



By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

As a citizen of the United States, I am thankful for the freedoms that I have. I appreciate the freedom of the press which allows me to write without fear of reprisals from my government. I am grateful that I can freely assemble with my brethren and openly worship God. I am glad that our founding fathers created a government that is not beholden to any particular religious creed, church, or denomination; but that all are free to seek God as directed by Him and their consciences.

There has been great political debate over Jefferson's reference to a "wall of separation" between church and state. In so far as "separation" has been enforced to keep the government from running churches and churches from running the government, I am thrilled. However, with increasing frequency we are seeing the courts extrapolating the separation of church and state into a separation of faith and law. In other words, if the courts suspect that faith in God has at all motivated or influenced state-sponsored activity, school board decisions, or legislative action in any way, then they are declared unconstitutional.

Last year a Colorado court overturned the decision of a jury to sentence a man to death because the jury considered what the Bible might have to say on the matter of capital punishment. The jury had an obligation to make every effort to arrive at a just and moral conclusion. In an effort to do this the jury referenced a widely-accepted moral guide. The judge had not turned sentencing over to a church but to twelve individuals who came from different backgrounds. A juror was just as free to reject the references to Scripture as to accept them. No government or church forced the jurors to give consideration to the Bible.

That the jury's consideration of the Bible

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 37

April-May-June, 2006

Number 2

Separation of Faith & Law

constituted no breach in Jefferson's wall of separation is made especially clear by the fact that individuals and churches which use the Bible as their moral guide have come to different conclusions on the morality of capital punishment. What if the ones who had brought in the Bible had done so to plead for mercy in sparing the convicted man's life? What if the jury had rejected the testimony of Scripture as not being relevant to their case and therefore decided against capital punishment? Would the courts have ordered him executed? Certainly not!

Honestly, I found it refreshing that a group of men and women attempting to come to a consensus on a matter of morality turned to the Bible for guidance. Oh that God's word could have that position of influence in more courtrooms and jury deliberations! Oh that the Bible could have that position of influence in the halls of government, the boardrooms of our companies and schools, and in our families! Perhaps, then, more churches would begin using it again.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). It is foolishness to impress jurors with the importance and gravity of doing their utmost to make a moral decision and then deprive them of a standard of morality which they wish to consult.

I suppose the next step in the attempt to divorce faith from law will be to instruct jurors to disregard their consciences if they have been educated in the Scriptures. Expert after expert on matters of law, psychology, biology, physics, and ethics can be paraded before jurors in an effort to influence them, but the influence of Scripture is somehow deemed unconstitutional.

On June 28th, 1787, in the midst of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin (a representative of no church) recalled that during the war in that very hall

they had often prayed to God for His assistance. James Madison quoted Franklin as saying:

"And have we forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, [Franklin was 81] and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice [Mt. 10:29] is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it' [Ps. 127:1]. I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building, no better than the builders of Babel" [Gen. 11:1-9] (*Notes on Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*, Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 209).

If referencing the Bible as a guide is unconstitutional behavior in matters of law and government and therefore invalidates any conclusions reached under its influence, then it would appear that the United States Constitution itself is unconstitutional. Of course, this is nonsense. What is unconstitutional is denying men and women the freedom to use the Bible as a legitimate moral voice and influence. Yet that is happening.

As citizens of this country, we may have some legitimate concerns with respect to our eroding freedom to preach the word of God. Nevertheless, our first century brethren never had such a luxury. Let us respond as they did. "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Ac. 5:29) and go everywhere preaching the word (Ac. 8:4). God help us to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, and let us not cease teaching and preaching Him as the Christ (Ac. 5:41,42).

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

Daughters:



From Whence Come Their Godly Husbands?

By KEITH CLAYTON

There is something special about daughters. Dads can become a piece of putty in their hands if they aren't careful, and make them forget their sobering and awesome duty to the man who will become her husband.

What kind of wife will our daughter make? What kind of mother will she become for our grandchildren? Will she be a daughter of Sarah, with a meek and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God? Will she love, honor and reverence her husband as God designed her to do? Will she be a good keeper of the home? Will she love God enough to serve Him by serving her husband and children with all that she is? Will she love God's word, and serve Him faithfully in His one true church? Will she be truth-centered and hold God's infallible word in her heart? (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Boys are different. We rear them differently, to be godly leaders. We train boys to love God, His word, His true church, their families...some of the same things we strive to teach our daughters, as human beings and people of God. Yet, boys are really different. They will be the heads of their future families. They will be responsible to God for how they lead. They, and their families, will reap the consequences of their decisions, whether those choices are godly or ungodly, true or false. Though we continue to be concerned that our sons make right and godly choices, we know that those are their choices to make as heads of their own families.

That's the big difference between our sons and daughters, and it is the reason for the consternation, and even trepidation, about dad's "giving away" their daughters in marriage. A faithful brother in Christ recently expressed some concern about his four daughters—from whence will come godly men for them to marry? His daughters have a way to go before they are of age to marry; but, this dad is looking ahead, and looking around...and not much liking what he sees even among the churches of Christ!

I'm talking godly men, not just those that show up to the assemblies of Christ's church. I'm referring to holy men who are not friends of the world, those who have their senses trained to discern—by use of God's word—between good and evil, between truth and error. I'm speaking about real men who are unafraid of controversy with the world. Our daughters need men who stand up and lead, without fear of reprisal from the worldly. Wives need men who do not shirk their headship stations to avoid disdain which the

unregenerate of this world may throw their way. Wives need the kind of spiritual, familial and social leadership from their husbands which does not offer compromise with the world and the worldly (in or out of the church).

Godly leaders for wives and children are sadly lacking in today's age! There are multiple reasons for this sorrowful condition. A big cause has been that compromises have been made by many. Some of us have given in to the philosophy of, "we want to be different from the world, but not *that* different." We don't want to be so much unlike the worldly around us that they persecute us and speak evil of us. Yet, this is precisely what happened in the first century to the saints of God.

Those folks were converted from the world to Christ and were not about to go back into the world, nor allow the world to take them prisoner to sin again. They would not lean over to please the world for they rightly feared that they might bend too far and fall right in!! They made no peace and no compromise with the world. They were holy because their Father, God Almighty, is holy. They were bought at a price—the blood of the Lamb of God. They didn't mind standing out as "lights" in stark contrast with the "darkness" they had just left.

Yet, today, tragically, successive generations of Christians seem to not have that line of demarcation fixed in their minds. And, some who do, wish it weren't so! They inwardly long for living without bounds, and by such, to be rid of any pressure from worldly and ungodly folks around them. Few that be are the number of Christians who recognize the difference between holy and worldly...and who are glad of it.

Here are some of the discussion points being defended from time to time in various churches of Christ: 1) girls on a high school coed wrestling team; 2) attending the prom; 3) modern dancing; 4) revealing attire on girls and women—short skirts, tight blouses, cleavage showing, leg less than half covered, swim suits in public; 5) marrying a non-Christian; 6) the guilty party in a divorce can re-marry. I wonder what our Father thinks of some of the "arguments" in favor of these manifestations of worldliness among His people?

But, to the point of this matter of husbands for our daughters—how will holy and godly men arise out of such thinking? It is painfully clear that they cannot. Elders, preachers and godly saints in churches of Christ must make a stand if the situation is to be made better. If people's feelings are hurt by

such clear and holy teaching, then so be it. No one seeks to hurt the feelings of another, but, sometimes it is not avoidable. How will folks learn holiness if truth is timid, or compromised for the sake of numbers? It would be better that the feelings of the worldly are hurt, and repentance manifested, than for families to be wrecked, lives put into ruin and souls lost in Hell for eternity because of the unopposed reign of worldliness.

Again—daughters are special, and are the cause for more concern, for in training a young girl to grow up into a godly woman and wife, she will be taught that she will be under authority. When she is young, growing through adolescence, she is under the authority of her dad. Once given away, she will be under the authority of her husband, who will become her head (Eph. 5:22-33). What kind of head can she find who will lead her in truth, and be the kind of head that Jesus is to the church—holy and uncompromising with the thinking of this age?

We teach our daughters to honor, love and reverence her man...to follow him. Where will he lead if he is infected with worldly philosophies about life? And, I'm referring to young men who are Christians. A non-Christian isn't even on the radar, for such would be a clear violation of multiple Bible principles, not the least of which is unequal yoking (2 Cor. 6:14ff).

It is not with great comfort that my godly brother with four daughters contemplates "who will it be?" for his daughters. There is a dearth of available ones, currently, who are thinking right. There are few who are unafraid to be holy in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (1 Pet. 1:14-16; Phil. 2:14-16). Worst of all, when they do want to make peace with God, be holy and at war with the world, then some even in the church of the Lord will openly discourage them from doing so. Godly parents need to begin to undermine the humanist thinking infused daily and massively into children attending public schools, and which has infected the thinking of some Christians.

From whence come the godly men for our daughters? Not from the institutions of the world. They will come from your home, dear parent...if you do your job, with reinforcement from a church that is really "called out" of this world and its decadence. They will come from sound and faithful churches of Christ, filled with families striving to be godly and faithful in all manner of living. There is no other place from which such real men will originate.

P.O. Box 1164, Cheshire, Connecticut 06410
e-mail: kclc2869@yahoo.com



THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS

By AL DIESTELKAMP

When it comes to behavior, one should never allow himself to be put into positions where he chooses between two evils. There may be situations wherein we *think* we must make such choices, but in reality there are always other options which we ignore because they may include discomfort, or even hardship.

We're dwelling in an ungodly world that excuses some sins, either because they are commonplace, or because they are viewed as harmless. The so-called "white lie" has long been considered acceptable in society. In recent times the world has developed a long list of what is called "victimless" crimes and sins.

Most Christians recognize this as a trap laid by Satan, and understand that we cannot afford to fall into it by excusing *any* sin.

The Bible clearly reveals that one will not enter into eternal life with any unforgiven sin, be it murder or that "little white lie" (Rev. 21:27).

Having said that, let me challenge a claim frequently made in Bible classes and sermons that "sin is sin, so one sin is as great as another." The Bible doesn't teach that. In fact, it teaches just the opposite.

When God was about to bring a flood on the earth, it was because "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth" (Gen. 6:5). Every man that had lived up to that point had sinned, but the sin became so great that God decided to start over, saving eight sinners whose sins were evidently not as grievous as the rest of mankind.

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, shows that God considers some sins worse than others. In explaining His reason for destroy-

ing those cities God told Abraham it was "because their sin is very grave" (Gen. 18:20). He spared other cities populated with sinners, but whose sins were not as grave.

Whenever I hear someone say that there are no degrees of sin, or all sins are the same, I wonder if they realize they are contradicting Jesus who said to Pilate, "the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin" (Jn. 19:11). Obviously, Jesus was not excusing Pilate's sin, but He clearly placed greater blame on others.

Though I think I've made it pretty clear that the "lesser" sins cannot be ignored just because they are not as "great" as others, let me make it even clearer. Any sin, great or small, has the potential of destroying one's soul. Conversely, any sin, great or small, can be remitted by the blood of Christ if the sinner will comply with the gospel of the grace of God.

Denying God Secretly

By RICK LIGGIN

"If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; if I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon going in splendor, and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above." (Job 31:24-28).

Recently, when I once again came across these words of Job, I was struck by how serious he was about avoiding every form of sin and even the slightest of transgressions. In this text, Job is asserting his integrity before God and trying to argue his absolute faithfulness to God. Job recognized, and bluntly declares here, that any paganism at all—even in the smallest of forms—would constitute an utter denial of God.

When Job speaks in this text of looking at the sun or the moon in their splendor, he's not talking about simply admiring these great heavenly bodies as God created them. All of us, from time to time, stand in awe of God's creation and admire its beauty...and rightly so! We should admire what God has made.

But this isn't what Job is talking about in this text. He's talking about looking at the sun or moon with the intent of worshipping

these created things. Job is saying that if somehow he felt a desire to worship the sun or the moon by throwing a kiss at them—if he only entertained these thoughts secretly in his own heart—even that would be an outright denial of the true God of heaven. Job knew, as we do, that the moon and sun are only parts of God's creation; they are not deities to be worshiped. Only God is God; and only He is worthy of our worship. And that means that even the slightest move by man in the direction of paganism would be an iniquity deserving of judgment.

Now, when I think about what Job says in this text, I cannot help but think of at least two lessons we need to learn from it:

1) A person does not have to overtly and openly deny God to be guilty of denying Him. One can deny the Lord secretly in his heart without ever doing anything openly to suggest that he has denied God. When we longingly look at temporal things and begin to secretly think in our hearts that maybe these things can make us happy and give our lives real purpose, we are taking steps in the direction of denying God.

2) Even the slightest move in the direction of putting trust in something else or someone else other than God constitutes paganism and a denial of the true God. Now this may not mean a whole lot to us in a society that traditionally does not literally bow down to images and idols. But when we

understand that Job, not only speaks of kissing the sun or moon, but also of putting confidence in wealth and in our ability to secure so much for ourselves (31:24-25), we begin to see the point.

We live in an extremely earthly (worldly) society. Oh, we may not literally bow to idols, but we most certainly devote ourselves to the pursuit of material things and material pleasures. And that makes us just as pagan as the man who throws a kiss to the moon or bows before an idolatrous sun god. And what we need to be acutely aware of is that even though we may consider ourselves to be Christians, and even though we may faithfully worship the true God on a regular basis, when we put (even some of) our confidence in physical pleasure or our material things or our ability to secure wealth, we have in essence denied God. And in denying God in this way, we are just as guilty of "an iniquity calling for judgment" (31:28).

I tell you, folks, Job's words here are sobering...but he knew his own heart! He knew that he'd never been guilty of any of these iniquities. Can you honestly say the same for yourself? Before you answer, you'd better examine yourself...your own heart. And you'd better recognize that God knows everything you do...even the things you do secretly in your heart.

315 Almond Drive, Washington, Illinois 61571
e-mail: rcliggin@gmail.com

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A CULT?

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

One man jokingly wrote that a cult was any group he didn't like. He was pointing out the tendency to use prejudicial or inflammatory language to describe those with whom we disagree. People sometimes throw the word cult around out of fear of the unknown and as a way to avoid open-minded investigation.

Of course, there are religious cults that are spiritually, emotionally, and sometimes physically dangerous and damaging. Deciding what is a cult and what isn't can be difficult because there is not one, all encom-

"According to cult expert David Halperin, most cults are groups organized for the purpose of venerating an authoritarian, usually self-proclaimed leader. This leader claims to have a special relationship with God or with some other supernatural force, a relationship that imbues him or her with special powers."

A Parents Guide to Teens and Cults,
by Larry Dumont and Richard Altesman,
The PIA Press, 1989 pg. 12

passing, definition which can be applied in every situation. While using care to avoid unsafe religious groups, we also need to resist the temptation to label as a cult any group we aren't familiar with or which seems different from what we are used to.

Because some people are unfamiliar with the church of Christ they have wondered if we are a cult.

The Choice Seats

Why is it that at sporting events, musical concerts and dramatic performances, the choice seats are near the front, but at worship people (even many Christians) actually prefer to sit as far back as possible?

At secular events people are quite willing to cheer and applaud along with strangers seated right next to them, while at worship many Christians do all they can to put as much space as possible between themselves and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I fear the answer to my question is that many Christians do not want to get highly involved in worship, and find comfort in being away from "the action."

~Al Diestelkamp

Here are some reasons why we do not fit the cult description:

- ◆ We do not have a human leader. Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22)
- ◆ We do not claim to have special revelation (knowledge) which others do not have – we believe the Bible is our sole authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- ◆ Reason from Scripture is used in teaching, not pressure, manipulation, or control tactics (Isa. 1:18)
- ◆ Every member is to study and understand God's word, not following any man or group ideology (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:15)
- ◆ We do not isolate ourselves, but are to be in the world while not being of the world (Jn. 17:14-15; Matt. 5:13-14)
- ◆ We are not closed minded, but are willing to "test all things" (1 Thess. 5:21)
- ◆ We are not antagonistic, but believe, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18)
- ◆ Zeal is expressed in ways controlled by God in the Scriptures (Rom. 10:2)
- ◆ Without exception, we are committed to God's high standard of morality, refusing to compromise anything revealed in the New Testament.

Being a follower of Christ has always been about faith based on personal study and investigation. True faith and its expression may seem strange, even extreme, to those who are unfamiliar with faith as revealed in the New Testament. Different or devoted does not mean cultic.

Our desire to do what is right in the sight of God must drive us to search for and find His true will as revealed in the Bible. These are the people you will find in God's true church. A cult tries to decide for you – God's people want you to look to God in His word to decide for you!

940 N. Elmwood Drive, Aurora, Illinois 60506
e-mail: davdiestel@yahoo.com

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Postage (U.S. & Canada)	441.09
Return Postage (20)	7.80
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 533.89
Funds available for past issue	1,323.08
Surplus	\$ 789.19

Donations (as of 5/1):

Milburn E. White, AR	\$ 100.00
Olin Warmack, AL	5.00
David & Barbara Waldron, MI	25.00
Anonymous, MN	10.00
Margaret Crump, FL	100.00
Ruth Spurgeon, TX	50.00
Dorothy M. Mills, FL	25.00
Anonymous, TN	50.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 365.00
Surplus from past issue	789.19
Funds for this issue	\$ 1,154.19

As always, we thank all of our voluntary partners who support this effort. With the annual renewal fee for the bulk mailing permit we anticipate this issue will cost about \$730 which would leave a surplus of about \$424 toward the cost of the following issue.

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

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

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

E-mail al@thinkonthesethings.com

Web Page www.thinkonthesethings.com

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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

Return Service Requested

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Cortland, IL
Permit No. 11