As a boy, I remember hearing the Chuck Wagon Gang sing the song which began; "There's a church in the valley by the wildwood, there's a church in..." Even today, as I sit at the table in my kitchen 4,500 miles away from my boyhood home, I can still hear those plaintive voices.

I learned pretty soon that a church may meet in the wildwood or dale, but the church is not a building—it is people and Christ. In my youth, I heard preachers say, "Jesus said, 'I will build my church.' The church is people, saved by Christ one by one." I later read the same Scriptures they preached about, and reached the same conclusion.

Through the years I have learned other things about the church. I think I learned them through reading and study, but I am sure I heard the conclusions I reached, also preached and explained by other brethren. As I grew, my conclusions about what the church is, and what it is not, took shape in my mind. Each of us, I suspect, has gone through that same process.

I was pretty sure I had the proper picture in my mind of the church in Jerusalem, or in Ephesus, or in Any-City, USA. But when I moved to Bratislava, some of the things I knew intellectually about the church, were brought into sharper focus on a practical level. Let me share a few of these things with you.

I learned the church is truly universal. As a young man, I heard much about the church and the "Restoration Movement." This

"Movement" was responsible for the restoration of the primitive message of the New Testament. A consequence of this thinking was that the "brotherhood" was made up mostly of Americans. I learned that this brotherhood is much more than Americans. It is truly worldwide. I have been literally around the world and met Asians, Africans, and Europeans who are only Christians. My horizons have been broadened.

I've learned church does not equal church-building. Church buildings are viewed as a necessity in some places. Large sums of money are used to build and maintain them. I have yet to meet with a congregation in Europe which has one. Most saints meet in rented rooms; we presently meet in our living room. It would be nice to have our own building, but for the foreseeable future, such is not realistic. Neither is it necessary. We can do everything a congregation needs to do without owning a building.

Lastly, I have learned to appreciate the generosity and kindness of brethren. Every dollar we raised to move here came from brethren in the U.S. Each month, they send wages which enabled us to move here and to remain here. Like Paul, you have "sent... for my needs." Like Corinth, God's people in this part of the world have benefited by the abundance of others.

I continue to discover things about the church of the New Testament which I have not seen before. In a different culture, I see things from a perspective I had not considered previously. I'm keeping my eyes open.

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As you can see from the figures above, we presently have a positive balance. In fact, we have more than enough to pay for this issue. It is expected to cost approximately \$580 for this issue, which would leave a balance of \$182.99 toward the next issue. We want to thank all contributors for being our partners in this work.

*Nora Pruitt is one of my aunts (the last of my father's sisters). She died June 8th of this year. She had contributed time and again to this paper, and her family made this final donation in her name.

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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