

# I Know....!

By ED BRAND

Many of us have things in our past we wish to hide. We have done or said things of which we are now ashamed and embarrassed. Some of those things were foolish indiscretions of youth, when our wills were ruled more by emotions than intellect. Others cannot be blamed on youth, but only on the strength of temptation and the weakness of faith.

I have never understood why some people use these sinful things as a spiritual marquee. They openly profess their youthful indulgences, claiming the Lord saved them from themselves. The demons of drugs and illicit sex had bound them until Jesus set them free. They almost appear to revel in their rebellion.

I am glad people who know me best have not tried to find out every mis-step and blunder. I would be ashamed for them to know about some things from years past. I am quite happy about their ignorance. I suspect they feel the same way: let us leave the past in the past.

However, I must confess there is a person who knows everything about me. Things I have forgotten, He knows. Things I remember with shame, He knows. He knows not only what I have done, but also what I have thought. Thoughts and desires which have never been expressed to a living soul, He knows. I am entirely incapable of thinking or acting apart from His knowledge.

This person who knows everything about me is the one John describes as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and He who holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1:12-18).

There is no place I can go to escape His scrutiny. He sees me when I arise and when I retire; when I work and when I play. Wherever I am, He sees and knows.

He not only knows me, He knows you (singular and plural). He told the church at Ephesus, "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false" (Rev. 2:2). No congregation has any secrets from the Lord. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, our wants and our wills.

It becomes us individually and collectively to try to live in such a way as to cause no disappointment and wrath from our Savior. He calls upon us to forsake sin and return to truth. To Ephesus He said, "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5)

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# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 28

January-February-March, 1997

Number 1

## ANOTHER WAY TO KILL BABIES

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

The right of every woman to kill her unborn or partially born child is a jealously guarded liberty in this land of the free and home of the depraved. As if the legal choice to commit these acts were not convenient enough, the scientific community has spent much of its time inventing easier ways to carry out these abortions.

Over five years ago I wrote about birth control methods such as RU-486 which are abortive (A Bitter Pill to Swallow, Think Vol. 22, No. 1). Primarily these methods prevent the fertilized egg (newly conceived child) from implanting in the womb. I also noted in that article that "The Pill," the ordinary and common birth control pill used by many women in this country, could act as an abortifacient. That is, it could prevent the newly conceived child from implanting in the womb. I only received one "challenge" to that article and it consisted of little more than a woman sending the information that it said nothing about the pill's ability to prevent implantation. She was correct. It said nothing. However, a manufacturer's informational insert should not be where our search ends when life is on the line. I sent her further documentation hoping to hear from her again, but I did not.

Further evidence of the potentially abortifacient behavior of the typical birth control pill was seen this past summer. According to the Associated Press, "scientific advisers to the Food and Drug Administration declared high doses of ordinary birth control pills taken soon after sex to be a safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy" (*Journal American*, Bellevue, WA, 6/29/96).

Thus the FDA was being advised that women who have already been impregnated could *prevent* pregnancy by taking large doses of these pills. That isn't even possible!

Beware the double-talk! The same people who can rationalize that a baby isn't a baby until it's born will have no problem saying that an impregnated woman isn't pregnant. A woman is pregnant when she conceives. My dictionary lists *fertilize* as a synonym for *impregnate*.

With that in mind consider the nonsense of the following quote from the article previously quoted describing how the pills work. "The pills prevent pregnancy by blocking a fertilized egg from implanting into the uterus so it can grow into an embryo." Let's say it correctly. The pills block a newly conceived human from implanting into the womb so it can be nourished and grow. The pills do not *prevent* pregnancy. They stop it. They abort it!

As I write this, RU-486 is clearing its final legal hurdles. However, women in the U.S. are now learning that "The Pill" that they've leaned on for years to provide them with reproductive freedom can accomplish the same thing. The FDA has known for years that, even taken in ordinary doses, birth control pills "change the characteristics of the uterus so that it is not receptive to a fertilized egg." (*FDA Consumer*, May 1976).

Brethren, taking human life for the convenience of sexual freedom is not a liberty, no matter what our government may say, no matter the stage of that life. Sisters, it's time to speak up and apply the truths of God's word to the challenges of our day. Teach the younger women to love their children (Tit. 2:4). Let's not allow the pressures of an immoral world quench the zeal we have for truth. Likewise, with holiness, let's turn away from the "form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5) that infects the churches of this land and return to being a peculiar people who hold strange views like, "Thou shalt not kill." God have mercy on our land!

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764

# Morality, Spirituality & Evangelism

By AL DIESTELKAMP

I recently attended one night of a gospel meeting which was focused primarily on evangelism. The preacher, Harold Comer, enumerated some changes in our culture over the past century which have made soul-winning a more difficult task. Gospel meetings, which before the popularity of television exposed many to the truth, no longer draw the crowds. Likewise, the “cottage meeting” (home Bible study) approach which was once a successful tool is not reaping the same results today because family members are pulled in different

directions and are seldom available for concentrated studies. He correctly noted that we must find a way to get people interested in the truth.

Brother Comer made a statement in his sermon which got me to thinking (that’s what sermons are supposed to do). He said that one of the things “we have going for us” is our strong moral stance. People who are truly seeking the truth are “impressed” when they see Christians who are committed to holiness.

This should be no surprise to us. Our Lord commanded us to “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good

works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). This doesn’t mean that the majority of people who see our goodness will eventually glorify God. Jesus made it clear that “few” will find the “narrow” way (Matt. 7:13-14).

Therefore, as much as we would delight in the salvation of all men, we must be content with finding the “few chosen” (Matt. 20:16) ones who will comply with the Lord’s will. We tend to get discouraged when the majority “think it strange” and even “speak evil” of us when we do not engage in sin with them (1 Pet. 4:4). Instead, we ought to look upon such insults as sharing in Christ’s sufferings and—without shame—“glorify God in this matter” (see 1 Pet. 4:12-16).

If, indeed, the few lost souls who are longing for righteousness look at the lives of Christians, will they see a higher morality than what they see among sectarians? Will they be attracted to the pure gospel by our lives?

I ask this question because I have heard more than one report of people who have been unwilling to investigate the Lord’s church because they view our members as worldly-minded. They are not referring to the famous “hypocrites in the church,” for they realize every group has its share of them, but to the appearance of a prevailing lack of spirituality and commitment.

The world is watching. They see in us a people who know exactly what the Bible says about salvation, worship and church organization. That part is good! But when they look deeper they see a people whose personal lives are so secular that there isn’t room for true spirituality.

They notice that outside “the assembly” we are timid about speaking of spiritual matters. The needs, plans and work of the local church are seldom discussed outside of “official” business meetings.

They observe families so driven by materialism that they are willing to let their children be “home alone” or farmed out to others while both parents pursue careers.

They find many parents are more concerned with their children’s secular education than their spiritual growth (as evidenced when school activities and homework come before worship and Bible study).

It is not enough to take a strong doctrinal stand on first principle issues. If we are to be the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14) we must take an equally strong stand on moral issues. This must not be limited to teaching from the pulpit, but also reflected in the lives of Christians.

When the Lord’s church develops a reputation for being a people whose every act is motivated by a desire to bring glory to God, truth-seekers will know where to turn to find salvation.

## You’re Never Too Old to Learn

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

I was perusing my bookshelf the other day when I noticed a bookmark sticking out of Whiteside’s commentary on Romans. This book had originally been my Grandpa Diestelkamp’s, and I had just recently placed it on my shelf. Curious as to where the book was marked I opened it and found it at the beginning of Romans 4. Page 87 was marked with pencilled underlines and a bracket.

My attention was next turned to the bookmark itself. It was a part of a newspaper that had apparently been torn out just for the purpose of marking this page, for neither side of the paper revealed anything complete. However, my eye was drawn to the top of this crude bookmark. “Tuesday, April 12, 199” it said. That’s not a typographical error. The tear just happened to cut off the last digit of the year.

I know I could solve the mystery of exactly what year it was, but what I was impressed with was that an old soldier was still digging for truth and understanding. Let me stress that I was not surprised to know this, but it was very satisfying to note and meditate upon.

The Preacher observed, “Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more” (Eccl. 4:13). Most of what God has revealed supports the general idea that with age comes wisdom. Certainly this ought to be the way it is, and it is right for younger people to expect and respect that wisdom. However, wisdom doesn’t automatically come with years. It comes with mental exercise and

hands on experience (Heb. 5:14). Of course, this becomes more difficult with age (Eccl. 12:1), but it is still important that the oldest generation be active, not only in leadership, but in studying and learning as well. What was previously observed about the old king was that, despite his age, he was a fool. Why? Because he was resistant to instruction. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15). The wise always know that there is much more they have to learn. It is the fool (young or old) that no longer hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

To put this more bluntly and to paraphrase The Preacher, “Better is a wise youngster than a foolish elder who won’t listen.” Nothing is more frustrating to youthful zeal than a leadership that thinks that they have arrived at the truth on all issues of import and therefore give little heed or time in study to the practical problems of this generation. Anyone who will not consider the possibility that he has misapplied some text of God’s word or, perhaps, has even been wrong in the past is proud and closed-minded. This is not leadership by strength of truth, but by the intimidation of position and tradition. Neither one is a valid scriptural leverage.

Please, do not misunderstand. I know that God’s plan for the older to lead the younger is best. I also know that it is our obligation to treat the elderly with respect. Yet, it is with that position of respect and leadership that the responsibility to continue to study and grow becomes all the more important. You’re never too old to learn.

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# IN OR OUT OF CONTROL?

By ROY DIESTELKAMP

It is truly frustrating to be in a situation where we have no control. We have to rely on someone else to do what we cannot do ourselves. Or perhaps, someone we love is going to have to do something, and we cannot prevent it.

Recently my wife and I had to face just such a situation, when our son, Jeremy, began to complain of significant pain, and upon examination by the doctor was sent for surgery to remove his appendix. We were not in control of the situation. We could not bear the pain for our son, nor could we remove the offending appendix or suffer through the surgery for him. Thankfully we could pray for God's help (and He was gracious) but personally it was a circumstance about which we could do nothing.

There are some lessons from this situation that are good and valuable. When we consider the subject of sin, we have to admit that, we do not have control over escaping its consequence. Scripture declares that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Once you and I have sinned, we have no power, scheme, or money that can forgive a single sin. In fact, Jesus asked, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk. 8:37). Wish as we will, try as we might, we cannot by our own strength escape our sin, cover our sin, or forgive it. We are dependent on God, to save us through His grace that He provided in Christ Jesus. In regard to forgiving sin, I am out of my own control, and must accept that fact and humbly seek God's mercy.

In a different way, I may allow things to get out of control when I am supposed to be in control. Parents have responsibilities to God and their children. In Eph. 6:4 we read: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." I have a responsibility to stay in control of my children, and raise them up to know and fear God.

Now I may let my children get out of control. I may never correct or discipline them. I may not want to inhibit their free spirit by saying, and meaning, "No," to certain actions. I may not enforce my will upon them by discipline (whether spanking, withdrawal of privileges, or chastisement). Or, I may wait until the child is older to start trying to exercise control, but by then will find out the child has a mind of his own. The word teaches us to "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

Parents are not to simply watch their children grow taller, play with neighbor children, go to school, involve themselves in sports, choose dates, pick a college or

a vocation, and get married. Parents must watch, correct, discipline, and make sure that as children grow physically, they also grow spiritually, learn God's will and witness it being lived in their own lives. Parents must help pick children's playmates, and later direct them make proper choices as to: 1) persons to date; 2) college to attend; and 3) whom to marry.

The next generation must be taught to make good choices for each of these categories so that they can—and will—continue to serve God.

While we have control of our young, we as parents are to use that control. God has made man in such a way that parents being in control will work. The general rule of God is: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Moreover, He has placed in the child, the nature to imitate the parent (Eph. 5:1). In today's world there is

the calamity of juvenile delinquency, gangs, drugs, and crime. An even worse calamity exists among the churches where children of Christians do not themselves become or remain Christians. This must remind all parents to love and fear God ourselves, personally set the right example, teach right from wrong, and be actively involved in our children's lives.

If we are not in control of our children, *who is?* If we are not in control of our children, *why not?* If we are not now in control of our children, *when will we be?* The Lord's standard calls for "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (1 Tim. 3:4). When a child is sick, we may not be able to control the situation. In our families, regarding our children, we must be in control. Let us fearfully pray to God for His help.

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## *I Get Love Letters*

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Except for a four-year period in the '70's I have always worked with small congregations which could not provide full support. This has required me to seek and retain support from other congregations and individuals. Presently seven congregations and one family have fellowship with me in my work. I am neither complaining or apologizing.

Congregations and Christians who provide financial support for a preacher have a right to receive periodic reports from him and so I write a letter to them each month. In these report letters I try to tell of any progress as well as any setbacks which we have experienced. At times, when discouragement rears its ugly head, those letters are difficult to write.

Occasionally I'm asked if I'm ever tempted to move to a place where the church is larger and support is not a problem. To be honest I must admit it crosses my mind from time-to-time, especially when I receive notice that I am losing support and must resort to writing for more help.

Most preachers in my situation become uneasy when they notice more than a check in the envelope from supporting churches. They fear it will be bad news. I've had that experience also, but for a number of years I have been receiving "love letters."

The Expressway church in Louisville has participated with me in gospel work for 19 consecutive years. I always appreciate the

timeliness of the support check wrapped in a copy of their latest bulletin. However, for several years hardly a month has passed without receiving at least one letter from one of the members of that church. The letters are from Christians, some of whom have obviously read my reports, and are filled with expressions of appreciation and encouragement. I have a file-folder that is full of them.

I haven't asked, but I'm sure that the elders at Expressway have motivated some of their members to write these letters, but that doesn't take away from the benefit. In fact, it is encouraging to think that they are mindful of the men they support at times other than when a check must be written or a budget planned.

And that's not the only love letters I get. In recent months I received a letter I didn't enjoy receiving. It notified me that I would be losing \$200 a month support. I mentioned this in my next report and shortly I received a check and a note from one of the elders of the church in Columbia, Missouri, indicating that they would provide an additional \$100 a month. Without a direct appeal they voluntarily responded to my loss.

I have been blessed with letters or phone calls from every church (and the family) that presently supports me. They have not been long letters—just short notes filled with love and encouragement. If you are part of a congregation providing support for workers in other areas, a note from you might be just the encouragement a preacher needs.



# Jerry Merten 'Finishes the Course'

Jerry Merten, faithful gospel preacher, died January 27th at the age of 46 after a four-year battle with cancer. A native of Wisconsin, Jerry had worked with congregations in Pekin, Illinois, West Bend, Wisconsin and since 1981 Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

For a number of years he published and edited *It Is Written*, a gospel paper similar in size to *Think*. David Diestelkamp, who co-published the paper (before moving to Slovakia), has indicated a final issue will be published in memory of Jerry.

Jerry had a strong faith and equally strong convictions. He maintained a proper blend of gentleness and firmness in his teaching, preaching and dealings with all. From our vantage point he appeared to practice "pure and undefiled religion" (Jas. 1:27) in a manner worthy of imitation.

He survives many relatives, including his wife, Teresa and six children: Jessica, Jamie, Tiffany, Tonya, Todd and Joel. He was a skillful head of this good family, "ruling his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence" (1 Tim. 3:4).

The funeral service, held in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, was attended by 220 people. People from the community as well as brethren from all over Wisconsin and three surrounding states gathered to pay respect. Karl Diestelkamp, David Girardot and Mike Cox, all Wisconsin preachers, spoke during the service. Keith Barclay, Rick Lanning, Wilson Copeland and Rennie Frazier, preachers from Minnesota, participated by leading in song, prayers and scripture readings.

Needless to say, Jerry is missed by all truth-loving brethren and leaves a void in Wisconsin which will not be easy to fill. Those wishing to send expressions of sympathy to the family may write: Teresa Merten, 2730 Gaynor Ave., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495.

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## Nigerian Preacher E.J. Ebong Dies

E.J. Ebong, faithful gospel preacher of Uyo, Nigeria, died, January 3rd 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.

Karl Diestelkamp has written a more detailed report of the life and work of this effective veteran preacher which (due to space and time constraints) will be printed in the next issue of this paper.

## Voluntary Partners

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Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
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Return Postage (53)	16.96
TOTAL COSTS	\$586.02
Funds Available for last issue	418.95
Deficit after last issue	\$ 161.07

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TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 555.00
Deficit from last issue	161.07
Funds for this issue	\$ 393.93

We want to thank the many people who have voluntarily donated money so that this publication may continue. This issue is expected to cost \$580 which would create a deficit of \$186.07.

## New Congregation Meeting in Toronto

A new church has begun to meet in Toronto, Ontario Canada. It is small, numbering about 20-25, and is made up of Filipino immigrants. Ontario brethren rejoice at this beginning, and encourage travellers to visit the services of this church. They meet Sunday afternoons, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., and for the present in the 28th floor apartment of William and Judith Mapilot, 280 Wellesley, (Apt. 2817). This is at the corner of Wellesly and Parliament, just a few blocks from downtown Toronto. They will give a very warm welcome to all visitors. For further information phone the Mapilots at: (416) 922-4793. Or call Roy Diestelkamp at: (905) 227-8336. Several preachers are alternating driving from other congregations to assist them.

# THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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

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