



# THINK

## ON THESE THINGS

*Philippians 4:8*

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## 'Home' School

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

“Get an education!” And so, many parents put great stress on their children to get an education that will equip them to make a living when they leave home. And while all would surely agree that education is necessary, the emphasis on “the 3-R’s” and related subjects must not overwhelm the first parental responsibility in educating their children.

The school I’m concerned about has little to do with *where* a child gets its secular education. Wherever children get such education, be it at home or in a private or public school, fathers and mothers must personally know what their children are, and are not, being taught.

“Home” school, as I see it, is spiritual instruction *in the family* where fathers instruct by word, by example and by their presence, in addition to whatever other “book learning” is taking place.

The Lord commended Abraham, saying, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). Concerning the words of the Lord, the law of Moses required parents to “*teach them to your children*,” speaking of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them upon the door posts of your house, and upon your gates” (Deut. 11:19,20).

Solomon wrote, “My son, *hear the instruction of your father*, and forsake not *the law of your mother*” (Prov. 1:8). These passages imply that a father is to actually give instruction. Mother also has a “law” to be heeded.

We are expected to “Train up a child *in the way he should go*” (Prov. 22:6), and we cannot pass off this responsibility to the child, or an educational institution, or the government, or even the church. Neither is

there some magic birthday, such as eighteen or twenty-one, where godly parental responsibility ends and we are exempt from using our good influence on our children. Eli had a responsibility to “restrain” his grown sons (1 Sam. 3:13). So long as my father lived he had a profound influence on my life, and he being dead, still speaks—good influence lives on!

Fathers are charged to bring up their children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). There is no recess from this work at “home!” This involves us in *real* instruction, communication, conversation

and contact, as well as our being examples of living “soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12). And while we are at it, we need to teach them good manners, to be patient, polite, thankful, courteous, thoughtful of others, and to be friendly—all of which will cause them to increase in favor with God and men.

“Home” school is always in session. Give us more Joshuas who will boldly say, “As for me *and for my house*, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

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## Good Traditions of Men

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

The Bible speaks of two kinds of traditions: the traditions of the apostles (1 Cor. 11:2), and the traditions of men (Gal. 1:14). We are told to “hold” to traditions handed down from apostles (2 Thess. 2:15), and to “beware” of some developed by men (Col. 2:8).

Let’s face it, not all traditions of men are bad. While we must rely on the scriptures as our sole authority, much is left in the realm of general authority, allowing for various ways of carrying out God’s will. With any practice, after we have “done it that way” long enough, it tends to become a tradition. Assuming a traditional practice is within the bounds of general authority, it may well be a good tradition. However, even a good man-made tradition becomes bad when it is bound.

Some brethren are very resistant to unnecessary change, while others seem to desire “change for the sake of change.” The former use the “don’t fix what isn’t broke” argument, while the latter argue that change is needed to prevent human tradition from becoming “law.” When both attitudes are prevalent in the same congregation there can be conflict and the potential for sinful division.

I certainly don’t consider myself to be a “traditionalist,” and am open to scriptural change, but only with great care and concern for others who may be resistant to change. I would also remind fellow non-traditionalists that if we make a habit of pushing for “change for the sake of change,” we run the risk of *that* becoming a man-made tradition. What a dilemma that would be!

“*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful...*” (1 Cor. 10:23).

# WHY DID GOD SAVE US?

By NATHAN COMBS

When answering the above question, many fervent believers will often swiftly, joyfully, and accurately answer, “Because of His great love for us!” Along these lines, a common song of praise which we regularly sing in our assemblies answers the question with the compelling phrase, “Because He loved me so.”

This idea, of course, is verified countless times by God’s word. In John 3:16 and many other places, the scriptures clearly teach that God’s abundant, overflowing love caused Him to save us from our sinful degeneracy. Indeed, if the apostle John later wrote in 1 John 4:8,16 that “God is love,” it follows from that context that everything God does must somehow be motivated by love, since that is a defining characteristic of His nature and His *modus operandi*. Is God’s love for us, however, the only reason for the plan of salvation? Is it even the main reason?

Whenever the gift of salvation is discussed amongst Christians, the blessings that humans obtain from God are often emphasized, and rightly so. Instead of wallowing in our dead and debased spiritual condition, we now enjoy life and the forgiveness of our sins. Instead of eternal separation from God, we now have the promise of an eternal relationship with God. Instead of giving up all hope, we now possess every reason to hope. When considering the benefits of salvation from our human perspective, the things that we have received from God sound like a pretty good deal! But are the things that we gain, wonderful though they are, the point of the plan? Is salvation intended to be considered merely from our human perspective?

Up until the time of the Polish astronomer, Copernicus, the vast majority of people in Europe believed in geocentrism—the theory that our earth does not move and the universe revolves around it. This grossly

mistaken hypothesis was no doubt believed because the heavenly bodies naturally appear to circle the earth and because certain Biblical passages could be forced to fit the model, but this supposition was also reinforced by the fact that human beings lived on the earth. Surely it was reasonable to suppose that God had ordained the mighty universe to move around the crowning glory of His creation: us! Of course, not only is such a viewpoint utterly wrong scientifically, it also seems rather arrogant to assume that the universe literally revolves around us.



Unfortunately, many people (albeit subconsciously) look at the plan of salvation in the way that medieval Europeans used to look at the heavens. They have the notion that God’s plan to save man was entirely concocted for the benefit of man. Therefore, motivated by His great love, God conceived and executed a rescue mission with the sole aim of resolving man’s problems, man’s sins, and man’s depravity. But if that were the case, how does that man-centric view of the plan fit into the Bible’s overwhelmingly strong emphasis on the glory of God? If God’s designs for man merely provide an opportunity for Him to give to us, why does He emphatically insist that the Christian life must be given back to Him? Even though mankind reaps the rich rewards of salvation, it seems myopic only to view God’s plan through the lens of our own personal benefits. We are then brought back to the original question: why did God save us?

In no uncertain terms, Paul answers that question in the book of Ephesians. Although Paul does mention that God saved us from our sinful deadness “because of the great love with which He loved us” (Eph. 2:5), the primary reason why God delivered us was so that humans (as Christians) could live their lives “to the praise of His glory,” reflecting a concept that Paul expresses three times in chapter one alone (1:6,12,14).

This adds a whole new dimension to the picture of man’s redemption. Paul’s main emphasis in Ephesians is not that mankind has received the incredible gifts of salvation, but that God chose to give us those gifts in order to further His glory. Indeed, almost at the very instant that Paul first brings up the subject of salvation, he describes the primary purpose of the plan: “that we should be holy and blameless before him” (1:4). Of course

God desired to give us “every spiritual blessing” as he says in that verse, but He did so in order to fulfill a larger objective. Since it is completely impossible to glorify God through a life that is full of sin and bent on serving Satan, the plan for our salvation was created to enable us to fulfill our original purpose as human beings. Ultimately, His brilliant plan was not enacted for us, but for God.

Let us further consider the benefits of the plan of salvation from God’s viewpoint. By making it possible for man to be forgiven of his sins, God not only receives the eternal praise of a larger portion of His creation, He proves once and for all that He is wise beyond degree.

When Paul points out the purpose of the Lord’s church in Ephesians 3:10-11, it seems much larger than the oft-quoted triad of “benevolence, edification, and evangelism.” God’s ultimate plan is that “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord” [ESV]. The universal body of saints is intended to prove to all the hosts of the heavenly realm that God is truly worthy of everlasting glory, thus refuting for all eternity the vicious rebellion of Satan and his followers.

If God is able to defeat the staunchest forces of evil by continually using the lowliest of means, He is necessarily the wisest being of all. If He can create a nation by enabling a 100-year-old man to father a son, lead that man’s descendants out of their abject slavery under a powerful nation, sustain that tenuous people through both prosperity and captivity, and ultimately conquer sin through the hideous death and joyous resurrection of a lowly carpenter from Nazareth, then God has unequivocally proven His supreme wisdom. When He attracts humans to this lowly plan by faith, when He displays to all the spiritual realm that man will indeed serve God “for no reason” (Job 1:9) and endure persecution and pain for the cause of the Lord, He has triumphantly whipped the devil with both hands tied behind His back. God has demonstrated that He alone is the uncontested ruler of the universe.

Why did God save us? Ultimately, He did it to magnify Himself, to show once and for all His incomparable power and wisdom. Consequently, the most wonderful thing about our salvation is not the blessings that we receive from God. It is the glory that God receives from our obedient lives.

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By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

# 50th Anniversary of 'The Pill'

**T**he Scriptures declare that children are a blessing from God (Psa. 127:3-5). The reproductive process was designed by God for the marriage union (Gen. 2:18-24; 3:16; 1 Tim. 5:9-14; Heb. 13:4). Our Creator knew that it was in the context of a committed and loving marriage that those created in His image would have the best opportunity to thrive (Eph. 5:22-6:4). Unfortunately, many in our world do not believe these things anymore.

The May 4, 2010, cover of *Time* magazine calls to our attention that our culture has been using "the Pill" now for half a century. The article inside gives a brief history of birth control and the debated effects of liberating women from the fear of unwanted pregnancies. I hoped the article would share current information on *how* the pill actually works. I was disappointed. Clearly, most users are satisfied *that* it works with much less concern for *how* it works.

Long time readers of *Think* may recall that I have occasionally waded into technical territory as I explored and questioned the mechanism of hormonal birth control methods (vol. 22, #1; vol. 28, #s 1 & 3). I am no medical expert, but I can read. Many couples have assumed that their birth control pills *only* work by preventing the monthly release of an egg (ovulation). However, this is not what the experts say. For example, consider the following statements which are from sources *not* affiliated with the "pro-life movement."

In a 2008 document entitled "Hormonal contraception: recent advances and controversies," the American Society for Reproductive Medicine said regarding oral contraceptives, "Their mechanism of action include inhibition of ovulation... and/or modification of the endometrium, thus preventing implantation." A current website promoting the use of the Pill and explaining how it works says, "Oral contraceptives employ synthetic hormones that mimic the properties of natural estrogens and/or progesterone to 'fool' the female reproductive

system...In addition to the inhibition of ovulation, the constant level of an estrogen and progesterin in the body cause insufficient thickening of the endometrium, which prevents attachment of the egg" (see inset box for website page).

To the extent that the Pill keeps a woman from ovulating, it prevents the fertilization of an egg (conception). This is its primary function. However, the above quotes state that in the event that ovulation and fertilization take place, successful implantation is not likely because the complex hormonal trickery employed by the Pill has not properly prepared the womb to receive a fertilized egg. To those who have no concern about protecting the newly conceived child prior to implantation, this potential "back up" method is an added benefit to "preventing pregnancy." (Many people do not equate conception with pregnancy but define pregnancy as beginning at implantation.) However, to those who desire to honor human life in all its developmental stages (from fertilization to implantation to birth and beyond), the acknowledgment of the Pill's potential to abort has moved us to inform women of this possibility.

Since 1984 I have been aware of the Pill's abortive potential. Recently, however, I have learned that there are some doctors who question whether the Pill is responsible for making the womb inhospitable to implantation if ovulation and fertilization occur. This is contrary to what has been asserted for years as illustrated in the previous quotes. At the heart of the debate is whether or not the circumstances that allow ovulation to occur (and the hormones released naturally at that event) are sufficient to properly prepare the womb for implantation despite the Pill's attempted hormonal deception. Some doctors say yes, but many doctors and others remain unconvinced, myself included. So, where do we go from here?

Shall we follow the lead of the U. S. Supreme Court as it wrestled with the knotty question of abortion? Justice Blackmun,

writing for the majority in *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973, said, "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer." Essentially, the court played dumb and, despite its alleged uncertainty, decided that the unborn are not human lives worthy of protection.

We all know where that kind of reasoning has led us. In matters of alleged liberty, the claim that there is not enough evidence to know for sure should be an obvious call for caution, if not prohibition, until we can act with confidence. This is a biblical principle (Rom. 14:23). The court did just the opposite on the subject of abortion.

Since 1973, science has further confirmed that human life begins at conception; but thus far that biological fact has struggled to override perceived liberties, and the practice of aborting human life at all stages of gestation continues to be a protected right. Similarly, birth control has become so entrenched in our culture that all its forms are assumed to be inalienable rights regardless of their questionable methods of action. Our culture has affected us, and perhaps we are all too quick to hear what we want to hear when it comes to our personal choices.

I recognize that it is not the intent of Christians who use the Pill to endanger any newly conceived offspring. I appreciate this. However, I also recognize that the strongest proponents of birth control in all its forms have more concern for the planet or their pocket books than they do for the unborn made in God's image. I am concerned that in the name of liberty, we have preferred convenience over careful consideration in our choices, and in so doing we have blindly followed the goddess into their ways of thinking. Let us beware, brethren.

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## Website sources for quotes:

<http://www.asrm.org>

[http://www.oralcontraceptives.com/about\\_cvc.asp](http://www.oralcontraceptives.com/about_cvc.asp)

## Recommended resources for further consideration:

"Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions" by Randy Alcorn

available at [http://www.epm.org/books/does\\_the\\_birth\\_control\\_pill\\_cause\\_abortionsDetail.php](http://www.epm.org/books/does_the_birth_control_pill_cause_abortionsDetail.php)

[www.drwalt.com/blog/?s=oral+contraceptives](http://www.drwalt.com/blog/?s=oral+contraceptives) — a blog by Dr. Walt Larimore, M.D.

## Chicago's Loss is Louisville's Gain

As this issue goes to press, Ray and Charlene Ferris are relocating from Normal, Illinois to Louisville. They are not only part of our spiritual family, but also of our physical family, and supporters of this paper.

Ray preached his first sermon in 1948. His first work was with a church in Richmond, Virginia. In 1955 he moved to the upper midwest, where he has labored in the Lord ever since. He has worked primarily with churches in Wisconsin and the northern half of Illinois. His teaching has provided a strong conservative influence, especially in the Chicago area. Ray was among a group of gospel preachers who began to publish *Truth Magazine* in 1956 when the controversy over church support of institutions was at its peak in the upper midwest.

This move was prompted by Ray and Charlene's recognition of the limitations their age has placed upon them. They will share a residence with their eldest daughter, Marilyn. Ray is still quite capable of preaching and teaching, and will no doubt be an asset to brethren in the Louisville area. Needless to say, they will be greatly missed, here in the Chicagoland area.

Their new address is: 7000 Brook Bend Way, Louisville, KY 40229.

~Al Diestelkamp

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Once again, donations exceeded our expectations. We're accustomed to running a deficit. Our sincere thanks to all who share with us in this labor of love. With the added foreign postage, this issue is expected to cost about \$540, which will leave us with a surplus of \$1,267.50 for future issues and the upcoming annual mailing permit and web-hosting fees.

# IS GOD'S WORD ENOUGH?

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

Most people today wouldn't have listened to the peculiarly dressed John the Baptist (Matt. 3:4). Many would not have endured the packed crowd at the house in Capernaum to hear Jesus teach (Mk. 2:2). Others wouldn't feel comfortable meeting with the church in someone's house like Nymphas (Col. 4:15). And Paul—who would want to listen to a preacher who admits he isn't very eloquent? (1 Cor. 2:1). Timothy would seem too young to preach to some (1 Tim. 4:12), John would be too old to others (2 Jn. 1).

What's happening to us? It seems that the message is getting lost in the messengers and the environment in which it is delivered.

Think of it like this: Suppose the "whole counsel of God" (Ac. 20:27) is presented in an accurate and understandable way. Is that enough? What if the speaker is not very polished—what if he doesn't have any stories that make you cry and he has no visual aids? Is it enough? What if, for whatever reason, there isn't a nice building to assemble in—no paved parking lot, no comfortable seats, no air conditioning or nice carpet on the floor? Is it enough? What if there aren't any people in this group you have a lot in common with in life? What if there are few or no kids your kids' ages? Is the pure teaching of God's word enough?

The fact is, most people who visit us from the denominations struggle to get past the externals to hear the message. Sadly, many claiming to be members of the Lord's church measure congregations the same way. Even sadder is that we have brethren advocating that we resolve this problem by polishing the messengers and environment. We are told that preachers and preaching must be

professional and facilities should reflect current trends and feelings about church buildings.

I am not suggesting that speakers shouldn't try their best and that buildings shouldn't be functional, but I am saying that the saving power is in the gospel (Rom. 1:16), not in the speaker or building. The carnal mindset of unbelievers (and some believers—1 Cor. 3:1-3) is going to cause them to overemphasize and over-value physical things.

The solution to this is not to cater to their carnality, even if by doing so we might have the opportunity to teach them. It was to the carnal thinking Corinthians that Paul wrote that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Cor. 10:4). His solution? He went back to basics (milk—1 Cor. 3:2)—"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Our solution? Teach people what the gospel is all about so that physical things won't be a stumbling block to listening to the truth.

Paul taught a Christ centered gospel that isn't seen to be enough in our me-centered society. So, people choose a church based on where they feel they can be serviced rather than where they can best serve God and others.

When we start being attracted by buildings and teen groups and friends and speaking abilities something has gone wrong. If it is all about the Word of God, if that is really enough, then what we will see first and will matter most is that someone is speaking "the utterances of God" and "serving by the strength God supplies" (1 Pet. 4:11, NASB). Is God's Word really enough or not?

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