

## JAMES HEAD, JR.

James Head, Jr., gospel preacher in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, died February 17, 2004 of complications following heart surgery. Brother Head was baptized into Christ in 1961 and became a member of the West 74th Street church in Chicago. In 1977 he began commuting on Sundays and Wednesdays to Milwaukee to preach. In 1979 he moved to Milwaukee to work with the Center Street church, which later moved to their present location in the Astor Hotel on the east side of Milwaukee. He is survived by his wife, Elestine.



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# Truth or Consequence

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

In an effort to impress on others the need for doing what is right an argument is often made from consequence. Unfortunately, this coin is often turned over by others who want to justify something on the basis of consequence. We desperately need to closely examine the positions we take and their rationale to see if they are based on truth or simply consequence.

### *Reasoning From Truth*

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer..." (Acts 17:2-3). This means taking the Scriptures, correctly explaining what they mean, and then making proper application to life.

This ability to reason from Scripture is one *all of us* must develop. It is what Peter referred to when he wrote that we must, "...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..." (1 Pet. 1:15).

### *Reasoning From Consequence*

I understand *why* reasoning from consequence is so appealing. The problem is that it is not a suitable replacement for reasoning from Scripture. "For the word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and it a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Arguing from consequence doesn't pack this kind of punch.

**"It's Wrong Because of Negative Consequences"** ~ The argument goes something like this: "Don't smoke because you will get cancer," "Don't engage in fornication because you may get a disease or become pregnant," and "Don't lie because you'll get caught." Usually this is an effort to graphically illustrate the folly of certain behavior.

Most arguments from physical consequence list what are only possible consequences. People who want to sin tend to feel confident that negative physical consequences won't happen to them (high odds seem to apply only to others). Great pains are taken to point out that negatives only "can" happen which doesn't mean they certainly "will." It then becomes an argument over the statistics, odds, and the foolishness of risk.

Although none of the physical consequences of sin are a pleasant prospect to face, none of them is as serious or deadly as the fact that they are sin. Physical consequences are possible (even probable at times), but spiritual consequences are always certain! While someone may argue that they won't contract a disease or lose something of physical value, they cannot argue that their sin doesn't violate Scripture, the very will of God for them.

I am not wholly against demonstrating the potential physical disasters of sin, but true repentance will not come until one realizes that God's word defines sin, and every sin alienates us from our Creator. There will be no arguing with the spiritual consequence of sin: "...the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23).

**"It's Not Wrong Because of No Negative Consequences"** ~ Some argue: "Homosexuality isn't hurting anyone," "It hasn't been proven that marijuana smoking causes cancer," and "Lust is okay as long as it is not acted on." This is the world's justification for "safe sex"—fornication without physical negative consequences (disease or pregnancy). These arguments ignore the fact that there is *always* a negative spiritual consequence to sin. The problem is that, since the world walks by sight and not by faith, the lack of an immediate negative physical consequence for sin lulls sinners into thinking there is no consequence of evil. Christians, who in contrast to the world walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), are not dependent on there always being a known negative physical consequence for sin. We know God has said it is wrong and that is enough. Sin violates God's revealed truth (1

Jn. 3:4) and we therefore confidently trust it is bad for us whether we see it or not.

**"It's Not Wrong Because of Positive Consequences"** ~ We hear people argue things like: "This new method of church cooperation will accomplish so much for Christ," "A new approach to worship will bring us closer to God," and "My lie will protect me or others and the truth will cause unnecessary pain." The world is quick to see that doing what is right in God's sight does not always bring instant gratification. In fact, righteousness can bring suffering while enduring everything from controlling personal passions to persecution. Sin is often seen as a way of alleviating the pressures of the flesh and carnal world. So, how can something be wrong when it feels so right? How can something be condemned when it helps so many people?

For something to be good it must first be right. Saying, "Let us do evil, that good may come..." is still doing evil and is flatly rejected in Scripture (Rom. 3:8). Something must first be good in the sight of God, not just in keeping with our own standards and sensibilities, or that of our society. This means we must define what is good by the word of God, for without this revelation we cannot know what God thinks is good or evil (1 Cor. 2:9-12). Surely we must admit that our personal feelings and standards may be tainted by things like pride, lust, and ignorance. This is why arguing from our perception of positive consequence falls so far short of establishing something to be good from God's revealed truth.

**"I'm Willing to Accept the Consequences"** ~ Those who make this statement tend to think only of physical consequences (and even then think they will probably never receive them). But the spiritual consequences of sin are unbearable: "...a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). Who, but Christ, can bear this?

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# WHEN THE PREACHER'S WIFE TAKES A JOB

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Our society has devolved to the point where it is expected that both spouses share in the production of family income. The scriptural admonition to teach women to be “keepers at home” (Tit. 2:5) has been scoffed at by most, ignored by many others and watered-down by some.

The prevailing attitude in the world has enticed many Christians to conform to the world. While I realize there are rare situations which have forced some wives and mothers out of the home and into the work place, it is my contention that the vast majority of women have been “forced” by other than necessity.

There's seems to be no end to the list of “necessities” that require the second income: credit card debt, a nicer house, a second car, a third car, vacations, saving for children's college tuition, etc. There's an old saying that, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” but I wonder if some have turned that around, making *invention* the mother of *necessity*.

When the trend toward two-income families emerged Christians were slow to join the crowd. However, with the passing of time it appears that Christians have “caught up” with the culture. In fact, it is not from Christians that I hear the loudest outcries against this lifestyle, but from those who would describe themselves as “evangelicals.”

The popularity of wives, mothers and grandmothers out of the home has not been good for our nation, let alone for the church. I doubt that it is merely a coincidence that the divorce rate has increased along with this trend. It should be no surprise that men and women working closely in business and industry are subject to more temptation, which for some leads to sexual immorality. Others may have enough self-control to avoid that pitfall, but fall prey to other temptations that are destructive.

Many women who are Christians feel guilty about working outside the home. I know this because they are quick to enumerate the reasons they have to do so. If it is a *good* thing for them take a job away from home, why do they feel they have to justify it?

Now that it has become commonplace among Christians for the women to work outside the home, I have noticed that an increasing number of wives of gospel preachers have followed suit. Of course if one is justified, so is the other, but we have come to expect better of the preacher's wife. We expect her (as well as her husband) to “be an example to the believers” (1 Tim. 4:12).

When a preacher's wife “takes a job,” here are some of the inevitable results:

- If he hasn't already done so in his desire to justify other Christians, her husband will immediately start avoiding any preaching

about Titus 2:5, or perhaps more likely, he will develop a lesson that will effectively explain away what is said. He may even suggest that the “worthy woman” of Proverbs 31 was a real estate broker because she bought a field.

- The family will get used to living on two incomes, which will make what may be intended as a temporary situation more permanent than originally desired.

- Others who may have had qualms about the wife taking a job may be emboldened to

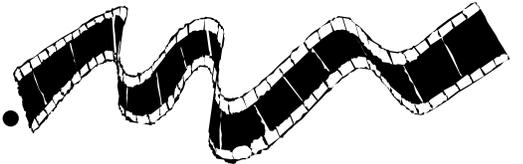
do so, for if the preacher's wife can do it, so can others.

- She and her husband will not be able to encourage other congregations as much by attending their gospel meetings, because she will be too tired (and rightly so).

- Churches will come to expect preachers' wives (and wives of preachers they support elsewhere) to work to save the church money.

- Preachers like me will be looked upon as narrow-minded hobby-riders.

## A Movie...



## The Power of God Unto Salvation?

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Billy Graham is calling it “...a lifetime of sermons in one movie.” Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion*, which focuses on Jesus' final twelve hours, is stirring up everything from lauds and tears to criticisms and charges of anti-Semitism. After wading through the interviews, articles and reviews (of the special pre-release showings) I am left wondering why anyone who believes that the gospel is “...the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) thinks God also needs a movie.

I fully understand that, more than ever before, we are a visual society. People who will probably never come to hear a sermon on the same topic are already demonstrating their willingness to watch the film. It is so popular that it is being touted as an evangelistic tool that is “Perhaps the best outreach opportunity in 2000 years” (*Passion Resource Mailer*). But does this end justify this means?

I do not doubt the ability of a Hollywood producer to make us feel something and cry, but if we will hold back our emotions for a few minutes some serious problems will come into focus.

We must not forget that Scripture, not a man-made movie script, is inspired. This movie is not simply Scripture in action. Although Biblical dialogue is present, there are also conversations and actions that simply are not found in Scripture. One addition is too many (Gal. 1:8-9), but like most of its predecessors, this movie has many elements that are speculative and down right wrong.

A graphic portrayal lends itself to speculation as it tries to show things which are not graphically pictured in the Bible. That the denominational world doesn't care about such supposition is evident in all the other areas in which they move without Biblical

precedent. Invitations to the movie and follow-up studies are being marketed with “TRUE or FALSE?” emblazoned across the front. But how will they respond to the truth seekers and skeptics who, in comparing the Biblical narrative, find inaccuracies in the film? When those claiming to be believers are inconsistent with Scripture Paul warns, “...The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Rom. 2:24).

I fear that truth will give way to cinematic excellence—if it looks good enough many will accept it as fact. Worse yet, that the movie is being hailed as an “experience,” what is being encouraged and played on is the strong tendency of the world to determine what is right based on emotion and the feelings of the moment.

“And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him...” (Jn. 19:17-18). “Then they crucified Him...” Matthew records (Matt. 27:35). Mark writes, “...they crucified Him” (Mk. 15:24). Luke says, “...there they crucified Him” (Lk. 23:33). The dispassionate Biblical record of the crucifixion has long been suggested as evidence of inspiration—they didn't write as men would describe that scene. In contrast, the movie's explicit violence earned it an R rating. I do not question the horrors surrounding the death of our Lord. I do wonder why it has become necessary to detail and show what the inspired words of Scripture do not.

Mel Gibson said in *Newsweek*, “The Holy Ghost was working through me on this film. I was just directing traffic.” We know better. The Spirit continues to work through the writers of our New Testament. Their account is accurate. Their story is the only “power of God unto salvation.”

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# Zero Tolerance for Evil

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

This past fall a syndicated article by Bill Press entitled “Ted and Fred are getting married!” ran in our local paper. The article was supportive of the Vermont and Massachusetts court decisions which have paved the way for “gay marriage.”

A couple of weeks later I received in the mail that same article clipped from the newspaper. All that was written at the top was, “Andy—Answer this!” and a signature. It caused me to ponder why others had not responded to this article. I wonder if many have been cowed by the fear of being branded intolerant. Admittedly, no one desires this label.

Intolerant is such a broad word and, unfortunately, is often only equated with extremism. Yet, we are all intolerant of some things and should be! Even those who are quick to label others as intolerant demonstrate their own lack of tolerance for others’ intolerance and thus condemn themselves (Rom. 2:1).

To simply identify someone as intolerant is meaningless. One cannot say that tolerance is preferred to intolerance until both are placed in a moral context. Is tolerance preferred to intolerance when it comes to the sexual use of children? In a society that is increasingly tolerant of anything, you might be surprised at the answers you would get, even from religious leaders, to that question.

Bill Press wrote, “Under the law, there is

no way for the state to justify treating some Americans as second-class citizens for any reason: sex, religion, race or sexual orientation.” Don’t be deceived—for all practical purposes, his use of orientation equals the right to act on that orientation. Therefore, if your orientation is homosexual, then you also have the right to practice homosexuality. Likewise, some contend if your sexual orientation is toward children, then you also have the right to practice pedophilia.

In the name of liberty, Mr. Press, the courts, and others in this country have wandered into a desolate wilderness with a broken moral compass. No matter which direction they turn, the needle always points back at them. The individual, and his personal orientation, has become the standard by which he directs his life. Everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Lest you think that is the way it ought to be, read everything written between the two scriptures that make that observation (Judg. 17:6—21:25).

The scriptures clearly condemn all sexual activity outside of marriage (Heb. 13:4). Marriage, in its beginning as designed by God (Gen. 2:18-25) and in every instance thereafter, is between a man and a woman. There is not one scriptural exception to this. All homosexual behavior is consistently condemned (Rom. 1:26,27).

Unfortunately, many people long ago compromised any moral authority on this subject by tolerating heterosexual activity outside of marriage. Likewise, many have tolerated divorce and remarriage, which Jesus clearly condemned as adultery (Matt. 19:9). On and on we could go in demonstrating that sin is tolerated more often than not. On what basis could many people condemn the immorality of homosexuals without condemning themselves? They could not, so they do not; and this is at least one major reason for the toleration of homosexuality.

The scriptures answer the issue of “gay marriage,” but most people do not have ears to hear. We should not be surprised that the world is “dull of hearing.” What is amazing is that so many who profess to be Christians have stopped their ears and joined the cry for toleration rather than repentance. Homosexuals are not sanctified by being monogamous, getting “married,” or being tolerated.

Sanctification comes one way, and that way does not include unrighteousness. 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 specifically identifies many unrighteous people including fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, and sodomites. Verse 11 then reads, “Such were some of you (notice the past tense). But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” The answer is not a call for toleration, but for sanctification.

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## About That Sign Out Front



By AL DIESTELKAMP

As you read this article, keep in mind that the congregation in Sycamore, Illinois, where I preach and serve as an elder, has a rather large sign out front with the words CHURCH of CHRIST emblazoned in bright blue lettering on a lighted white background. Thus it is clear that I am not at all adverse to using this scriptural description to identify the local congregation.

What *does* disturb me is the subtle (and some not-so-subtle) attempts to suggest that autonomous congregations which choose other scriptural descriptions are displaying symptoms of digression or are ashamed of the doctrine of Christ.

Most brethren understand that there is no single “name” which must be used to the exclusion of others, but some seem intent on raising suspicion (or at least an eyebrow) if they paint a sign that reads “Christians meet here,” or advertise as “The Lord’s church,” or simply as “the church in Podunk.”

Lest you think I’m making this up, let me cite several examples from recent experience. First, a brother, while preaching in a gospel meeting not far from where I live, cited a “laundry list” of what he considered dangerous trends, one of which was churches choosing to be identified by anything other than “Church of Christ.”

More recently I read one of the speeches from the 2004 Florida College Lectures, in which the author asked, “Who has not heard of digressive churches of Christ that changed

their designation to ‘the church,’ justifying it by saying that ‘Church of Christ’ carries an unpleasant connotation in the community.” There are some digressive churches, but calling the church “the church” is not part of their problem.

Even more recently two articles were published in *Truth Magazine* in which the two authors lamented the use of other descriptions. One asked, “Have we become embarrassed to refer to the New Testament church in the same way the Holy Spirit did?” This implies that the New Testament gave the church an exclusive name, and that name is “Church of Christ,” in spite of the fact that more often churches were identified in other ways.

The other author, under the heading, *What Should the Sign Say?*, after correctly acknowledging that “Church of Christ” is not the exclusive Bible name for the church, implied that not to use it on our signs is evidence of being ashamed of Jesus. Was the apostle Paul ashamed of Christ when he wrote the churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessalonica, without once addressing them as “churches of Christ”?

Then there was the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that if a congregation wants another designation, “Why not paint the sign to say *Not a Church of Christ?*” That question reminds me of the rule, “What proves too much, proves nothing at all.” Using that logic, if some of our brethren were to purchase a building formerly owned by a certain denomination, perhaps they should repaint the sign to read, *Not a Church of God.*



# MORALS in the PULPIT and in the PEW

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP**

Once, when I preached a sermon on morals, a mature man in the congregation asked to speak. For perhaps two or three minutes he exhorted the people, giving complete endorsement to what I had preached. I believe his endorsement may have impressed the people more than my sermon had. It would be a good thing, everywhere, if elders and/or other mature, devout men would publicly concur in teaching of truth on moral matters. The more worldly ones would then come to realize that morality is a matter for all, not just for preachers. We need more morals in the pew as well as in the pulpit.

In the same city where I preached the above-mentioned sermon, an elderly lady attended the services. I visited her, and in the course of such I inquired how she happened to attend. She said that "her church" was far across the city and that her son had urged her to attend with us. Her son was foreman in a plant over the very man mentioned above who exhorted the people when I preached. Her son so admired the morals of his worker that he told his mother, "that church must be all right" because that man went there.

Of course, I do not mean that the morality of the people necessarily makes a church right. People may indeed be moral and still be very wrong doctrinally. On the other hand, regardless of the purity of doctrine that is preached, a church can't be right before

God and fruitful among men unless the morals of the members are above reproach. In fact, correctness (scripturalness) in worship, work and organization is made attractive to the world by genuine morality and good works (Matt. 5:15-16).

When Christians teach the whole truth, many people will reject it and rebel against it. Yet some may be won to receptiveness and later to obedience through the godliness of Christians. Conversely, any scriptural position a church may take is made quite inconsequential to the world if the people do not live in holiness. A preacher's sermon on morals falls very flat if the congregation does not exemplify the highest ideals. Especially the leaders (elders, deacons, preachers, etc.) and their wives need to maintain untainted reputations that will portray the very same ideals as are proclaimed in the sermons.

Instead of always whining and complaining about the morals of the world about us, God's people would do better to just demonstrate, in the pulpit and the pew, the qualities that are desirable. Let us say and do, preach and live moral purity of the very highest possible degree. Let the thoughts of our minds, the words of our lips and the deeds of our bodies be holy, godly and righteous altogether. This would abound to the glory of God, to satisfaction in life and usefulness to the world.

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\*In the last issue I noted that the platemaking system I have used since 1972 would have to be replaced because the manufacturer has discontinued the necessary supplies. I have since purchased a used computer-to-plate system at a cost of \$1,000, as reflected in the figures above. This necessitated use of the surplus we had and inflated the cost of the last issue. This issue is expected to cost approximately \$540 which would leave a deficit of \$184.40.

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

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