



THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Just As Christ Loves The Church'

By AL DIESTELKAMP

For men who are married, there is no greater challenge than the one posed by the inspired apostle: "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Loving our wives is easy, but loving them "just as Christ loved the church" sets a very high standard.

Our marriages will not be as they ought if we haven't followed the pattern of Jesus' love for His church. Therefore, it is important that we see just how Christ loved the church so that we might act accordingly toward our wives.

Christ loved the Church sacrificially

Our text says He "gave Himself for it." He loved the church, not for what the church could do for Him, but what He could do for the church. Jesus said "I am among you as one who serves" (Lk. 22:27). He said that He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28).

To succeed at loving my wife as Christ loves the church requires an attitude of sacrifice toward her. We are not likely to have to die for our wives, but we must be willing to serve their needs. Indeed, true love "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5).

As husbands, we need to understand that our wives have needs that differ from our own, and it's our job to meet those needs. While not all wives have identical needs, a survey among participants in a ladies' Bible study in which they were asked what they needed most from their husbands showed the following results:

The number one need expressed was for their husbands to exercise spiritual leadership. In fact, 91% of the women surveyed listed this as their most pressing need. Your wife needs you to take the lead in preparing your family for eternity, including your authority to enforce righteous behavior, modesty, and involvement in worship and Bible study.

The next most pressing need among the respondents was family commitment. She needs you to be as committed and involved as she is to making the home a fortress against all that might threaten the family.

Also high on wives' list of needs are conversation and communication. It is hurtful to the wife when her husband does not talk to her as a friend. Though the husband may not intend to be treating his wife as unimportant, this is often how it is viewed by her. She is your partner and deserves to share your thoughts and plans.

Another expressed need was for affection and love. Though this is also high on the needs lists of husbands, how wives anticipate affection to be shown is usually different. As husbands, we need to use our imaginations to invent new ways of showing true affection for our wives.

Also on the list was financial security. This should not be interpreted as the need for riches but rather the need for the husband to be responsible for supporting the family. There are two extremes to be avoided. The husband who abdicates his responsibility to support his family has failed to meet a real need. On the other hand, some use this obligation to support the family as an excuse for practicing materialism.

Christ loved the church exclusively

Although Jesus loves the whole world just as His Father does (Jn. 3:16), He sanctified the church as His bride (Eph. 5:26-27). This means He "set apart" His church from the rest of the world.

Likewise, the marriage relationship demands sanctification. The husband is "set apart" to belong to the wife, and the wife is "set apart" to belong to the husband—he for her, her for him. Any interference with this God-given arrangement is sin. Wisdom demands that, as much as possible, the husband avoid situations where he is expected to work closely with a woman other than his wife. If one's occupation requires him to work with women, then he must make

sure there are others present so that no false accusation can be made and no doubt planted in the mind of his wife.

The sexual needs of both marriage partners are to be satisfied by each other exclusively (1 Cor. 7:2-5) as together they "flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18) "and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21). This exclusivity forbids any viewing of pornography.

Christ loved the church caringly

Our text says, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28). When one does what is best for his wife, he does what is best for himself. The apostle declares, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church" (v.29). To nourish is to feed. Christ feeds His bride with "the bread of life" (Jn. 6:51). A loving husband will nourish his wife with his care for her. What we do for something or someone that we cherish is "protect and care lovingly" (*American Dictionary*). The wise husband will *nourish* his wife by making it clear to her and others that he *cherishes* her.

Christ loved the church enduringly

Jesus has made His church "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). In like manner, "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (v.31). Jesus used this same quote from Genesis 2:24 to teach the inseparability of marriage (Matt. 19:5-6). God joins two into "one body"; man is not to separate what God joins. The thought of divorce should be as remote as thinking of dismembering one's own body.

The way Christ loves the church should cause a man to have a greater appreciation for his wife. He should view her as a highly prized, valuable (and nicely packaged) gift from his Creator who knew just what he needed!



HOME, SWEET HOME

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP (1911-1995)

The only news about submission that the world would consider great is if it weren't necessary. That news would be music to the ears of many in the religious world, too, removing the need for the textual gymnastics that are necessary for them to redefine gender roles and renumber who is first in the kingdom.

A sizeable number of Christians might also find some joy in discovering submission and its concepts of following, serving, and obeying had finally been declared unnecessary. No more having to put others first, no more cooperation, no more gender roles. Would that be good news?

The great news about submission is not that less is more, but that more is more. Submission is an opportunity to serve Christ, and we always want to do more of that. Submission is an opportunity to be like Christ, and nothing can be better than that for a true disciple!

Think of it this way; when submission brings you life circumstances that you don't want to go through, how is that different from Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane? (Matt. 26:39-44). Your submission makes you Christ-like! When submission doesn't allow you to do what you want to do or say what you want to say—Christ-likeness! (Jn. 6:38). When you are required to obey, and it's hard—Christ-likeness! (Heb. 5:8). When subjection requires that you remain silent—Christ-likeness! (Matt. 26:63; Isa. 53:7). When people don't appreciate you, thank you, honor you for who you are and what you do but you continue to humbly do what is right—Christ-likeness! (Mk. 15:32; Phil. 2:5-9). When people misunderstand your submission to be weakness—Christ-likeness! (Matt. 27:42). When you bow to someone as your head—Christ-likeness (1 Cor. 11:3). When you defer your rights and revenge to forgive the undeserving—Christ-likeness! (Lk. 23:34).

Instead of whining and complaining about "having" to submit to each other, we should welcome it as an opportunity to be Christ-like. Sometimes we'll find ourselves submitting when others don't have to. We can rejoice and be glad that we are blessed with these opportunities to be Christ-like that others don't have!

We live in a prideful, arrogant, pushy, domineering, success-agenda fueled society. The idea of submission and serving others has been lost. Submission is alive and well in followers of Christ because Christ is in them and He is the picture of submission. More is more, and we welcome it! "...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21).

In February, 1883, a grave in Tunisia, Africa, was opened and a body which had been buried nearly 30 years earlier was removed. A new casket was draped in the American flag and the body was brought back to the United States for burial in accord with the highest honor possible. What had happened to case such an honor to be given to one who had been dead so long? Before his death the man had served his nation as a diplomat, but it was not for this that he was honored.

Before his death the man had penned a little song. In the ensuing years this song had touched the very hearts of Americans. It was sung by rich and poor and by the educated and the illiterate. Its words had cheered and thrilled all good people of this land. The man was John Howard Payne and the song was *Home, Sweet Home*.

But today, how long has it been since you have heard anyone singing that song? How long since it has touched your own lips? Why have we forgotten the song? Perhaps it is because we do not now have the deep appreciation for *home* that we once had as a nation—as a people.

Home Is the Cradle of Civilization

Someone has said, "As the home goes, so goes the nation." Throughout the history of humanity, nations have prospered or else they have faltered depending upon the quality of the families therein. No nation has ever prospered very long if the homes of the nation were corrupt. Government in every land has become worthwhile only when and if principles of steadfastness, integrity, and fidelity have been instilled into the hearts of the ones who make up the families of the land. If the homes have failed, invariably the nation has failed also.

But the influence of home reaches beyond the kingdoms of this world, and so we can also say that "As the home goes, so goes the church." Therefore, we conclude:

Home is the Bulwark of the Church

The Lord's church cannot rise above the ideals that prevail in those families of which the church consists. When honesty, purity, and respect for authority prevail in the homes, then the church will be the mighty "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). The righteousness that emanates from the family circles will be that which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. If in the homes the Bible is regarded as "that good old book," and if its words are trusted, its principles followed, and if its pages are often read, *then* will the church be the "temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16).

When kindness, compassion, love, and gentleness are common qualities of the homes, *then* will the church be "a city that is set on a hill" (Matt. 5:14) whose light cannot be hidden. When, in the homes, "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" are put aside (1 Pet. 2:1), *then* those who have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23), will flourish as living stones, and the church will truly be "a spiritual house...acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

But perhaps the most personal and significant consideration of the importance of the family—the power of the home—is comprehended when we realize this:

Home is the Vestibule of Heaven

The saved are added to the church (Ac. 2:47) and Christ is the Savior of "the body" (Eph. 5:23), but comparatively few will be saved in heaven without the influence of home. The impressions learned in infancy at mother's knee (and sometimes across it) will have more influence upon most people than the most powerful sermons. A few people will rise above the evils the heard and learned at home, but most people will only be as submissive to authority, and as true to ideals, and as pure in heart and life as they learned to be at home. In this regard we would urge mothers and fathers to remember well their God-give responsibilities toward their eternity-bound children. Paul said, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Our plea today is for this generation, and others to come. This is not written to criticize mistakes of the past, but to try to get parents today to realize their duties and seek solutions through God's Word and through righteousness. But as we plead for the children, we know that we must plead with the parents, for as C.C. Miller wrote:

*The lambs will follow the sheep, you know,
Where'er they wander—where'er they go.
If the sheep goes wrong, it will not be long
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.*

*So still with the sheep we must earnestly plead,
For the sake of the lambs to-day.
If the lambs are lost, what a terrible cost
The sheep will have to pay!*

"Home! Home! sweet, sweet home! Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!"

This article is part of a longer article was published in several publications during the 1960s, and serves as an outline for a sermon that was preached by the author almost everywhere he was asked to preach

THE RIGHT TO BE ANGRY

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

We have all found ourselves trying to reason with people who have allowed their emotions to cloud their judgments. It can be extremely frustrating if not futile. Some might, therefore, conclude that reason and emotion are incompatible; but this is simply not so. It is possible to be very emotional about something and remain rational. To be rational is not to be without feeling, and to be emotional is not to be without sense. God has given us the capacity for both, and we need not shelve one in order to engage in the other.

The Psalms are great examples of expressions of emotion while retaining reason. Emotion is defined as “a psychic and physical reaction subjectively experienced as strong feeling and physiologically involving changes that prepare the body for immediate and vigorous action.” Indeed, emotion is critical to action. Reason without emotion may reduce truth to something merely academic; and emotion without reason is blind and—without self-control—is dangerous.

If you are home alone at night, in bed, and in the dark and suddenly hear the sound of breaking glass, you *will* have an emotional response. Mine would be *Yikes!* We call it fear. Goodbyes are often accompanied by the emotion of sorrow and reunions accompanied by the emotion of joy. Injustice or mistreatment brings out anger.

It is this emotion of *anger* that I want to address in a rational manner. It is the emotion with a bad reputation. Some believe that anger of any kind is reflective of a sinful attitude. Yet, this is a harmful oversimplification.

Anger is defined as “a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.” We have all felt anger. Living in a world of sin gives us the occasion to be angry about a host of things. There are many injustices which take place in the world, but these aren’t the only things that anger us. Indeed, we are capable of being as angry with our own neighbors or family members as we are with terrorists, and this should give us some pause to consider the range of things over which we rage.

If someone contradicts you, do you have the right to be angry? If kids track mud through your freshly mopped kitchen, do you have the right to be angry? If a person cuts you off in traffic, do you have the right to be angry? If someone mocks your faith, do you have the right to be angry? If someone molests your child, do you have the right to be angry? If your spouse commits adultery, do you have the right to

be angry? We have all had occasions to be angry, but what does a person mean when he says he has the *right* to be angry?

My computer dictionary defines a *right* as “a moral or legal entitlement to have or obtain something or to act in a certain way.” Its first example was, “She had every right to be angry.” From whence comes this right? The U.S. Declaration of Independence asserts that “all...are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness,” along with, no doubt, the right to be angry at an oppressive government (as the signers and those they represented were). In other words, when someone is doing something we consider to be unfair, we believe we are entitled to be angry. Let’s consider this in the light of Scripture.

God has anger. There is such a thing as righteous indignation. From the curses pronounced in the Garden of Eden to the judgment against the world of Noah’s day to the consequences of the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel, God’s anger is manifest in Scripture. Indeed, most of the Scriptures which speak about anger or wrath are in reference to *God’s* anger toward men for their continual rebellion against Him. “*God is angry with the wicked every day*” (Psa. 7:11). Yet, we are also told that God is *slow* to anger and forgiving (cf. Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18).

We also learn that men were rightly angry. Moses’ anger was often just (e.g. Ex. 32:19-22; Deut. 9:17-20). David was righteously indignant when he heard about a rich man’s killing of a poor man’s pet lamb (2 Sam. 12:5). However, you surely recall the context of that story. David’s anger was promptly replaced with conviction and repentance when Nathan said, “*You are the man!*” (vs. 7). The one who called for God’s anger to rage against his enemies (Psa. 7:6) also found himself begging God *not* to act in anger toward him (Psa. 6:1). Our righteous indignation can be shown to be little more than self-righteous indignation with a slight shift of perspective.

Yes, anger is indeed a legitimate emotion which, like any other emotion, has its place and can be used properly. Indeed, we not only have the right but the obligation to be angry about the things which anger God. However, before we are too quick to let our rage and wrath roll, there are some things we need to keep in mind. If the omniscient and omnipotent God is slow to anger, then we who are finite must be all the more so. “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” Why? Because, generally speaking, “the wrath of man does

not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19,20). While Paul’s “be angry” attests to anger as a legitimate emotion, his “and sin not” (Eph. 4:26) attests to the difficulty we have in bringing our emotions under the control of the spirit rather than the flesh.

Therefore, we must be extremely careful in justifying our anger as a right. Too often the right to be angry is used to justify nearly any expression of that anger. We clearly see that as false when someone’s “justifiable” anger at a careless driver turns into “road rage,” resulting in an unjust punishment which doesn’t fit the “crime.” Yet rage is not limited to the road, and injustice is not only in the extreme of murder. Christians need to be careful to express their anger in ways which honor God. Social media is a public forum often used unwisely in order to vent anger toward others in ways unbecoming to the Name we wear. From sports to political policies to social injustices to unfaithful spouses, beware the reactionary rants, the citing of dubious news stories, the posting of snarky memes, or the “sharing” of or even the “liking” of those posted by others whereby we fuel their rage.

For anger to be righteous, it must first be rooted in truth and spoken with care (Eph 4:15). We have no right to return evil for evil (Rom. 12:21). We are explicitly told “do not avenge yourselves” (vs. 19). Vengeance is not inherently evil, but it belongs to God and to those to whom He has given it (13:1-4). We do not have the right to personal vengeance.

Finally, no imagined human right to be angry includes the right to withhold grace and reconciliation to those who repent. If we desire God’s wrath to be tempered by grace toward us, then we *must* temper our anger toward others and extend grace. This is a dominant, practical message to any who claim the gospel of the grace of God (e.g. Matt. 6:12,14,15; 18:21-35). God would be just in condemning us in His righteous anger because He is perfect in all ways. The fact that He has chosen in love to extend grace to those who repent *demands* that we do likewise. Because we have all sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23), any right to be angry comes with the obligation to extend grace to the penitent as God has pictured for us in Christ. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

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When 'Nothing' Became 'Something'

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

It took place several billions of years ago—or, so we are told. Make that trillions of years or even quadrillions, if you will. After all, when was the beginning of “Nothing”? Never mind such trifling details—one nanosecond before “time” existed, “Nothing” rolled out of its non-existent bed and decided to become “Something.”

There is wild speculation about its beginning. Maybe “Nothing” produced non-existent chemicals and caused a gas explosion that solidified into lifeless matter to become “Something.” We are told that eventually, over multiple eons of “time,” this chaos of lifeless matter experienced enough upheaval and collisions to become the now-known universe with its billions of stars, moons, and planets.

Squeeze out a few more billions of “years” and lifeless “Something” experienced “life.” Theories abound—a combination of chemicals floating around in a primeval soup of some sort—or the result of electrically-charged subatomic particles making accidental contact—or you name it! Somehow some of these were thrown

together and began billions of years of evolution into all the varied life forms, extinct and living. We are told, “That’s it—it’s a fact—there’s no need for debate—get with the program.”

However, there are some nagging questions that do need answers before we believe “Something.” For instance, how did the lifeless matter that “evolved” into the mosquito “know” to use its proboscis to pierce and suck blood from life forms with blood rather than sucking sap from trees? And then, what process stamped out evolution and allowed consistent reproduction of all living things to take over so that everything reproduces “after its kind”? “Nothing” obviously died. “Something” spawned by “Nothing” provides no answers—just theories (guesswork).

So where does man go for believable answers to the origin of “Something”? The answers are not in some distant planet or galaxy! “By faith we understand that *the worlds were framed by the word of God*, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Heb. 11:3). “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand

in awe of Him. For *He spoke*, and it was done; *he commanded*, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:8,9). “*And God said...*” (Gen. 1:3,6,9,13,14,20,24,26,28,29).

- **Psalm 90:1,2** — “Lord, You have been our dwelling placed in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, *or ever You had formed the earth and the world*, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”
- **Isaiah 40:28** — “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, *The Creator of the ends of the earth*, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding” (Isa. 40:28).

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’...” (Psa. 14:1). Pity the poor atheist and unbeliever whose god is “Nothing,” and whose hope ends at the grave.

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