

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 40

April-May-June, 2009

Number 2

Quitting Church

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

The anticipatory words of Jesus, “I will build My church...” (Mt 16:18) have lost their luster with a lot of people today. Some in the denominational world are fed up, discouraged and distracted—and are quitting. Some are seeing their churches as man-made institutions and are tiring of leaders marketing to them as though they are consumers. Others have come to expect churches to be more like non-profit organizations and less like religious groups—they easily become dissatisfied and move on, becoming serial quitters as they frequently shop for a group with more amenities.

Brethren are often tempted by this trend. The lure of greener grass, something new and exciting, different relationships, and less structure, lures them to quit assembling with God’s people. And local churches feel the shrinking numbers and are tempted to respond by trying to meet people’s perceived needs with unlawful activities and unscriptural teaching.

Christ’s church faces an attack from people who want to be spiritual, but don’t want anything to do with a church. They view quitting church as quitting organized religion, as quitting an outdated organization which is out of touch with modern life. They want to claim to believe in a perfect God without the hassle of having to associate with imperfect people (Christians). They wonder if Jesus had lived today if He would have said, “I will build my website,” or “Just stay home and read my blog.”

Why The Church?

In the broadest sense, the church is all people who have been purchased by the blood of Christ (Eph. 20:28). Christ adds people to this number when they obey Him and are saved (Ac. 2:38, 47). In this sense, the church exists as an expression of the collective possession of Christ. Those who say they want nothing to do with the church are therefore saying they do not want to be one of the saved. Those who reject all concepts

of the church are rejecting Christ and His sacrifice for them. However, most who reject the church will say they are leaving the people—they want Christ, but not “organized religion.” It might be said they want to be one of the people of God, but not physically with others who are His people.

The word church is also used to describe a group of disciples in a common location who worship and do spiritual work together (example: 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1). Assembling with, working with, and worshipping with other faithful disciples is Christ’s will (Heb. 10:24-25; Ac. 11:26). Disciples may choose with which faithful disciples to assemble and work (Ac. 9:26). But Christ expects His disciples to be “...longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3). That means the solution to problems, conflicts, and dissatisfaction isn’t to just leave. Resolving problems, not quitting, is to be a high priority among disciples because what we do together as Christ’s church glorifies Him (Eph. 3:21) and edifies each other (Eph. 4:16).

Those Who Leave

Most importantly, quitting must never involve or lead to quitting the Lord. It often does. Personal desires and goals may make exchanging our souls by quitting seem worth temporary rewards (Matt. 16:26). Frustrations, disappointments, and problems involving our lives and other people must not cause us to abandon Christ and His church.

Ultimately, irreconcilable differences over truth or edification may cause us to choose to work and worship with different faithful disciples. Unfortunately, most who leave do so because of hurt feelings, personalities, certain doctrinal teachings, and disagreements over matters of opinion. In the heat of problems or in the despair of discouragement, quitting may seem an easy solution, even what is best. However, love should unify disciples, making giving up and quitting our relationships unimaginably painful.

Those Who Stay

Those left behind often feel hurt, abandoned, and angry. Problems are left unresolved and some who were involved aren’t even around to help clean them up. Like Samuel, God has to remind them, “...they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me” (1 Sam. 8:7). Pride must give way to sorrow over the breaking of fellowship and the loss of a soul if in quitting they have left the Lord.

Preachers, elders, teachers and saints would do well to do serious soul searching when people quit. It isn’t right for people to quit, but those who cause offenses share in the guilt (Matt. 18:7). Not every quitter’s charge is true and not everything they are looking for can legitimately be supplied by the church, but not all complaints are false. “Test all things” (1 Thess. 5:21)

God

In the decision to quit or stay, God is often forgotten. The whole concept of the church is disdained because of the frailties of man. What is ignored is that the church is a visible demonstration of the “manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). He adds to the number those who are being saved, but some respond by saying, “I want to be spiritual, but not linked to anyone else.” He gives His people other disciples with which to work and worship so His name can be glorified and they can be built up, but some say, “No thanks! The work required to get along with each other isn’t worth it.” We honor God when we value being His church.

God knows there will be those who go, “...out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (1 Jn. 2:19). God knows some will quit, whether they realize it or not, because they simply do not want to be His people as He wills them to be. Continuing with God’s people is His will and to quit His people is to quit Him.

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



By STEVE FONTENOT

Older women are to encourage the younger women to be “keepers at home” (Tit. 2:3-5, KJV); “workers at home” (NASB); “homemakers” (NKJV); “busy at home” (NIV); “good managers of the household” (NRSV); “fulfilling their duties at home” (NET).

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon tells us the word translated “keepers/workers at home” means, “properly, *the (watch or) keeper of a house*’ (Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pausanias, Plutarch, others). b. tropically, *‘keeping at home and taking care of household affairs, domestic.’*” The word is derived either from *house + work* [οικος, εργου - “workers at home”], or, *house + keeper* [κοιτοσ, ουρος - “keepers at home”] (a MSS difference).

It is clearly a word pointing to fulfilling the responsibilities of caring for a family.

Older women who have a “healthy” (“sound”) view of responsibility conforming to the purpose of our redemption in Christ (Tit. 2:1, 11-15) are to teach younger women “to be” this kind of woman. This would seem to include teaching them that they have this responsibility—that it’s an honorable, God-given responsibility, and what it entails. This would be rather difficult for an older woman who had given her heart and life to business, civil, social, or physical pursuits and responsibilities.

Specifics do not exclude, and this word would not exclude a woman from working in a secular job, serving in a political capacity, or being an athlete, but Paul instructs

‘Keepers At Home’

that being a “homemaker” should be taught to younger women, and says nothing here about women being taught to devote themselves to these other pursuits (nor is that focus taught anywhere in Scripture). Has our society—even men and women who are Christians—reversed this emphasis, stressing and teaching the importance and skills of business, etc. and failing to teach and emphasize the role of being “good managers of the household”? And if a woman’s physical and mental energies are depleted in other pursuits, how good a “manager” will she be of the home, and how many duties will go “unfulfilled”?

“Homes” have become little more than “houses” to show off our “things,” and demonstrate the level of economic status we have attained. Houses are used as children factories where children are conceived and then pushed out of the way so material and worldly priorities can be pursued, rather than a place where children are nurtured in moral and spiritual character, taught responsibility, and experience the comforting assurance

of love, peace, and security. Because of a failure to develop and cultivate the family relationship, the stage is set for conflict, unhappiness, discontentment, and even divorce, rather than providing the example of commitment, selflessness, and sacrifice for one’s family and for God, and the joys such priorities bring.

We need women who will learn and devote themselves to the home and thereby in time be the “older women” who will “train the younger women” in this God-intended role. We need men who will encourage their wives and their daughters to be devoted to making the home all God intended and reaping the powerful fruit that can be had from women who are “working at home,” rather than pushing their wives and their children’s mother into the world so they can have more “things.” And we need preachers who will preach that this is God’s plan, for that is what Paul told Titus to teach in the churches on the island of Crete.

18542 Crestline Road, Humble, TX 77396
e-mail: sp63@mac.com

Wii Gospel

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Nintendo’s Wii video game system allows those of us who have abandoned most forms of exercise to “pretend” to go bowling in our living rooms, in a virtual reality setting. Instead of lifting a heavy ball the “bowler” uses a hand-held controller the size of a TV remote and goes through the motions as if bowling a real ball. It can be very satisfying when you end up with a better score than you ever get at the bowling alley.

The idea is that this is better for you than other video games in that you’re at least supposed to get up out of your easy chair to play the game. I was buying into that concept until one of my friends beat me without ever getting out of his chair. It’s beside the point, but I was also beat by a child who wasn’t big enough to lift a real bowling ball.

This convinced me that someone whose only bowling experience was with this video game would surely be disappointed if they ever tried *real* bowling.

It occurred to me that many churches have developed an appealing alternative to the *real* gospel of Christ—sort of a *virtual gospel* (Gal. 1:6-7). With it no heavy lifting of obedience is required. Instead of a Bible, their “controller” is a handy “statement of faith” written by men. Those who “play Wii church” are entertained, and at the same time impressed with their ability to master what they *think* is “spirituality.”

After being spoiled by the hype and convenience of “Wii gospel,” those who have never been exposed to the *real* gospel of Christ as revealed in the New Testament are likely to be disappointed if they ever get around to giving it a hearing.

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

Our Carnal Culture of Comfort

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians that he “could not speak to [them] as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ,” (1 Cor. 3:1) he was specifically referring to their calling themselves after men. However, it is clear from the rest of Paul’s letter that the carnal attitude so infecting that church began with the lusts of individuals (i.e., 1 Cor. 5:6). A church inevitably reflects the values of its members, especially its leadership.

The Corinthian culture was materialistic and immoral. Most of the Christians who comprised that church were likely products of that culture (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). Therefore, their fleshly inclinations, if unchecked by the spirit, would tend to find their way into not only their personal lives, but into the work and worship of that church.

This problem was not unique to Corinth but was true of other first century churches. It is just as possible for modern churches to think they are alive when, in fact, they are dead (Rev. 3:1), or rich when, really, they are poor (Rev. 3:17). In our culture of material affluence, the inclination of the people, even in allegedly spiritual contexts, is to expect and emphasize comfort in all realms: physical, aesthetic, organizational, and even doctrinal.

This is exemplified in many church buildings. It is one thing to logically deduce from Scripture the need for a place to assemble and therein find authority for using church funds to build structures to accommodate such assemblies. It is another to make such buildings reflect or appeal to our carnal culture of comfort. No, I am not suggesting that comfort is inherently wrong, but the emphasis upon such liberty may indicate motives that are more carnal than spiritual.

With affluence often comes a desire for a more polished image and a professional approach to teaching and the assembled worship. If we think about it, this is comfort driven also. As a rule, listeners prefer to hear speakers who have good voice quality, dynamism, excellent vocabulary, vibrant illustrations, humorous anecdotes, and powerful visual aids. There is nothing wrong with any of these per se, but none of them is essential to effectively communicate the gospel. Those concerned with appearances want “their preacher” to talk smoothly, dress smartly, and keep it short. We are often more concerned with image and comfort than we are with content.

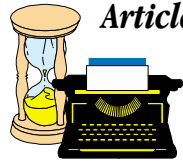
Once we have done this, it is but a short step into making it a priority to make people feel comfortable spiritually. Again, comfort is not inherently bad, and the Scriptures certainly provide spiritual comfort, but when instruction and correction are needed, it is imperative that we preach the word and not tickle

ears (2 Tim 4:1-5). Let us not forget that the word of God is described as a sword (Heb. 4:12), and people who were converted were pricked in their hearts (Ac. 2:37). Beware buying into the idea that conversions to Christ and spiritual growth come via comfort.

Leaving the glory of heaven was not comfortable for Jesus. His life in the flesh was not comfortable. Certainly, the cross was not comfortable. Therefore, professing disciples

of Jesus Christ must not think themselves above their teacher (Matt. 10:24) and put a premium upon comfort. Indeed, we have become soft in our culture of comfort and should give serious heed to Jesus’ observation about how hard it is for those who are rich (that’s us, brethren) to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Lk. 18:24).

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



Articles From the Days Gone By

THE PREACHER SHORTAGE

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** (1911-1995)

Is there really a shortage of preachers of the gospel? Well, I suppose there will never be as many as there should be who are willing to go out into the highways and byways of the whole world proclaiming Christ. But usually what we hear about a preacher shortage is not a consideration of the needs of destitute fields, but it pertains to the obvious fact that there are not enough qualified men so that each congregation here in America can have a “full-time” preacher.

Yet I don’t believe there really is a preacher shortage. Almost every congregation can have the services of a capable and devoted man in preaching the word of God. Many congregations will have to utilize the abilities of all the Christians to run the errands, visit the sick and do much of the personal work, but there are plenty of men who are able to do the preaching of the word.

Many such men want to support themselves. Some do this because they want financial remuneration comparable to other Christians so that they can provide for the niceties of life for their families. Others do it so that they can provide security for the later years for themselves and their wives. But is this wrong? Surely we have not imposed an unwritten vow of poverty upon a man just because he preaches the gospel.

One Christian was showing me the acreage and house he had recently purchased for his retirement. When I expressed appreciation for his wisdom and then remarked, perhaps wistfully, that I didn’t own one square foot of land anywhere he exclaimed, “Oh, well, you don’t need it!” It took a moment of reflection for me to accept his statement as a compliment. I think he meant that my children, my brethren and my God would take care of my wife and me. And I believe it is so, but it would surely also be right for a preacher, if he desires, to work with his

own hands to supply the necessities of life, and at the same time using the abundance of leisure which our modern way of life provides to study the word and to preach the gospel.

The preacher who supports himself can do effective work in many places, and at the same time he can help congregations that are unable to support a man. In other places he can do the local preaching while the congregation supports a man in some destitute field. I am aware that the Bible teaches that one who preaches the gospel may live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), and I am grateful that brethren generally are eager to provide his necessities. Realistically, I know that many congregations will have to be content without a full-time preacher. I hope such brethren will not be disappointed, but that they will, without complaint work enthusiastically with the men who support themselves.

There are plenty of full-time preachers who regularly preach to congregations in which several men who sit and listen are just as capable as the speaker. Why not activate these men to help fill the supposed shortage? Indeed, there is not a real preacher shortage, but in some cases considerable inactivity on the part of many very able men who could be busy preaching, but are content to sit and listen to another. In other cases there is a desire on the part of congregations to hire a man to be a full-time administrative executive who will also do enough visiting and personal work so that the members will feel relieved of this obligation. Oh, yes, they will also let him preach two or three times per week.

Indeed, if those who are able to preach will do so, and if congregations will be willing to work with and use a faithful man who supports himself, there will be no preacher shortage.

This article first appeared in Truth Magazine, November, 1968

LOOKING GOOD

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Some time ago, a Saturday morning was dedicated to washing the windows (inside and out) at our house. They needed washing, and the next afternoon we were to have many people at our house for a social gathering. After that job was completed I proceeded to scrape and paint the trim around the doors of our otherwise maintenance-free exterior.

As I was finishing up the painting, and noticing how nice it looked in contrast to the peeling paint, I realized that visitors would not likely take note of the effort. No one would comment about how sparkling clean the windows were, nor how freshly white the trim appeared.

However, had we not cleaned the windows, or had I not painted the trim, some might have noticed that these jobs hadn't been done.

Our lives are much like that. Few will notice when we do what is right, but many will notice when we do wrong. In reality, this should not upset us. Our purpose in doing what is right should be to please God. It should never be for our own glory.

Doing right is our duty, and Jesus said, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Lk. 17:10).

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 85.00
Postage (U.S. & Canada)	392.59
Return Postage (22)	9.24
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 486.83
Funds available for past issue	318.80
Deficit	\$ 168.03

Donations (as of 5/4):

Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	\$ 50.00
Bob Priest, AR	25.00
Sammie & Dorothy Bell, NC	50.00
Anonymous, WI	100.00
Anonymous, FL	50.00
Anonymous, MO	60.00
M. Bruce McDonald, MD	25.00
Anonymous, IN	20.00
Heath Rogers, TX	20.00
Anonymous, IL	20.00
Nina Campbell, TX	50.00
Dorothy Mills, IA	25.00
Steve & Lynne Lewis, KS	10.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 505.00
Deficit from past issue	168.03
Funds for this issue	\$ 336.97

Many thanks to all who have helped to make this publication possible. With the added foreign postage, this issue is expected to cost about \$530, which would leave us with a deficit of about \$193.

Unread Letters

By MATT HENNECKE

A childhood accident resulted in poet Elizabeth Barrett becoming an invalid and recluse. Despite her isolation her early poetry drew the attention of Robert Browning who began courting her. He eventually asked for her hand in marriage and Elizabeth and Robert were married in 1846.

But there's more to the story.

In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched closely by her tyrannical father. He was strict beyond reason and attempted to prevent suitors from courting her. In fact, he did not want any of his children to marry. As a result, Elizabeth and Robert eloped, their wedding held in secret because of her father's disapproval.

After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives—exiled from her parents. Even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Some were fairly lengthy, others short and poetical in form.

Not once did they reply.

After ten years, Elizabeth received a large box in the mail. Inside, she found all of her letters. Not a single one had been opened. Elizabeth's years of writing, her letters pleading for reconciliation—were for naught.

Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been

restored. These events were reported in the *Daily Walk* in May 30, 1992.

What makes the story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning so compelling is that it is so similar to another story. A story that is repeated over and over again—generation after generation.

You see, I am aware of other letters which have been written but not read. Beautiful letters. Letters of reconciliation. Letters of hope. We know them better as epistles. These letters, written by men, but authored by God through the Holy Spirit have been written for our reconciliation, for our salvation. Sadly, they often go unnoticed, unread, unheeded. Indeed, the entire Bible, God's Word, is a book pleading for reconciliation. What is amazing is that God is pleading with us for reconciliation but He



has done nothing wrong. We are the ones who have gone astray (2 Peter 2:15), and yet God stoops to beg for our reconciliation.

In Colossians 1:18-23, Paul speaking of Christ says, "it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" Why? Why would God give His only begotten Son for all of us who have gone astray? Paul tells us in verse 22: "in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Paul's letter speaks of reconciliation and of hope. Are you listening? What a beautiful letter. It would be a shame if it were never read, or if read, ignored.

18410 Standwick Drive, Louisville, KY 40245
e-mail: matt@biblemaps.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