

Second in a series on
'Doing Good To All'



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 39

January-February-March, 2008

Number 1

DOING GOOD TO OUR BRETHREN

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Having a relationship with Christ puts us into a spiritual family along with all others who are in Christ. It requires that we develop and maintain affection and love for those of like-precious faith—even to the point of “giving preference” to them (Rom. 12:10).

While we have an obligation to do good to all, we have a special duty to do good “to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Our differing personalities and temperaments can make this a difficult task, but that does not excuse us from accomplishing it.

It is inevitable that we will come in contact with other Christians who “rub us the wrong way.” The tendency, in such cases, is to avoid as much contact with them as possible, but that is not the solution. Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying about another person, “I don’t like that man. I’ll have to get to know him better.” Many times a true friendship can evolve from dislike if we get to know one another better.

“One Another” Disciples

The term “one another” is often used by inspired writers of the New Testament when giving instruction as to how we should act toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. A profitable study would be to go to all the scriptures that contain these words in order to learn the many ways we can do good to our brothers and sisters in Christ. The limited space in this paper will not allow such an exhaustive study, but we want to take note of a few of the “good” things we are to do to, and for, one another.

One of the most important obligations we have toward one another is to forgive (Matt. 18:21-22). Whenever there are people involved, there will be the need for forgiveness. Failure to forgive will not only be hurtful to the one who has sinned against us, but

also will jeopardize our own souls (Matt. 6:14-15). In forgiving, we must do so willingly, making sure we “do not grumble against one another” (Jas. 5:9). Forgiveness without grumbling is an act of kindness prompted by a tender heart, “just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).

Another way that we can do good to our brethren is by sharing in their joys and sorrows. We are told to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). In order to do either we must get to know one another well enough to know when to rejoice and when to weep. This will not happen unless we are willing to spend significant time with one another. We are told to “be hospitable to one another” (1 Pet. 4:9) and to be “given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13). I am convinced that one of the greatest needs among God’s people is the restoration of reciprocal hospitality. Only then can we expect to adequately “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

We must also do good by what we don’t do. In regard to “doubtful things” (Rom. 14:1), we are told not to “judge one another” nor to “put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13). Instead, we must learn to “consider one an-

other in order to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

This does not mean that we are to sit idly by while our brethren sin. Indeed, we are doing good when we, in gentleness “restore such a one” (Gal. 6:1). When gentleness fails to turn a sinner from “the error of his way” (Jas. 5:19-20), we are doing good to rebuke him sharply, that he “may be sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:13). When all else fails, we are commanded to “withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Even this action is doing good for the brother in error, as our determination “not to keep company with him” is so that “he may be ashamed” (2 Thess 3:14), and come to repentance.

It’s All About Love

There are no less than twelve New Testament verses commanding that we “love one another.” Our Lord called it “a new commandment” (Jn. 13:34). What was “new” about this command was that He included the words, “as I have loved you.” The apostle John placed that command on a par with the command to “believe on the name of Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 3:23). When we do good, including doing good to our brethren, we are expressing our love in action.

Some of the good that God wants us to do to, and for, one another may not be perceived as “good” in the eyes of men—or even in the eyes of some brethren. However, it is only in the scriptures that we are “equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Doing good to your brothers and sisters in Christ should come naturally. Christians are the best people on earth! This is not because of anything we have done on our own, but what Christ has done for us. It is only reasonable that we should act accordingly. To the extent that we do, others will see the good (Christ) in us, and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).





By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

For the last several months there has been a great deal of angst over adjustable rate home mortgages (ARMs), people's inability to make their house payments, and thus the potential for many defaulting on such loans. In addition, the overall indebtedness of households is increasing. Quite frankly, many families are facing financial crisis and are blissfully unaware of it. They don't allow themselves to think about it or they think that somebody will do something to fix their problem.

It has long been observed that financial matters create some of the greatest stresses in marriage. The amazing power of compound interest that is lauded by investors as a means to make your money grow under sober-minded stewardship can also quickly drown the undisciplined consumer in a virtual ocean of debt. Debt is often a very sensitive subject that most do not want to discuss with others.

It is no surprise to the student of Scripture to find that God has much to say regarding money and, therefore, about debt. While debt has become a way of life in our materialistic culture, the spiritually minded would do well to beware.

Debt can simply refer to what is owed by agreement as the result of services performed or goods received. It is an obligation to be met. In such agreements one side assumes risk while the other meets the obligation and is indebted to the other until the obligation is met. We see this in all aspects of commerce from the relationships of employer/employee to producer/consumer. As such, debt is not inherently evil.

Problems of debt come when the obligations are not met. "The wicked borrows and does not repay" (Psa. 37:21a). The teaching is not that borrowers are wicked, but that those who do not honor their debts are wicked. I fear we have raised up a generation that would find those words harsh.

To fail to pay back what we owe is to default not only on a loan but on our word, on an oath, a promise. In Leviticus 19:11-13

Drowning in Debt

we find false swearing and dealing grouped with lying and stealing. It is all considered to be fraud. In most agreements taking an oath is sufficient to give the lender confidence (Heb. 6:16). When we, who claim to be children of God, go back on our word, we profane the name of our God. God is our witness whether or not we utter those words in our purchase agreements.

The Pharisees and other like-minded, loophole-seeking legalists taught that oaths invoking the name of the Lord had to be kept, but others did not (Matt. 5:33-37). It is interesting to see how Jesus took the things by which they swore and connected them all to God. Whether you swear, affirm, or promise in a court of law or sign a piece of paper, shake hands, or have a gentlemen's agreement, God is involved as a witness; and the One whose name we wear is blasphemed if our "yes" is "no" or our "no" is "yes."

As we read Jesus' scathing rebukes of the lawyers of His day, we see that He has no patience for any kind of commitment-making that essentially diminishes a man's word to "nothing." We are fools if we think that we can go back on our obligations simply by the way we technically phrase our words (Matt. 23:16-22).

However, the problems of debt are not limited to the extreme of defaulting. The psalmist's antithesis to the wicked that does not repay is not a borrower who repays, "but the righteous shows mercy and gives" (Psa. 37:21b). The righteous are not merely those who repay what they owe; the righteous are merciful givers. The truth is that many of us are not in a position to be the kind of givers we should be because much of what we have is not really ours but is borrowed. Debt can hinder our ability to be generous, hospitable, and sacrificial.

Proverbs tells us that the borrower is servant to the lender (22:7). When I borrow more than I can repay, then I am effectively a slave to the lender. In some cultures this led to the literal selling of oneself and one's own into servitude for life. Just because our culture legislates grace and does not permit slavery does not mean that we are free from our obligation to repay our debts. Shall we continue in debt that grace may abound? No!

While many have not actually defaulted on their debts, they find their financial situation deteriorating, not because of crisis or calamity, but because of a lack of self-control. These begin to feel like they are slaves to the banks, credit card companies, and stores because—for all practical purposes—they are. The feeling of mounting financial debt is not pleasant, nor should it be. Like profane Esau, many are selling their futures and their souls for the convenience of fast

food: the immediate gratification of wants masquerading as needs.

We need to count the cost of our decisions (Lk. 14:25-33). As a rule, diligence in planning leads to abundance whereas hasty expenditures and borrowing leads to poverty (Prov. 21:5,6). Fulfilling our material fantasies by accumulating treasures of things and experiences without careful consideration about how (or whether) we will ever pay the cost is a sure way to death (physically and spiritually).

The fact that borrowing is not inherently wrong and may be, in some cases, necessary has been used by many as a diving board into the depths of debt. The liberty to borrow does not justify all borrowing. Just because something is lawful does not mean that it is helpful (1 Cor. 6:12,13). Anything over which we do not exercise proper self-control has the power to enslave us, and we are not to be brought under the power of any.

Undisciplined borrowing is a fast path to enslavement, and the burden of debt will distract us from our full service to Christ. It is not in keeping with the spirit of Christ for one who has been bought by Him to intentionally enslave himself to another master. It is better for us to be free from the slavery of debt (1 Cor. 7:21-23).

The person who finds himself drowning in debt ought to desire to be made free but not by dishonorable means. Onesimus was not free to leave Philemon simply because he no longer wanted to be enslaved or because he had become a Christian (Phe. 10-19). While grace and love might compel some to forgive debts, the debtor is in no position to demand grace.

Debt as a lifestyle is dangerous because life is uncertain. "You do not know what will happen tomorrow" (Jas. 4:13-17). Many live for today without any realistic plan (budget) for how they will pay tomorrow. Many "plans" are not well thought out and assume the status quo (or imagine improving circumstances). Many "plans" only take into consideration what we want and not the Lord's will. This is not only arrogant; it is selfish, carnal, and poor stewardship.

We who claim to live of the spirit need to walk by the spirit. The spiritual qualities of peace, patience, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-25) must be applied to the material things with which we have been entrusted if we are to be entrusted with true riches (Lk. 16:10-12). Rather than desiring to be rich (or to live that lifestyle), we need to find contentment in our relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:11-13) who has paid the debt we could not pay.

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

Good or Evil?...You Make the Call

By RICK LIGGIN

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

The fact that Christ will judge us all based on our good or bad deeds makes it necessary for us to rightly distinguish between good and evil. Isaiah warned: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). It's a serious matter to call something *bad* when it actually is good; or to call a thing *good* when it actually is bad. And that's exactly why the apostle Paul urges us to "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

Notice particularly the word "everything" in this text! Paul says that we must examine *everything* carefully! Not one thing is to be automatically considered good...or evil. *Everything* must be tested! We must not just examine those things that jump out at us as "suspect," or only those things we don't like or don't want to do. *Everything* must be examined! Even the things that are not suspect...even the things that we like and want to do. Why? Because eternity hangs in the balance!

Once we have examined everything carefully, Paul then tells us to "hold fast to that which is good" and "abstain from every form of evil." In urging us this way, Paul makes an interesting play on words to more strongly drive home his point: literally he says, "*hold fast* (KATECHO) that which is good; *hold off on* (APECHO) the evil" (see the ECHO in each of these words). And again, notice Paul's use of "every": he says *every* form of evil must be held off on! Not just *most* forms of evil or those forms that we agree are evil; but *every* form...even if it comes in the form of something we like or want to do! If it's a form of evil, we must hold off on it...we must abstain!

We need to understand, though, that when it comes to what actually is good and what actually is evil...this is something determined by God, and not by our wants or opinions! Our job is to examine everything care-

fully in light of God's Word to make sure it is good *before* we participate in it, and refuse to participate in it if it turns out to be some form of evil.

Now, let me ask you: How well are you doing at distinguishing between good and evil? Are you willing and ready to defend your "call" on what is good and what is evil...*before God in judgment*? Are you so sure that "there's nothing wrong with it" that you would even encourage others to do it...*before God*?

The point is: are you making the right "call" regarding what is good and what is evil? Are you sure enough about your call to stake your soul on it? Because that is exactly what you're doing! You and I will give an account for what we do, and I desperately want us to see this, because, quite frankly, I am concerned at times about some of the choices we make!

It amazes me how much Bible knowledge some folks seem to think they have when it comes to deciding: is it good or bad? They have so little real experience with the Word that, when trying to tell a lost friend what he must do to be saved, they need the help

of the preacher or some more mature Christian. But when those same mature brothers warn them about some sin endangering their lives, suddenly they don't need anybody's help...and: "Who in the world does he think he is, trying to tell me what I can and can't do?" They need the help as long as they agree or as long as they're only being asked to make changes that they are comfortable with; but let a more mature brother suggest that something they're doing is morally wrong or at least spiritually dangerous, and suddenly they know enough about the Bible to make their own decisions.

If that sounds curiously like you, maybe you need to sit up and take note! Are you willing to stake your soul on your present Bible knowledge, so that you have no need to "examine everything carefully"? I have no desire to "lord it over your faith" or tell you what to do. I'm just trying to remind you to examine everything carefully in light of God's Word...and not just your opinion. But in the end, brother, the call is yours...and you will answer for it! Makes you think, don't it?

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



Articles From the Days Gone By

'Have A Nice Weekend'

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP (1911-1995)

Each Monday lately our new bread delivery man has said as he left, "Have a nice weekend." Naturally, we are amused and perplexed. I have concluded that he was trained late in a week by one who left his customer saying, "Have a nice weekend." This new man just is not aware that such a greeting is only suited to the last of the week, and so he uses it all the time.

Many people are like that in religious matters. They read that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come," and so they go right on doing the very same thing more than 1900 years after the prayer was answered.

Some read that God commanded the Jews to keep the Sabbath holy, so they try to do the same today, even though they are not Jews and also long after the Sabbath was "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

Jesus told His apostles to "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49). Many to-

day are still expecting to receive that miraculous power long, long after Christ's promise was kept (see Ac. 2:1-4).

The fact is, late in the week it may be o.k. to say, "Have a nice weekend," but this is hardly the expression suited to Monday mornings. Likewise, it once was right for men to keep the Sabbath holy, but with Christ's death God repealed that law (Heb. 8:13). It was once right to pray for the coming kingdom, but when the kingdom came (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9) we should know enough to quit asking for it.

Immediately after the ascension of Jesus, it was correct for the apostles to expect the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as Jesus had indeed promised (Jn. 14:26; 16:13), but since the Holy Spirit came and fully revealed the gospel (Gal. 1:11; 1 Cor. 3:13; Rom. 1:16-17), we cannot expect this to be repeated in each generation because there is no more truth to reveal to us (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

This article, written in 1965, was printed in the West Side Bulletin, Aurora, Illinois

Reproductive Technologies Outline Available on Website

Abortion, contraception, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, stem cells and cloning, are discussed in an outline by David Diestelkamp <thinkonthesethings.com>

Wine is Still A Mocker

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP



“Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). It’s now nearly 3,000 years later and wine continues to mock and many continue to be led astray by it.

Wine’s current ploy is to divert attention from the many negatives of alcohol drinking to its alleged “health benefits.” Over the past decade the media has sensationalized a few studies which some believe suggest health benefits from drinking wine. Rises in wine sales and use have actually been attributed to these reports.*

Does a glass of wine a day keep the doctor away? The seduction of wine’s health benefits need to be countered with a stiff dose of reality.

- ◆ Most findings are preliminary, require further study, and their interpretation and meaning are very controversial among scientists and doctors. Don’t be fooled by the misreported certainties in the media.*
- ◆ Antioxidants in wine, called resveratrol and flavonoids, are suspected, but not known, to have health benefits.*
- ◆ You would have to drink gallons of wine a day in order to take in the same amount of resveratrol as the mice were fed in some wine studies.*
- ◆ Grapes and grape juice contain the same antioxidants as wine.* There is growing evidence that the health benefits of red wine are related to its nonalcoholic components.*
- ◆ Antioxidants can more readily be obtained from almost all fruits, vegetables

and grains, as well as from supplements.* “If you want antioxidants,” writes a well known cardiologist, “you are better off eating a spinach salad with vegetables than drinking a glass of red wine.”*

- ◆ Most experts agree that if there are real health benefits, there is still a fine line between healthy drinking and risky drinking.*
- ◆ Although some studies report possible heart benefits from wine drinking, the American Heart Association and other experts emphasize that there are much more effective ways to prevent heart disease.*
- ◆ The American Heart Association does not recommend drinking wine or any other form of alcohol to gain potential benefits.*
- ◆ Interestingly enough, almost every disease or condition being tested for potential wine benefits is known to be adversely affected by moderate to heavy alcohol use.
- ◆ Mayo Clinic says on this issue: “Few medical experts, if any, advise nondrinkers to start drinking.”* Two researchers conclude: “No one should start drinking if they don’t already drink.”*

*See website for documentation
www.thinkonthesethings.com

So be warned: Wine, its promoters, its drinkers, its would-be drinkers, and the media are not objective in their “proof” for why they are right and why you should join them in drinking. The deceptive nature of wine on all levels shouldn’t surprise us. We know its end—mocking and being led astray. Be wise.

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

Chicago Congregation Seeks for A Preacher

In our last issue, we reported the death of brother James McGowain. His passing has left a void that needs to be filled. The good brethren of the Long Avenue church in Chicago are seeking a gospel preacher to work with them. Any man interested in this challenge should contact Dennis Turner at raincloud1954@yahoo.com.

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Postage (U.S. & Canada)	392.63
Foreign Postage	38.70
Return Postage (26)	11.87
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 528.20
Funds available for past issue	323.41
Deficit	\$ 204.79

Donations (as of 1/8):

Anonymous, KY	\$ 200.00
Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	50.00
Mike Daniels, IL	100.00
Anonymous, IL	25.00
Don & Marsha Swanson, TX	25.00
Kenneth & Wilma Berdine, PA	50.00
Terry L. Clayton, CA	30.00
Mrs. Robert W. Bennett, IA	30.00
Anonymous, FL	100.00
Mary N. Mayhall, AR	50.00
Scott & Suzy Miller, IL	115.00
Anonymous, IL	100.00
Margaret S. Crump, SC	200.00
Anonymous, TN	50.00
M. Bruce McDonald, MD	25.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 1,150.00
Deficit from past issue	204.79
Funds for this issue	\$ 945.21

Once again, many have come to our aid to erase our deficit. We are deeply grateful to all who share in this work. Without any unexpected expenses, this issue should cost about \$500 which would leave a balance of about \$445 for future issues.

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