



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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LESLIE DIESTELKAMP *Gospel Preacher 1911-1995*

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Son of Leslie Diestelkamp

This issue of Think is dedicated to the memory of my father, Leslie Diestelkamp, who served as editor of this paper for twenty years. We begin with the obituary I read at memorial services held in Aurora, Illinois, and St. James, Missouri.

Obituary

Leslie Eugene Diestelkamp was born December 24, 1911, in Phelps County, Missouri. He died at 1:15 p.m., Tuesday, September 12, 1995, at Jennings Terrace in Aurora, Illinois. Thus at his death he had lived 83 years, 8 months and 19 days. He was the son of Henry and Eda Diestelkamp. However, his mother died of pneumonia when he was three months old, and from that time he was cared for by his grandparents, William and Louisa Diestelkamp. Because his grandmother was an invalid at this time and until her death five years later, his aunt Amelia, not yet 16 years old, provided much of his care. Later, when his aunt Amelia married Elmer Ferris, their home became his home. Indeed, Uncle Elmer & Aunt Amelia Ferris were like a father and mother to him, and he has often credited them for the strong influence they provided him. Their children became like a brother and sisters to him.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Henry & Eda Diestelkamp; his substitute parents, Uncle Elmer & Aunt Amelia Ferris; his first wife, Alice; one brother, Henry; two sisters, Alma Sorrell and Irene Ridenhour; two grandchildren, Timothy Hodges and Violet Hodges; and one great-grandchild, Ryan Diestelkamp.

Survivors include his wife, Myrtle, of Aurora, Illinois; two daughters and their

husbands, Robert & Lavon Speer, of Fox River Grove, Illinois and James & Wanda Hodges, of Temple Terrace, Florida; three sons and their wives, Karl & Delores Diestelkamp, of Kenosha, Wisconsin, Al & Connie Diestelkamp, of DeKalb, Illinois, Roy & Mary Diestelkamp, of Thorold, Ontario, Canada; a sister, Nora Pruitt, of St. James, Missouri; two cousins who were like sisters and their husbands, Raymond & Velva Breuer, of Hallsville, Missouri, and Jack & Darlein Duncan, of Dixon, Missouri; one cousin who was like a brother and his wife, Ray & Charlene Ferris, of Lockport, Illinois; 20 grandchildren and their 17 spouses; 40 great-grandchildren (41 if you include the one in the womb—and we do!); and a host of brethren in Christ.

One night in August of 1925 he and his grandfather walked 20 miles to attend a gospel meeting at the Oak Grove church near St. James, Missouri. He confessed his Lord and the next afternoon he was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins.

Two years later, at school, he met Sarah Alice Wright. On June 22, 1929, he took her home from a party, beginning a courtship which resulted in marriage on August 3, 1932. The marriage lasted 41 years until her death parted them on September 20, 1973. On May 1, 1976, he married Myrtle Benedict, a long-time family friend and sister in Christ. The 20 roses in the floral arrangement here today represent the 19 years, and more, she has been a loving and faithful companion to Dad. Thus he was blessed to have known two wives whom he could “praise in the gates.” Likewise, Dad’s children had both a loving birth-mother and a loving second-mother that we can “rise up and call ‘blessed.’” I do not hesitate to speak for the rest of Dad’s family in expressing our love and appreciation to Myrtle. I am

happy that even though none of his children were present when he died, that Myrtle was there, and that by God’s grace he was eased from the bosom of Myrtle to the bosom of Abraham.

Dad spent most of his preaching career working with small congregations or in congregations that had special needs. He was intensely interested in “world evangelism” and was able to preach on five continents. He had a special place in his heart for the work in Nigeria, which proved to be his most fruitful experience. Indeed, there are brothers and sisters in Christ in that far off country whose tears of grief at this time are genuine.

In the mid-50’s Dad’s concern for the purity of the church caused him to think it would be beneficial to publish a gospel paper in an effort to help stem the tide of liberalism. It was his idea to publish a small paper which could be distributed free. However, other Chicago area preachers envisioned a larger publication which would have been cost-prohibitive without a subscription fee. This was the beginning of Truth Magazine, the predecessor to the Guardian of Truth. He served as Associate Editor of Truth Magazine from 1956 to 1959.

In 1969 Dad’s original idea for a free paper was accomplished with the start of Think On These Things. This publication which is mailed to most states and to several foreign countries is nearing the end of its 26th year. He served as its Editor for 20 years. It was, for him, a labor of love.

It is fitting that we pay tribute to one who has affected, in a positive way, so many lives. However, Dad would want you to put things in perspective and remember that he was simply a sinner, saved by the grace of God!

Through The Years With Leslie Diestelkamp

By RAY FERRIS

Cousin of Leslie Diestelkamp

Leslie Diestelkamp lived with our family from before I was born until he married his first wife when I was nine years old. He was the nearest to a brother that I had, for my only brother died shortly before he reached his second birthday, and I can only remember a few isolated incidents in his short life. However, with Leslie, my older "brother," it was different. Since he was eleven and one-half years older than I, our time together was greatly limited, but he made a decided impact upon my early years. His first wife was a beloved member of our family, and also impressed me very much as I grew old enough to realize her fine example as a Christian.

My memory of Leslie's first sermon is limited to the nervousness I felt for him in this effort. At that time the thought never entered my mind that I would be making a similar effort almost exactly fourteen years later in Front Royal, Virginia, in August, 1948. Being older in 1943, it was a significant event when he came by our house in St. Louis in his old V-8 Ford loaded with his family and a few items he could pack into it, on his way to Wisconsin to preach. My mother was not at all thrilled at the prospect of him moving so far away to an unknown area in the frigid north to depend on the uncertain support of a preacher in "mission work."

Three years later I left St. Louis to go into the Navy which took me from San Diego, to New Jersey, and then to Washington D.C., where I met and married Charlene Baker in 1947. We continued to live in D.C., until the Fall of 1949, when we moved to Nashville, where I enrolled in David Lipscomb Col-

lege. Other than a brief visit in 1950, Leslie and I had almost no time together during these years.

In June, 1952, we moved to Richmond, Virginia to work with the Highland Park church in that city. While working there, Leslie corresponded with me about his planned visit to the lectures in Abilene in 1954. I responded by telling him I believed I would probably not be welcome at ACC (as it was known back then), because of some of the views I held regarding unauthorized activities in the work of the church. You must remember that our time together had been almost nil from the time he left for Wisconsin in 1943 until this correspondence more than ten years later. We sent each other bulletins we published with our respective churches, but the institutional controversy was in its early stages and we were not writing about such in our bulletins.

Leslie began immediately to suspect that he and I were doing some similar thinking, and we came to realize that our thinking was almost identical regarding such matters. When I have related this matter on occasions regarding the similarity of our views, even though we had such limited contact for more than ten years, some have asked if I did not think that was amazing. My response has always been in the negative since we both used the same Bible as our basis for authorized action.

In 1955, when we moved to Racine, Wisconsin, Leslie was working with the church in Brookfield, Illinois. It was natural that we would now have a much closer relationship in gospel work than ever before. Not long after, a group of us met in Bryan Vinson's home to begin to lay serious plans to begin publishing a magazine designed to try to keep the tide of digressive activity among brethren from devastating the upper midwest. Truth Magazine was the result of this effort, beginning in October, 1956. It became an absolute necessity for us, along with Bryan Vinson, Foy Vinson and Gordon Pennock, to work closely. We proofread, collated, addressed, bundled and delivered the magazine to the post office for mailing. There is no question that Leslie was a moving force in the early years of the paper, and there is no doubt that great good was done by that work, not only in the upper midwest, but throughout the world. I never cease to be amazed at the people I meet, who are strangers to me, but they remember the early years of the magazine, and express gratitude for its influence in those battles of yesteryear.

Although Leslie was like a big brother to me, our closest association in gospel work was in that effort. Leslie spent almost all of his life as a preacher in the upper midwest, when he was not in foreign fields or full-time

meeting work. I have lived within one hundred miles of Racine, Wisconsin for more than forty years, as I worked with congregations in Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin, and in Elgin, Rockford and Lockport, Illinois, but we did not work closely in such efforts. I believe Leslie preached in only two gospel meetings with those churches while I worked with them, and I worked with churches where he labored on two or three occasions in such meetings. You see, we did not try to arrange meetings with preachers in the family in the places where we worked. If local churches wanted such meetings we rejoiced that we could work together, but we left it to them to instigate the thought.

In spite of that limited association, we often saw one another in meetings, for we both made it a practice to attend meetings all over the area to encourage such work. In recent years, his second wife, Myrtle, was his constant companion in such visits and we came to love and appreciate her as one of the family. We also visited in our homes, and the Diestelkamp Thanksgiving gatherings started in our home and became a tradition years ago. It regularly involved all the family who could make it. My children called him "Uncle Leslie," and there was a close bond among his children and grandchildren and my own family that continues to be treasured among us. At the time of his death, arrangements had been made to visit with him and others of his family. However, we arrived shortly after he died.

The cause of the Lord has surely lost a tireless worker, and his pen and voice will be sorely missed throughout the world. That is especially true in our own area where so much of his effort was concentrated, but we must press on in this great work. I count it as one of the great blessings from God in my life to have been considered a part of his family circle. We lament his passing, but "we sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope."

855 E. 11th Street, Lockport, Illinois 60441

WARRIOR

A Warrior died today,
His battles finally done.
He may shed his armour now,
For his war is over,
And his peace is finally won!

The trumpet call of victory
Is heard throughout the land;
For death is not an ending
But the beginning of endless bliss.

No more darts to dodge,
No more anguish to bear,
But the veteran's bonus
For loyal service, to the Lord.

We honor him, as all men do;
Those who pass the test,
And wish him well on his journey home
To that eternal rest.

by Fred K. Hennecke
an old friend of Leslie Diestelkamp

On the Passing of Leslie Diestelkamp

His wife has lost a devoted husband
His children have lost a loving father
The churches have lost an able and
faithful proclaimer of the Word
Christians in this nation and abroad
have lost a faithful friend and counselor
A prince and a great man has fallen in
Israel and has gone to his reward
I have lost an esteemed and beloved
friend and brother in the Lord
Though he is dead, thanks be to God,
his works will live on in the hearts
and lives of those fortunate enough
to have been touched by this
outstanding noble Christian

by John L. Nosker
Richmond, Virginia

If He Believed It, He Put It in Writing

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Grandson of Leslie Diestelkamp

There are things that we will miss now that Grandpa has departed to be with the Lord: His constant concern for the family, for brethren worldwide, and for the truth. Especially we will miss those opportunities to communicate with him on these important matters. The opinions, advice and support that we, as his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and brethren, have always enjoyed are no longer available for the asking. It is the loss of his constant influence and ever-present concern that causes us sorrow.

One of Grandpa's frequent modes of communicating his concerns and opinions was through his writing. Whether a sermon critique scrawled on the back of a business card, a personal letter, one of his famous typewritten carbon-copied family letters, or an article for publication, his words were occasions to think and learn.

I still recall the letter he wrote to me as three of his grandchildren (Dawn, Sherry and I) were about to leave for college. "Never let the gas tank get below half full," was one of his rules for the road. I don't recall ever telling him that my gas gauge didn't work. It would have bothered him so. Also included in this letter was a list of brethren that we could call on for help in case of an emergency while on our journey. From the Chicago suburbs to Temple Terrace, Florida, I don't think we were ever very far from one of the names on that list. Grandpa often said, "My brethren are the greatest!" His confidence in that enabled him to send his grandchildren cross-country with less concern.

Truth is, however, that some brethren were not always the greatest. I don't think anything bothered Grandpa more than to learn of a brother who had fallen away. Of particular concern was what seemed to him a rising number of preachers who were unfaithful to their wives. Grandpa was not too shy to personally advise us on these matters. Over nine years ago, just before I moved to Pontiac, Grandpa wrote me and, among other things, discussed private Bible studies. Once contacts were made he advised, "Then you and Karen, or you and one of the men, can visit the contact (if the contact is a woman . . .)" In this same vein regarding honorable behavior he wrote the following remarks to Karl, Al, Roy, Robert, David and me in May of 1988: "First, please think seriously with me regarding the very significant concentration of Diestelkamp preachers in this immediate area . . . It is awesome to contemplate . . . That awesomeness should be humbling to all of us—to help all of us realize the impact each one may have on the influence of all. Not only, then, by sound words we must preach, but by pure lives

"This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize;
And shout, while passing thru the air,
Farewell, Farewell,
Sweet hour of prayer."

These words, from the song, Sweet Hour of Prayer," written in Leslie Diestelkamp's own handwriting, were found, after his death, on a scrap of paper on his desk.

and unquestioned characters . . . we shall all contribute to the welfare of the cause of Christ which we love, and to the effectiveness of all the others in the group."

Of course, Grandpa's writing was not limited to personal letters, but extended to the public forum as well. His abundance of writing was not to see his name in print. It came from an intense desire to see the truth of God's word propagated and defended. This love for God's truth made him unafraid of controversy. In his 1954 speech at the Abilene Lectureship he lamented that some had become so afraid of being branded an "anti" that they had become "anti-anti" (opposed to opposing virtually anything). There he declared himself "anti, anti-anti." Grandpa was opposed to being against opposing. Yet, he was not one who yearned for controversy. His desire was for unity and peace among brethren where possible.

These, too, were recurring themes in his writings. In his book, *Here Am I, Send Me*, he wrote: "Perhaps no one loves peace and unity more than I, and few preach more to promote such. Yet, purity must always come before peace. . . There would have been no division in Chicagoland, nor in the nation, if a line had not been drawn by those who refused to allow any opposition to their promotions. Steadfastly I have refused to draw lines on these matters except with regard to perverse people whose attitude forbids association, but I have always been forced to recognize a line others have drawn."

Ironically, in his later years some would be critical of his refusal to draw lines of fellowship though he never equivocated on the error of those liberal concepts. Standing for the truth required entering the fray of battle with the sword of the Spirit, and that he did. From the incessant tide of modernism to the moral issues of our day he was there with his thoughts from Scripture. Still, he found no pleasure in taking his brethren to task. For over 25 years, through the pages of his little paper *Think*, he challenged and encouraged his readers to, by the grace of God, press on in the service of our Lord.

I shall miss his words of exhortation and the smile that often accompanied his personal delivery of such. I am thankful, however, for God's providence in sending that Missouri farmer and his wife into His

fields. I'm grateful for the blessing of long life that enabled me to know him. Thank you, Myrtle, for being his companion. Thank you God for your grace that gives us the hope and comfort of being together again and in your presence. It is times like these that increase our yearning for heaven and our commitment to being there. O death, where is your sting? It is swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:54-57).

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He Is My Grandpa

It happened lots when I was young
It almost was expected.
I'd say my name and in their eyes
Recognition was reflected.

In congregations far and wide
It always was the same.
Their interest in me heightened
When I said my big last name.

Even now it happens still,
Though marriage changed my name.
They find out who I "used to be"
And their questions start again.

"Oh, I know your kin," they tend to say
"How are you related?"
Well, that depends on who you know
And they don't seem irritated
When I start the list of relatives
That seems to flow and flow.

It could be my dad, his name is Al
Or Uncle Karl or Roy.
"No not them," the old man says,
"I knew him when I was a boy."
"He told me the wonderful gospel,
He taught me to follow God's law
Leslie's his name, now how's he your kin?"
Sir, he is my grandpa!

I always loved to say that,
To let other people know,
That my grandpa was the man
That they were glad to know.

"I met him in a meeting."
"He stayed with us in our home."
"He ate dinner with us once or twice."
"He called me on the phone."

"I heard him preach in Africa."
"The truth he always sought."
"He always helped his brother."
"The gospel's what he taught."

No matter how they knew him,
They all seemed to be the same
They loved the man who loved the Christ
And did all things in His name.

Years will come and years will go
And I'll still stand in awe
How many people knew and loved
My very own grandpa!

by *Laura Alvarez*
Granddaughter of Leslie Diestelkamp

I HAVE KNOWN HIM

By ROBERT E. SPEER

Son-in-Law of Leslie Diestelkamp

Speaking of Abraham, God said, "I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice . . ." (Gen. 18:19). This line may very well be applied to Leslie Diestelkamp, for God knew him, and he knew God. God had said He knew that Abraham would command (teach) his children to keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness, and Leslie Diestelkamp certainly did that.

As Paul with Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5), we call to remembrance the faith that was in Leslie (Dad), who, like Timothy, had known the teachings of God from his youth. In his teens he made a walk of 20 miles to be baptized. An aging grandfather and a young aunt and uncle influenced his early life in godliness.

As his own children came along, he followed the advice of the wise writer who said, "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6). Further, he was, as Timothy was instructed to be, an example in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity (1 Tim. 4:12). He instructed his children in these

matters; more, his life was a demonstration of what he wanted them to be.

His children grew up with a nightly Bible reading in the home, often discussing what had been read. This was usually done before bedtime, but as the children grew older and began to engage in social activities, the reading was done before they went out. When visitors came, they were invited to take part in the reading. One visitor charged that if the President of the United States came for a visit he would be made to read the Bible. Dad's response was that the President would certainly be invited to join the family Bible reading.

How effective was this training? All five children became Christians. All five married Christians. To these, 22 grandchildren were born. Of the surviving 20, all are Christians. Seventeen of the 20 are married, all to Christians. Now, as they come of age, the great-grandchildren are becoming Christians.

From time to time, changing societal attitudes would cause Dad to write to his children and their families, sounding a note of caution on behalf of the grandchildren. He always wrote and spoke to the family members with their best interests at heart, with their spiritual interests in mind.

At times when there would be gatherings

of the clan there was never a question as to whose was the commanding voice. Oh, there may have been voices that were louder but, in the family, none was more respected or heard more clearly than that of the family patriarch.

While living, Dad placed great emphasis on the family. His legacy of believing the Word, spreading the Word, and godly living has reached into the second, third and fourth generations.

In years to come there will be those who do not know the name of Leslie Diestelkamp, but many who do not know the name will benefit from his life and his work, and by these, like Abel, "he who is dead still speaks" (Heb. 11:4).

The tongue which spoke so eloquently and the hand which wrote so forcefully now lie still in death, but the real Leslie Diestelkamp—in the spirit, in the written word, in our hearts, in the family—lives on! Indeed, people who live in the Lord never see each other for the last time. That is why, when I stood by the body of Leslie Diestelkamp on the day of his death, I patted him on the shoulder and said, as I had many times in the previous nine months, "Good-bye, Dad. I'll see you later."

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When God Said 'Go' He Packed His Bags

By ROB SPEER

Grandson of Leslie Diestelkamp

When I think of Grandpa Diestelkamp I think of Mark 16:15,16: "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" I also think of Isaiah 6:8: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, And who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"

His life has touched people in virtually all corners of the world. He was the kind of man who, when he saw a job to be done, did it. It is very easy to let a difficult work go undone or to allow someone else to do it. Grandpa saw and responded to the needs of the gospel. He spent most of his life preaching the gospel. He has been all over North America and has personally preached on four other continents. His preaching carried him to the Philippines, England and for long-term work to Nigeria and Australia.

Through his influence countless lives have been touched. The profound impact that he has had in his lifetime is absolutely

mind boggling. Just a short time ago some men from Racine were in the Philippines to work with the churches there. Brother Wilfredo Samodal showed them pictures of Grandpa with the members of the church there. They remembered him fondly and spoke highly of his time there some 20 or more years before. Grandpa was one of the first men to work in western Nigeria. He took some of the faithful eastern preachers from the bush country and went into the big cities. Here in the U.S. Grandpa has helped start many works in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Missouri. Where Grandpa planted the seed of the word others have followed to water the seed and God has granted the increase.

It was not easy to do the kind of work Grandpa did. He was away from the comforts of the United States many times. He was at times separated from his family for extended periods of time. He became tired and worn down and even at times sick. In Nigeria he became so sick that he had to preach sitting down because he could not stand. In the Philippines he became malnourished to the point that he was hospitalized when he came back home. He did not allow his per-

sonal struggles to stop him from seeking to preach God's will.

There are many people today who are Christians because of the work that Grandpa did. It is because of his influence that many other men have dedicated their own lives to preaching the gospel. Several in his own family have seen his dedication and realized the importance of teaching the gospel. His family has preachers who have gone to Nigeria, Canada, Australia, Czechoslovakia, and even today his family is in the United States, Canada, Slovakia and Brazil.

Many times when we think of "going" to teach we think of picking up our belongings and moving to some new place. Grandpa showed us through his example that there are other ways to go. His influence has gone where he himself never went. Through personal letters, bulletins and books Grandpa's writing has been a powerful tool for good.

Grandpa's personal life, teaching, preaching, writing and "going into all the world" will be remembered for generations to come. ". . . Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . their works follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

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Dad Sought Peace—Not Controversy

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

Son of Leslie Diestelkamp

I cannot remember when Dad was not a preacher of the gospel. He preached his “first full sermon” almost a year before I was born. Oldest memories are of him preaching in Missouri at Oak Grove and The Miles near St. James; at Fort Leonard Wood; at Waynesville at Rolla and at a CCC camp during WW II. Of his early preaching he said, “I learned to preach a little by studying my Bible a whole lot, and finally launched out to take the gospel to as much of the world as one man could do.”

When we moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin, in 1943, it was the challenge of preaching in a destitute field that led him there (three churches in the state with less than 50 members, total). Significant growth took place. It is safe to say that prior to 1959 Leslie Diestelkamp was welcome in any of the churches in Wisconsin, Minnesota and most of Chicagoland, even though his stand against church support of human institutions, the sponsoring church and the social gospel were well known. However, when he returned from Nigeria in 1961 some of the very churches he had started would not even use him to word a prayer. Though he was disappointed by such attitudes, he was not bitter and still tried to teach in those places via letters and written articles. He still preached the same gospel, but they had changed under the tutoring of men who were not committed to the same approach to Biblical authority as was he.

When We Ask Why?

The following is an excerpt from a letter from David Diestelkamp to his parents and other family members, written from Slovakia a few weeks before his grandfather's death.

“We can't express the feelings we have when we read about Grandpa's apparent decline. The love and care all of you have for him says a lot about you and him. He is a great man. Sometimes we talk about 'the great warriors of Christ who have fallen,' but I'm not so sure that's the right way to look at it. Though we miss his strong hand in the battle, it is not because he has fallen, but because he is winning the victory to which we have not yet attained. These words probably tend to fade for those of you who must face his ordeal and try to help and cope with it. My mind can't help but think about why this is happening—if he is going to die, why this lingering and possible suffering? You know I don't have any lofty answers, but I trust God and know in the end all will be well. We have seen that literally thousands of people all over the world are praying for Grandpa. His whole life has been dedicated to turning people's hearts and actions to God—to get them to confess their faith and trust in Him. It has occurred to me that even through this problem he has given opportunity to thousands of Christians to do those very things. Through one event near the end of his life he has caused more people to confess their faith in Christ than many men in their whole lives.”

Leslie Diestelkamp was not a controversialist by nature in the sense that he sought controversy, but he never ran from it either. He loved peace in the nation, in the family and in the church, but not peace at any price. His stand for truth cost him some of the dearest friends he had on earth, but he preached it anyway. When he was misquoted or misrepresented he was very charitable toward his enemies. When I began to do some writing, years ago, he gave me advice that he himself practiced. He said, “Do not attribute a position or a conclusion to a man who denies that he takes the position or accepts the conclusion. You may think you see an inconsistency and may express this, but do not try to make a man say something that he denies.” There are brethren who can benefit from this advice even today. The fair-

ness that he tried to show to others was not always shown to him in return. I would not have written everything that Dad wrote, nor would I take every position he took, but neither would I try to rewrite any controversial sentence he wrote. I do ask his critics to be fair in handling what he wrote. When it was pointed out that someone had misquoted or misrepresented him, he usually said, “Well, those who really know me know these are misrepresentations.” He was not swayed, he preached on.

If you want to do something that will remind you of Leslie Diestelkamp, you go out and live the life of a faithful child of God, giving God the glory for all that is accomplished—and he would want you to try to do a better job of it than he did.

8311 - 27th Avenue, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53143

The Life of A Righteous Man

By **KYLE SPEER**

Grandson of Leslie Diestelkamp

“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die, and a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted” (Eccl. 3:1-2).

Later, in the same book, we read Solomon's wisdom: “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to the heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (7:1-4).

Certainly, there is much to learn in time of sorrow. We are reminded that there is a time for all thing—even death. As we enter the house of mourning we remember what is truly important in life: the way in which we choose to live. Grandpa has left a tremendous gift for each of us to hold and to cherish. That gift is his example in the way he led his life. In a letter, Sewell Hall wrote these same thoughts: “there have been few men of my acquaintance whose hope of eternal salvation seemed to me better founded—and the foundation is not the multitude of his good works, but his evident, active, unfeigned faith in Jesus Christ.” Let us consider the life of a righteous man.

This example that we have is one we should not let go. “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the

promises” (Heb. 6:11,12). This gives us two important statements that Grandpa was able to fulfill. First, Grandpa had the desire and diligence to continue until the end. He had faith, not just during easy times or young, healthy times, but all the time, until the end.

Second, what we do is through faith, and Grandpa is one that we may imitate as he led a life of service in faith. In all that Grandpa did he remained humble—believing that it was the providence of God and not his own ability that led him to preach. Grandpa knew that he was to plant the seed. He knew that where he planted God would give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-10).

Grandpa followed God's design and built on the foundation of the Bible. He stood against any who deviated from God's word. He rejoiced for many in doing good, he sorrowed for those who did not. He cried with many when harder times came. He spoke plainly, and he spoke the truth.

Grandpa was a man who led by example, spreading the gospel everywhere he went. He raised a faithful family. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue their service to God.

There is a time for all things. A time to teach, a time to preach, a time to die—a time to harvest that which is planted. “Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:6-7). I look to the day when we can join Grandpa in heavenly rest. Consider your life: Is it the life of a righteous man?

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THINKING ABOUT DAD

By ROY DIESTELKAMP

Son of Leslie Diestelkamp

The psalmist tells us that we spend our years “as a tale that is told” (Psa. 90:9). We always talk about our own life in relation to what we have done and when we did it, and that is also how we talk about others, and particularly when death takes from us a family member. The life of Leslie Diestelkamp is now a tale that family and friends will tell. “My Dad did this,” or “Leslie Diestelkamp said that,” or “I heard your father preach in such and such a place and time,” is the way it will be. We have to remember that if time goes on, we will die too, and people will speak of us in the same way.

When I think of my father I remember him in the different facets of his life. He was a Missouri farmer once. Oh, that was long before I was born, but one could not live with or around him and not know he once was a farmer. His sermons were full of Missouri and farming illustrations. His children knew of his love of Missouri mules. For one of us to be called a “mule” was an honor, as it implied we were strong and were working hard. He respected and loved men like Ben McIntosh for whom he once worked. From him and others, he learned about farming; he learned about work; he learned about character; he learned about being a Christian. Dad, I think, would have been happy to remain a farmer, but the Lord had other fields and other harvests, and he would go and work in them.

My father was also a writer. It is a trait I, for one, do not claim. He wrote in volumes. His letter writing was amazing. No one can know how many people he wrote letters to, on his old manual typewriter, using only two fingers to strike the keys (he typed fast, nevertheless). He usually began a letter by

saying, “I received your letter today.” He also wrote for periodicals that circulate among brethren. The old Gospel Guardian, and later, Truth Magazine, would publish much of his writing. He had a knack for being able to sit down and write a profitable article. He did not need to sit around waiting for “inspiration.” He could be told, “We need an article. Go write one.” He would. Later he applied most of his writing to his own paper, Think On These Things. Others in the family were free to write for Think, but everyone knew most of it was going to be from him. Through his writings he opposed modernism, institutionalism, and any other destructive doctrine creeping in among Christians. However, he loved to write on positive things too—things like personal purity, the home and family, preachers and preaching and world evangelism.

My father was a husband. He had two wives (one at a time) for a total of 61 years. For two marriages to have lasted so long is a reminder to all that men and women on this earth can marry well and be faithful to their mates until death parts them. My mother, Alice, departed from him in death in September of 1973, and now he has departed from Myrtle in death in September of 1995. He believed the scripture, “Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Prov. 18:22).” He found in his lifetime two good and honorable women to be his “one wife.”

He was also a father. He was not an absentee Dad. He was the head of his family, and he brought up his children to know God. All of us saw his faith and learned to serve God, Christ, and the church by what we saw in him. He told us the truth, but he showed us the truth first.

Once, on a questionnaire from a church, I was asked where I learned to preach. The answer that I think was expected pertained to the formal schooling I had received. I answered, “I learned to preach at the knees of my father and mother.” Unfeigned faith is the strongest teaching tool parents in Christ can have for their children. We never questioned whether Dad would do the right thing, behave appropriately, or speak purely and honestly when dealing with his family or the world. As a grandfather and great-grand-father, Dad was not an expressive man, but he loved each one deeply. He listened intently to hear of their welfare and, in particular, their spiritual success. He had no greater joy than to hear that they walked in truth.

Oh yes, Dad was also a preacher. He preached because he wanted to. He preached because he loved Christ, and he loved the lost. He moved from Missouri to Wisconsin and the north to work in fields that needed laborers. Nigeria, the Philippines, and Australia received his efforts. As a preacher, he was not profoundly scholarly. He never tried to be. To view his “books” would not take long. He had them in one modest bookcase.

He was glad some preachers were scholarly, but he spoke in a way that the average man would understand. Remember, he had been a farmer. He used illustrations in his sermons to make things easy to grasp. Mother used to say he illustrated his illustrations, but they got the point across very much like parables did for our Lord. He also recognized that in order to preach truth and oppose error one did not have to be, in his words, “a Philadelphia lawyer.” The errors of institutionalism, the social gospel, sponsoring churches, instrumental music, premillennialism, Calvinism, etc., could be refuted with scripture and plain reasoning.

In preaching, he loved to challenge churches. When speaking to churches he didn’t just complain or condemn, but he also held out before them what needed to be done. An example of this would be his preaching on world evangelism. He would tell churches that the fastest way to increase contributions was to do something with the money already in the bank. In like fashion, he would challenge churches to challenge each member to give more, not by putting a new rug down in the building, or renovating an adequate church building, but by sending the gospel out to some place it had never gone, or to where it had not been preached so plentifully.

Dad loved preaching, and he loved preachers who would stand for truth, live purely and humbly and, if necessary, make sacrifices to be able to preach. He helped to raise support for a lot of preachers over the years. In fact, to this day, there are few men who may have scripturally raised so much money for so many different preachers in so many different places. Churches knew when they got a letter from Leslie Diestelkamp that they were being told of another “opportunity” to send the gospel out. What that meant was that they were being asked to send some money to a needy preacher in Nigeria, or the Philippines, or Wisconsin, or Iowa, or some other place. The success of raising such support was not just my Dad’s. He worked among and knew a marvelous generation of elders, deacons, saints, and preachers, now mostly gone, who rose to the challenge of world evangelism after the depression and World War II. He always said: “My brethren are the greatest.”

We, who have been left behind, know he has joined that “great cloud of witnesses” who, by faith, have served God through Jesus Christ. We, too, need to follow Christ, laying aside “every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1,2). “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28).

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What I’ll Miss Most

That which I will miss Dad most for, is his prayers. You did not spend time in his home without knowing that he prayed to God. When Dad prayed he did so often for others, specifically, by name, and for their particular situations and needs. I know he did that for hundreds of brethren in Christ, and for his family too. I know he prayed for me, and I found great joy in that. I will miss his prayers, for: “. . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16).

We all have work to do in praying. The prayers of Leslie Diestelkamp, and others too, are stilled. We must be praying people too, and for others, specifically, by name, and for their particular situations and needs. We are urged to “come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16), and to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Even so, let us pray.

—Roy Diestelkamp

There . . . Go I

My Dad often told the story about one winter day when I was about four years old. I was walking with him, and because the sidewalks were slightly snow-covered we left tracks as we walked. I was "tagging behind" and trying to stretch my little legs in order to place my feet in his shoe imprints. I called to Dad and said, "Look, I'm walking in your steps." He used this story to illustrate the fact that fathers need to watch the way they walk, because their children are influenced by them. This story, and Dad's life, motivated me to write this poem.

—Al Diestelkamp

Ever since the day dad had his stroke,
Which stilled a voice that mightily spoke,
Some man would say when passing by,
"There, but for the grace of God, go I."

During the months of nursing home care,
Unable even to comb his hair,
Hard to imagine—much harder to see,
This man of faith, stripped of his dignity.

Propped, lifted, padded and by others fed his dish;
Like Peter of old, carried to where he did not wish.
It caused more than one to say with a sigh,
"There, but for the grace of God, go I."

After all these passing months of grief,
His soul—at last—has found relief.
The shell is still, and in the earth will lie,
On to Abraham's bosom he did fly!

It ought to cause each one among us
to hope, and pray, and solemnly promise,
To say that when it comes my time to die,
"There, and only by the grace of God, go I."

Grandpa Diestelkamp

He wasn't known for big bear hugs
Or tender kisses on the cheek.
He gave us an example great
Of faith that's never weak.

by Laura Alvarez
Granddaughter
of Leslie Diestelkamp

Grandpa Was A Very Special Man

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Grandson of Leslie Diestelkamp

The night of Grandpa Diestelkamp's funeral I took my five year old boy outside before things got started, and was talking to him about being very good, "because we're going to talk about Great-Grandpa, and he's a very special man." I asked him, "do you know why he's special?" He said, "Because he preached the gospel." I agreed, "That's right—because he preached the gospel." I pray that's another generation who will believe it and will speak those words. Not just another generation of Diestelkamps, but another generation of your children and your children's children.

Grandpa did something special. He taught our mothers and our fathers to teach their daughters and their sons the gospel of the grace of God—the way to eternal life. And, not only that, but to live it, and to teach it, and preach it, to anybody who will listen.

As I got ready, two and a half years ago, to go to Eastern Europe, his health was failing a little bit, and he knew he wasn't strong enough to do some things that he'd like to do. He looked at me in the eyes and said, "in two and a half years a lot of things can change." He knew what that meant, and I knew what it meant. He was right! Then he said, "I wish I could go with you." Why? Because there were a lot of people he had heard of who hadn't heard—not his words—but the words of the saving grace of God. He wanted them to hear it. He held up the hands of those who were speaking those words. It didn't matter where they were, or who they were, he encouraged even when he couldn't go. That's what made him special.

Many people have stories about how Grandpa touched their lives. He's had an

incredible life. But I think one of the things that he enjoyed the most is in a command of Paul: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). He loved to teach. But he also loved to teach those who would teach others. He loved being around other preachers because he loved the message they were preaching.

When listening to others preach, he didn't care what your presentation was like (as long as you didn't drop your voice), if only you spoke the truth. More than once a young preacher was unnerved as Grandpa walked in the building (I'm one of them) and sat down. He was there to hear the gospel. And if you preached the gospel, you had a great audience. He was your greatest fan!

I found that Grandpa was not only a preacher of the word, but he was a student of the word. He taught us what it means to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). It didn't matter how old you were, if he could learn something from you, he'd do it. I heard him talk about some things he'd learned from some young men when he went to gospel meetings. That's because he was there to hear the truth—not the man.

The knowledge Timothy had was not from some special school, but from God's word (2 Tim. 3:15). That's the school that Grandpa encouraged young men (and old men) who wanted to preach to attend. He sent them to God's word. He bristled at the idea that someone who wanted to preach had to attend a formal school. He would be the first to defend a man who hadn't been to college to learn what they needed to know.

Grandpa was special, because he taught us

to "Keep yourself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). He taught us to "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16).

Grandpa's done his part. Now we need to do our's.

Kastiel'ska 21, 821 05 Bratislava, Slovakia

A Soldier of the Lord

A soldier has gone home today
Our loss will be his gain.
Today he finally fought and won,
Life's final war with pain.

With armor on and sword in hand
Many battles he has fought.
Many souls across this country
And in other lands he's taught.

And the far outspread effect
Of the seed that he has sown,
To him or to his family
Will never all be known.

There was a song that he did sing
At the starting of the day,
It was "Have Thine own way Lord,
Have Thine own way."

The children God has given him
And his grandchildren too,
Are following in his footsteps
In the things that God said "do."

As a husband, and a father
As a brother and a friend,
As a faithful Christian servant
An example he did lend.

With the life that he was given
He gave glory to his Lord,
And now as God has promised him
He's reaping his reward.

by Faye Trotter



Leslie & Alice Diestelkamp



Leslie & Myrtle Diestelkamp

He Knew How to Choose A Wife

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Solomon was inspired by God to declare that, "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband" (Prov. 12:4). Certainly, the effectiveness of a gospel preacher is enhanced when he uses wisdom in choosing an excellent wife. Leslie Diestelkamp proved his wisdom in this way twice in his lifetime.

Alice Diestelkamp, the wife of his youth, was the mother of his five children. She was faithful to him and to the Lord her entire adult life. My sisters, my brothers, and I could not have had a better mom. She was pleased to be a "housewife" and did not even try to seek fulfillment outside the home. She knew her God-given role was to love her husband and children. She enthusiastically joined him as his partner in his worldwide work of preaching. We, and our own children and grandchildren, are still reaping the benefits of her life and example.

Myrtle Diestelkamp, his wife for the last 19+ years, has been just what he needed.

Previously, she had never married and, therefore, had little experience with children. However, she adjusted well to this sudden change when she married Dad. She travelled extensively with him, even helping him drive the car, as in their senior years he continued to preach the gospel. Even after his "retirement," they would go to remote places and small churches to help on a short-term basis. During his days in the nursing home, there were very few days when she did not spend many hours at his side, being a "helper" to him. We love her.

Voluntary Partners

We were about to go to press September 12th when my father died. That issue was put on hold while we worked on this special issue. A memorial fund in lieu of flowers was set up to benefit this publication. Several donations have been received, which will be reported in the next issue of this paper along with other donations. Of course, we are grateful to all who have contributed.

The Funeral & Burial

Brethren from all over the north-central states converged on Aurora, Illinois Thursday, September 14th, where more than 330 attended the visitation and memorial service for Leslie Diestelkamp. The following evening, at least 167 people attended a similar gathering in St. James, Missouri.

It seems fitting, from a family perspective, that Leslie Diestelkamp is buried in the Oak Grove Cemetery (near St. James, Missouri) within a few yards of where he confessed his faith in Christ, and near the creek where he was baptized into Christ, and among the graves of those who helped to mold his life, character and spiritual values and then encouraged and supported him to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel."

The Graveyard

*Monuments at nearly every tiny lot,
That mark for us a special spot,
And all around the eye can see
Reminders, for our memory.*

*Thank God! Our loved ones are not here!
Those to us who are so dear,
Only dust resides beneath this sod,
The living soul is home with God.*

by Karl Diestelkamp



THINK ON THESE THINGS

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