

## Going on 30 Years!

This begins the 30th year of publication for this paper. When we started in 1969 we didn't know how long we could continue. Had it not been for many good brothers and sisters in Christ who have consistently and generously sent donations, we would have been forced to cease publication long ago. We thank God for all who have contributed as well as those who read and benefit from this labor of love. The Lord willing, we will continue to publish as long as we are able.

—Al Diestelkamp

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Number 1

# GRACE

By PHILIP CHUMBLEY

In Genesis 14:13-24, Abram returns from rescuing the inhabitants of Sodom and the city's thankful king tells Abram to "Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself" (v.21). But Abram replies that he "will not take anything that is thine lest thou shouldst say 'I have made Abram rich'" (v.23). In doing so Abram lets it be known that he will not be beholden to the king of Sodom. His action in recovering the goods and the people was not to gain a reward, or because he owed anything to the king of Sodom.

That same attitude is seen in God's dealings with us and is demonstrated in his dealings with Israel. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

### ***"by grace are ye saved through faith . . ."***

The wisdom of the world tells us that we simply have to believe ("through faith") and God saves us ("by grace"). However, a comparison of this verse with Old Testament examples shows the true message that Paul is relaying.

### ***"and that not of yourselves . . ."***

When the Israelites were about to go into the promised land and drive out the people there, Moses told them "Speak not in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee saying 'For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land . . .'" (Deut. 9:4). The Israelites were told to get it out of their heads that they were receiving the promised land because they were so good! Likewise, our salvation is not because we are so righteous of our own accord that we somehow deserve it.

### ***"it is the gift of God . . ."***

In Joshua 6:2, God tells Joshua "See I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor." Jericho was a gift. The Israelites were told to march around the city for six days and seven times on the seventh day. This was a requirement for them to receive the gift. But even while their obedience in this was required for the taking of the city, it in no way meant they earned the city. Our salvation has certain requirements attached to it (Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:9; Ac. 2:38), but that doesn't mean we earn it. Walking around a city thirteen times wasn't worth the destruction of a wall that took years to build. Neither are our actions worthy of the salvation we receive; the reward far exceeds the effort.

### ***"not of works . . ."***

When Gideon attacked the Midianites, he had 32,000 men answer his call (Judg. 7:3). But God said this was too many "lest Israel vaunt themselves against me saying 'Mine own hand hath saved me'" (Judg. 7:2). Once again, God made sure they understood that it was not what they had done that saved them. One might ask, why did God even send 300 men to destroy Midian? Couldn't He have simply destroyed them without any Israelites involved. The answer is that God was teaching them a lesson that, while there were things that they had to do, the reward from Him was far beyond their efforts or ability.

### ***"lest any man should boast . . ."***

The prophet Isaiah pronounced against the king of Assyria who boasted, "By the strength of my hand I have done it" (Isa. 10:13). Just as Abram declined to give the king of Sodom an excuse to boast (Gen. 14:23), God gives us no room to boast. Our

salvation is wholly dependent upon His mercy. There is nothing righteous or wonderful about our own works that we can point to and demand salvation. In today's vernacular, we have no such entitlement. What we have earned is death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23), but God, through His grace, gives us a way out.

Ephesians 2:8-9 is often used by the world to assail baptism and "prove" that we are saved by faith alone. However, as seen above, these verses speak of our salvation in the same manner by which God dealt with the Israelites. Their victories were a gift from God, but in every case they had to do something to receive the gift. Also, they were reminded that since it was a gift from God, they had no reason to boast.

Another verse often appealed to in support of that doctrine is Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us." Here Paul conveys to Titus the same message as he did to the Ephesians. Titus 3:5 is part of a compound sentence split in the wrong place. The thought actually starts in verse 4: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done." Compare that with Deut. 9:4-5. Then Paul goes on, "But according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Once again, God makes sure we understand that He is not beholden to us. When God gave the Israelites the promised land, and gave them Jericho, and delivered the Midianites into their hand, the Israelites had to do something in each case. Yet we are told that this was done by faith (Heb. 11:30). We are saved by His mercy, but we are still required to do something in order to have access to that mercy.

1780 Lily St., Aurora, Illinois 60505  
e-mail: pechumbley@aol.com

# In The Likeness of Men

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

New York's Governor Pataki has called upon the Republican Party to remove the anti-abortion plank in its platform. For many, the subject of abortion is *only* political. Were it only a political issue I would not bother you with another article on this subject, but I do want to bother you. I want us to be troubled, not only by the millions of innocent lives taken each year, but by the effect this cultural barbarism is having on the attitudes of Christians.

Culturally there is a so-called great dilemma as to when human life actually begins and is of sufficient value to protect. Many fancy themselves confused and perplexed

## Uphill to the



## Toy Box

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

It has always amazed me how easily children can take out and scatter toys, while they find it such drudgery to put them away. It seems that the reverse process should be just as easy and fun. At clean-up time it is as though it is uphill to the toy box!

But life is exactly the same way. Nothing is ever as easy to pick up as it is to scatter, to fix as it is to break. Even spiritually, "passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25) cause us to forget that "the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

We need to learn the same lesson we teach our children: While emptying the toy box may momentarily seem like the fun thing to do, there will be an intolerable consequence to pay in the end. The idea that we'll play now and "clean it up later" doesn't work with sin. We are "without strength" to clean up the mess we make (Rom. 5:6).

When the toy box of the world opens to reveal its sparkling diversions, remember that it took the blood of God's only Son to bring order to the chaos of your life. Don't mess it up again!

940 N. Elmwood, Aurora, Illinois 60506  
e-mail: daviddiestel@uno.com

about when life really begins. This is a ruse as most choose to err on the side of selfishness rather than science. Even Christians have claimed to be uncertain as to when life begins. What is causing all this confusion? I suggest that our ability to reason on this subject is being clouded by our cultural practices.

In 1947 Allan Guttmacher, founder of Planned Parenthood, referred to the fertilized egg as "the new baby which is created at this exact moment." In 1961 he wrote, "fertilization, then, has taken place, a baby has been conceived." Planned Parenthood itself used to teach that abortion, "kills the life of the baby." What has Planned Parenthood learned in the last 35 years that would have changed the truth of what it used to write? If anything, science has further substantiated that conception is the "exact moment" at which a new baby is formed.

For the Christian, the scriptures ought to be the basis on which we can make such important determinations. Of course, this will have little effect on the unbeliever, but that is not my concern in this article. I am concerned that Christians are being swayed more by worldly thinking than by scriptural thinking.

Scriptures such as Psalm 139:13-16; Psalm 51:5; Job 3:1-10, etc. reflect the belief that one's personhood begins at conception. Some have been uncomfortable with drawing such conclusions from poetic literature that include hyperbole, but I believe, hyperbole or not, conception is portrayed as the beginning.

However, I believe there is even better proof found in Philippians 2:5-8. This passage calls upon us to consider how Jesus humbled Himself in coming to this world. This, however, was not the first time that deity had come to earth. (Recall the "men" who visited with Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac and then to observe the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah—Gen. 18:1-15.) Jesus' coming, however, was emphasized by Paul as being "in the likeness of men."

At what point did the personhood of Jesus come into this world? Notice Luke 1:35. Gabriel announced that the one *born* would be called the Son of God, but also notice verse 31. Mary was going to *conceive* in her womb and bring forth a son. Matthew 1:20-21 records that Joseph was told as much. At what point in the process did Jesus begin His "coming in the likeness of men," of being "made a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9)? Conception! Why? If human life of value and personhood does not really begin at conception, then why did Jesus begin His "coming in the likeness of men" at that point?

God, who has the ability to raise up seed to Abraham from stones (Matt. 3:9), could

have sent His Son into this world at any phase of human development. But God saw it as fitting in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their souls perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10). God did not just send a thirty year old man to spend a little over three year teaching and then suffer in death. God willed that both He who sanctifies and those sanctified be one, be brethren (2:11). Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, Jesus partook of the same. Yes, it was so that through death He might destroy the devil, but it was so that He could free his brethren who were *all their lifetime* in fear of death (2:14-15). God determined that in *all things* Jesus had to be made like His brethren (2:17).

It was God's choice where to begin the process of Jesus' coming. He didn't start it at age 30. He didn't start it at age 12. He didn't put a baby on Mary's doorstep. God went to extraordinary lengths to have His Son begin life like His brethren. Jesus' coming tells us exactly when human life begins. It begins right where the Son began His fleshly existence. Human life worthy of protection begins at conception.

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764  
e-mail: adiestel@davesworld.net

## When A Faithful Mother Dies

When a faithful mother dies,  
The world's a poorer place.  
No one else can fill the void,  
That's left in time and space.

Perhaps it takes another mother,  
With her own children too,  
To understand a mother's love,  
And all the things that mothers do.

We've lost her for the moment,  
With sorrow, pain and bitter tear,  
But death cannot remove or blur,  
The happy memories, oh, so dear.

With gentle words she urged us on,  
Toward the final goal,  
More than just devoted Mother—  
Instructor to our soul.

And so she's left us now,  
And journeyed on ahead—  
The mortal body left behind,  
But, the spirit never dead!

—KARL DIESTELKAMP

8311 27th Ave., Kenosha, Wis. 53143  
e-mail: kdiestel@execpc.com

# Why Can't A Woman Be More Like A Man?

By AL DIESTELKAMP

A better question might be, "Would you really want your wife to be more like a man?" Wasn't it her feminine qualities that first attracted you to her? Most of us, if really put to the test, wouldn't opt to have a wife that has *manly* characteristics. It's only in moments of frustration that we think it would be handy if she were like us. Of course, the same is true in women's complaints about men. In a moment of disagreement a woman may think she wants her husband to think and respond more like she does, but in her calmer moments she realizes that his differences are what she admires.

Recognizing the basic differences in the sexes is important. However, the differences should not be used—by men or women—as an excuse for failure to modify behavior. There is room for improvement for both men and women, and we would all do well to "imitate" what is good in each other (see 3 Jn. 11).

As husbands we need to understand that our wives have needs that differ from our own. Not every woman has the exact same needs, but there are some basic needs of which we would be wise to be aware. Being aware of these needs is only half the battle. We must also be willing to meet the needs of our wives. That's our job. A great "fringe-benefit" of doing this job well is that our wives will respond in kind by making sure that our needs are met.

Obviously, not all men and women would list their needs in the same order of priority, but a recent survey of Christians and their spouses showed the following generalization:

## HIS NEEDS

1. Sexual Gratification
2. Affection/Love
3. Admiration/Approval
4. Family Commitments
5. Conversation

## HER NEEDS

1. Spiritual Leadership
2. Family Commitment
3. Conversation
4. Affection/Love
5. Financial Security

Though there are some mutual needs of husbands and wives, there are also some very different needs. Best illustrating the difference between men and women is the need for sexual gratification. While men were reluctant to list it as their No. 1 need, it appeared on more lists than any other need. Actually, whether men like to admit it or not, their No. 2 and No. 3 needs may be an extension of their need for sexual gratification. This strong emphasis is sometimes hard for wives to understand. The men may be disappointed that sexual gratification didn't even make the top-five list of their wives, but may take some comfort in know-



ing that it just missed the list with their wives giving it sixth place.

But enough about our needs! Let's focus on what the wives described as their needs:

**Spiritual Leadership** — This was, by far, the number one need expressed, with 91% of the women who participated, listing this as one of her needs, and 55% listing it as the No. 1 need. This involves not only setting a good example for the wife and children, but also getting directly involved in developing spiritual maturity in the home. It is too often the case that the husband will neglect this responsibility, which places a greater burden on the wife. She needs you to take the lead in preparing your family for eternity, including using your authority to enforce righteous behavior, modesty and involvement in worship and Bible study.

**Family Commitment** — Actually, this and the next two needs appeared in the needs lists of 73% of the wives surveyed, but Family Commitment ranked slightly higher on the lists. When a woman becomes a mother, much of her life revolves around the family unit. She needs you to be as fully committed as she to making the home a fortress against all that might threaten the family.

**Conversation/Communication** — It's not surprising that the need for conversation was on the list of 73% of wives questioned. What is surprising is that it even showed up in the top five of the men's list! Generally, women are twice as communicative as men. It is hurtful to the wife when her husband doesn't talk to her as a friend. Though the husband may not intend to be treating his wife as unimportant, that is often how it is viewed by her. She is your partner and deserves to share your thoughts and plans.

**Affection/Love** — In our survey Affection/Love was listed on 73% of our wives' needs lists. On larger surveys not limited to wives of Christians this is usually the top-ranked need. Though it is also on the husbands' list, how wives anticipate affection to be shown is usually different. Husbands

need to use their imaginations to invent new ways of showing true affection for their wives.

**Financial Security** — This need, expressed by 55% of the respondents, should not be interpreted as the need for riches, but rather the need for the husband to be responsible for supporting the family. There are two extremes to be avoided. The husband who abdicates his responsibility to support his family has obviously failed to meet a real need. On the other hand, some use the obligation to support the family as an excuse for practicing materialism.

The best way to find happiness in this life is to fulfill the needs of the wife you love so much. Her needs ought not to take second place to anything except what is expected by the Lord. And since our wives have indicated their greatest need is for us to be the spiritual leaders God expects of us, they won't mind taking second place to God.

## Study & Apply

### 1 Pet. 3:7

As husbands, we are instructed to be understanding as we dwell with our wives. At times, our physiological and emotional differences make this a challenge.

### Jas. 4:1-3

When a husband is not dealing fairly with his wife his prayers are "hindered" because: 1) He is less likely to pray; 2) God is less likely to respond.

## Practical Suggestions

- ✓ Be aggressive in making and enforcing spiritual guidelines for the family (i.e. modest dress, recreational restraints, worship priority).
- ✓ Make time for family togetherness activities.
- ✓ Talk to your wife as your best friend. Ask for her opinion often, and listen to her advice.
- ✓ Find new ways to demonstrate your affection for her (i.e. helping with a household chore; taking care of the children so she can do something enjoyable; give her token gifts).

# WHAT CAN I DO?

By ED BRAND

Parents have to respond to a host of questions and complaints raised by their children. One common complaint (There's nothing to do!) is often accompanied with the question, "What can I do?"

Young people, unless you are really anxious to become intimately acquainted with work, you should not ask a parent this question. I quickly learned from my father there are many things a healthy teenage boy can do: clean the bedroom, sweep the drive, mow the lawn, weed the flower beds (how I hated that one), hoe the garden—the list was endless. You can see from the chores mentioned that it didn't take an inordinate amount of skill to clean a room or pull weeds. It does require one thing though—commitment to get the job done.

Christians often wonder, and sometimes ask, "What can I do?" In many congregations it seems the main focus is on the time the church comes together for worship and study. There are only a certain number of things which require one to do something: announcements, song and prayer leading, distributing the Lord's supper. Some don't have to "do" something publicly. So the question is raised, "What can I do?"

The last months of Paul's life were spent in prison. His final letter in the New Testament (2 Timothy) is not a scholarly dissertation on some deep theological subject. It is basically an appeal to his "son" to do some things. He wrote that in the "last days" there would be some terrible times (3:1). What can a Christian do in such days? What act or work can be done that will have the greatest effect upon a wicked world? Boldly preach the word of God? Yes, that must be done (4:2). Nourish and strengthen the weak?

Yes, that too (2:25). Many of us are not equipped or allowed to publicly proclaim the message (4:1).

One thing all of us can do is live a pure life (2:21). In a world which appears to be getting darker morally and spiritually, Christians can be beacons and lights. You can make a statement by the cleanness of life required of saints. That is one thing which everyone can do, regardless of gender, age or IQ. Here's one area you don't have to ask, "What can I do."

## WHY2k?

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Some are expecting the second coming to take place at the stroke of midnight as we enter the year 2000. They must think there is something special about that time and that the Lord uses our system of time-keeping.

Our modern calendar was based on when men thought Jesus was born, but it has since been determined that they were "off" by a few years.

It's arrogant to suggest that the Lord is watching a man-made calendar. When will men learn to quit guessing at "times and seasons" not meant for man to know? (see 1 Thess. 5:1-3).

That day will not "overtake" faithful Christians only because we are being watchful and sober at *all* times (1 Thess. 5:4-6).

## Barclays, Brands Returning to U.S.

After two years work in Bratislava, Slovakia, Keith Barclay and Ed Brand plan to return to the U.S. this Spring. After May 3rd their addresses will be:

Keith & Kathy Barclay  
2797 Russell St.  
Portage, IN 46368.

Ed & Pat Brand  
1988 Tanglewood Dr.  
Snellville, GA 30078

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# THINK

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

E-mail AlDiestel@aol.com

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

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