



# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

October-November-December, 2017 • Volume 48, No. 4

## Examining Our Hedges

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The literal definition of a hedge is “a fence or boundary formed by closely growing bushes or shrubs.” Metaphorically, the word is used to describe any barrier or limit intended to keep one from “going too far.” It is a protection against the human tendency to step in the wrong direction.

In religious discussions hedges have gotten a bad rap! Often, when questioning a practice or behavior the charge will be issued, “You’ve set up a hedge,” as if that is a bad thing to do. In this article I want to challenge that notion before I go on to the “flip side” and consider some negative side effects of some of the hedges we have set up.

Keep in mind that calling an unscriptural practice a hedge does not make it one, nor does it make it scriptural. Error by any other name is still error. Admittedly, we have modern technology and conveniences that we justify under general authority that were not available to our first century brethren. Some of these raise questions that are not specifically addressed in Scripture. This calls for the employment of good judgment, which may call for some hedges against likely abuse.

It appears to me that the apostle Paul built up a hedge in his personal life in choosing to live a celibate life. Clearly, he understood that he had a right to “take along a believing wife” (1 Cor. 9:5). However, because of a “present distress” he recommended for himself and others the single life to hedge against being distracted from the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 7:25ff). The apostle was quick to identify this as a hedge by saying that “if you do marry, you have not sinned” (v.28)

The controversies regarding the eating of certain meats and the observance of special

days seem to be examples of first century hedges that the apostle Paul had to address (Rom. 14). Notice that he did not condemn the ones who refused to eat meat, but told them to obey their consciences without condemning those who ate meat. The same is true regarding the observance of special days. Those who possibly hedged against putting their confidence in the observance of “days and months and seasons and years” (Gal. 4:10-11) by abstaining from any such observances were not to be shunned, nor were they to impose their hedge on others.

All of us have hedges in our lives whether we admit it or not, and one would have to be an extreme libertine to deny that some hedges are helpful. Most parents set hedges for their children. As a hedge against temptation, a father might forbid his child from searching the web while alone in his room. By doing so he is not saying that such a practice would be inherently wrong, but that it would serve as a hedge against what *is* wrong and harmful.

While it is not inherently wrong for a married man or woman to have a one-on-one business lunch with a person of the opposite sex, wisdom would suggest a hedge to avoid any practice that might raise suspicion of impropriety. The same is true in regard to private one-on-one Bible studies with persons of the opposite sex.

Likewise, shepherds of a local congregation might make decisions intended to avoid future “short-step” departures. Even if the first step is not wrong, in and of itself, if experience has shown that an apparently innocent practice tends to open the way for what is unauthorized, it is prudent to hedge against it. To see the value of reasonable hedges one only has to observe how far sectarian churches (as well as some of our brethren) have gone. In their eagerness to remove hedges they have embraced what is unauthorized.

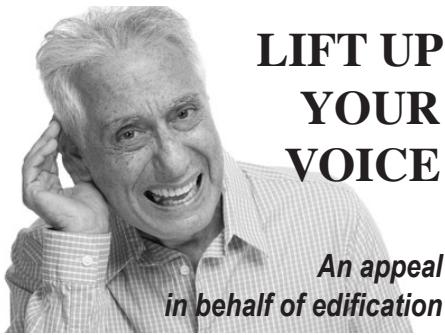
The Pharisees come to mind whenever this subject is brought up. No doubt, they were big into hedge building. In fact, when we are charged with hedge building we are often charged with being “pharisaical.” Yes, Jesus did rebuke the Pharisees of the first century who were focused on tithing even the spices in their homes while neglecting “weightier matters” (Matt. 23:23), but His rebuke was for the neglect—not for the tithing. In fact, He said they should have done both.

The main problem with the Pharisees was hypocrisy. Even their hedges tended to be self-serving, designed to maintain their positions of power.

For the most part, I don’t believe our hedges are from impure motives, but there can still be some unintended consequences. If a hedge is viewed as something that can never be crossed under any circumstance, it becomes a *wall* instead of a hedge. In such a case we would likely begin to build a hedge around a hedge.

Without bringing into this article a list of possible hedges, let me give just one example of what I am writing about. I remember many years ago a congregation being asked if, in case of a disaster, their building could be used as a temporary emergency shelter for the residents of a nearby nursing home. The brethren rejected the request on the basis that it was not a work of the church. I believe that was an unfortunate decision that came about because the hedge against indiscriminate use of the church’s property became a *wall* instead of a hedge.

My appeal is not to rip out all hedges, but to recognize them for what they are—hedges and not walls. Reasonable hedges are beneficial for individuals, as well as for families, or even the collective activities of local congregations, but we must not try to impose them universally.



## LIFT UP YOUR VOICE

*An appeal  
in behalf of edification*

By **KARL DIESTELKAMP**

**Y**ou are in a Bible study and the teacher speaks so only about half of those present can hear him. Someone near the back responds and speaks so softly that those in the front struggle to hear him. He probably had something important to contribute. A person near the front speaks only loudly enough for the teacher to hear him. This is not only a problem for those of us who are hard of hearing.

A preacher is preaching the gospel. He gets to a point in his delivery where he drops his voice, speaking softly. When he is asked why he drops his voice he says, "I do that for effect." Well, the "effect" is that many in his audience didn't hear what he said. My father, Leslie, often said, "A speaker's first responsibility is to be heard; otherwise it doesn't matter what he says."

Let's trot out the microphones! O.K. Put it on, or stand behind it, then, please forget about it, and speak to your whole audience as though the mic was not there. When you speak, determine to be heard, whether leading prayer, reading scripture, teaching, preaching, leading singing and even making announcements. If you lead public prayer in a "still small voice," please bowed, speaking to the floor, how can one "...say the Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he knows not what you say" (1 Cor. 14:16).

Jesus spoke to a "great multitude, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And he spoke to them..." (Matt. 13:2,3). Frequently, his hearers were multitudes (Matt. 5:1-7:29, even outdoors; 11:7; 15:29-31; 19:2; 23:1), and it is clear that they were able to hear his voice. Peter, "standing up with the eleven, *lifted up his voice*, and spoke forth unto them" (Ac. 2:14). At least 3000 heard him—no mic; brethren, "*lifted up their voice to God*" (Ac. 4:23,24). The church in Jerusalem reached "about 5000 men" (Ac. 4:4). How did they all hear when they worshiped together? Can you imagine teaching such a crowd and not having to really "*speak up*"?

I plead for the edification of everyone, not just the hearing impaired, but including them.

8311 - 27th Ave., Kenosha, Wisconsin 53143  
e-mail: [kdiestel@execpc.com](mailto:kdiestel@execpc.com)

# The Lesson of 'Perezuzza'

By **STEVE FONTENOT**

**A**fter Aaron and his sons had prepared the holy objects and furnishings of the tabernacle, "...the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them..." (Num. 4:15). Moses was commanded to put "*poles* into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them" (Ex. 25:14). The Kohathites were to carry the ark "*on their shoulders*" (Num. 7:9). Years later, David decided to transport the ark on a "new cart" (1 Chron. 13:7). While it was an act motivated by good intent, participated in with zeal, approved by the leaders and the people, "The anger of the Lord" struck

Uzza dead and David called that place "Perezuzza" (1 Chron. 13:1-11 *κιν*). He learned the lesson—they must respect what "the Lord chose" (1 Chron. 15:2). So next time "the sons of the Levites carried the ark of God *on their shoulders, with the poles thereon as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord*" (1 Chron. 15:15). "Carry" is generic as to how and who, but gathering all the pertinent facts and harmonizing them indicated the authority was *specific* as to who and how. We, too, better learn the lesson of "Perezuzza" and respect what "the Lord chose"!

18542 Crestline Rd., Humble, Texas 77396  
e-mail: [sp63@mac.com](mailto:sp63@mac.com)

## Reasonable...Trusting

# FAITH

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"*

HEBREWS 11:1

By **DAVID DIESTELKAMP**

**F**or most people, it seems like faith just sort of happens (or doesn't). In other words, they have faith (or don't), but they don't really know why. To them it's a feeling, something they've just always known was for them, or it just seems right, something they can't imagine being without (or for some, it's not).

Bible faith is way more than this. Bible faith involves...

- Thinking:  
"...*think on these things*" Phil. 4:8
- Reasoning:  
"...*he reasoned*" Ac. 17:2
- Reading:  
"...*have you not read*" Matt. 12:3
- Understanding:  
"*do you understand*" Ac. 8:30
- Trusting:  
"*Abraham...went*" Heb. 11:8

True faith doesn't just somehow happen, we have to fully participate.

### Reasonable Faith

Faith has always been word-based, whether coming directly from God (i.e., speaking directly to Adam and Eve or Moses), or through a messenger (i.e., an angel or a prophet). True faith is a response to communication from God. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

That means that a person takes the Word of God, determines it to be from God, then listens to it, tries to understand the message God intended, and then makes necessary personal applications. This requires think-

ing and reasoning. Faith is a conclusion that is based on information. It isn't a guess or a feeling.

### Trusting Faith

Biblical faith is not simply a compilation of true or important facts. Able sacrificed. Noah built. Abraham went. Sarah conceived. Isaac blessed. Joseph worshipped. Moses refused and forsook. All these, and more, from Hebrews chapter 11 highlight the trust aspect of true faith.

Faith is not simply confidence in the truth of the believed; it is confidence in God who said it. Our trusting faith is in God, and that gives us confidence that what He has said is true, is best for us, will happen (or did happen), is good, etc. True faith trusts.

### Faith Faith

Faith is not sight, and it won't be sight until heaven. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). No matter how much proof there is for the things we have faith in, it will never be enough to become sight. Faith based on evidence gives us assurance of the reality of things we can't see and hope for. It sounds funny to say that we need faith that is faith, but it's true. Some people want faith that is sight. They don't want to have to reason and trust. They insist seeing is believing, but actually, seeing is seeing. The question is whether we will truly trust God, and put faith in Him, even when we can't see. That's true faith. Do you have true faith?

940 N. Elmwood Dr., Aurora, Illinois 60506  
e-mail: [davdiestel@yahoo.com](mailto:davdiestel@yahoo.com)

# Truth: The Best That We Can Do

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

**M**y father-in-law Ward Ellsworth died in his sleep in the early morning of August 5, 2017. His health had deteriorated in the last few years until his body could no longer fight off infection. In the months leading up to his death, his wife and daughters were able to care for him in his home. His mind was sound and sharp to the end, and this provided him hours of opportunity to reminisce with family and friends.



Ward Ellsworth

Eulogies are occasions to praise the good that someone has accomplished. Some might observe that eulogies are unbalanced historical accounts which emphasize only the good and ignore the bad. Nevertheless, God's grace teaches us that this is a gracious thing to do. Eulogies cannot preach sinners into heaven, but eulogies can be occasions for us to reflect on the good that God can accomplish with flawed people. In Hebrews 11 we find brief eulogies of men and women of faith. Abraham and Sarah are eulogized as people of faith, but we might recall several specific negative incidents in their lives that were not faithful (e.g. Gen. 16:1-6). It is noteworthy that God does not remember Abraham and Sarah for their laughing at His promises (Gen. 17:17; 18:12) but remembers them for their faith (Heb. 11:8-12, 17-19).

My father-in-law and I were not always in agreement on matters of doctrinal application. However, I have chosen to elaborate on what I believe was the best good that he did. I have chosen to focus on something he did that is challenging yet achievable for all of us by God's grace—to seek, know, obey, apply, and take a stand for truth. That is the best any of us can do. Truth is the basis of everything that is of enduring value. Truth is the foundation of faith. Truth is at the heart of hope. Truth is the language of true love. These are the things that abide and remain even after the fires have consumed our homes or the hurricanes have blown or washed everything away or death has claimed our mortal bodies.

However, we may feel quite uncomfortable discussing the subject of truth in a mixed crowd because there is a lot of disagreement about the specifics of what constitutes truth. Indeed, many are quite cynical and skeptical about truth. We have political opinions, economic opinions, religious opinions, moral opinions, parental

opinions, social opinions, and so on. However, let us never draw the unwarranted conclusion that our varying and conflicting opinions are evidence that truth is something that is situational, personal, evolving, unattainable, and never absolute. When my father-in-law heard someone say that there is no such thing as absolute truth, he would consistently show the self-defeating nonsense of such sophistry by asking, "Is that absolutely true?" He believed that there is such a thing as objective truth which supersedes and is unfazed and unchanged by our opinions.

As a public school teacher from 1956 to 1982, my father-in-law was very concerned by the changes that he saw taking place in the public schools in his lifetime wherein truth was being compromised and redefined to suit the subjective feelings and wants of a culture increasingly focused on self and on the natural world rather than on nature's God. It became his passion to get to the root of and expose the thinking which was drastically changing the teachers, their teaching, their students, and ultimately the culture into people who fancied themselves (as he was prone to observe) "so 'open-minded' that their brains fell out." Do not misunderstand what might be taken as a closed-minded insult. My father-in-law was very much for open-minded seeking of truth. However, minds which are open to the very idea that there is no objective truth to pursue have lost the ability to be taught and guided by anything other than their own feelings. The prophet Isaiah said, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Is. 5:20).

When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, He was asked by Pilate if He was a king. Jesus' response was, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (Jn. 18:37). The response of skeptical Pilate was, "What is truth?" (vs. 38). It is not Jesus' words but Pilate's words which have become the mantra of our skeptical age in which most people find the assertion that there is objective truth to be too rigid and intolerant.

Yes, my father-in-law's passion for truth manifested itself in a variety of ways that were generally unpopular, but it was the best good he ever did. His stand for families against the covert work of humanism in the public schools was trailblazing. His support of parents taking personal responsibility for the education of their children was unequivocal. Of course, all of this was driven by faith in God and His Word which guided everything he did—from raising and guiding his own family, to helping others educate their children, to his pursuit of the primitive pattern of faith and practice revealed in Scripture apart from pop-Christianity. Yes, his passion for these things would get eye-rolls from many people, including newspaper editors and readers and even his own brethren and family at times. However, in our "What is truth?" culture, he kept repeating the truth in the hopes that someone was listening; and some were listening and some will listen still; and so Dad, like Abel of old, through his faith, though he died, he still speaks (Heb. 11:4).

323 E. Indiana Ave., Pontiac, Illinois 61764  
e-mail: andydiestelkamp@gmail.com



By **STEVE FONTENOT**

**H**ere in the Houston, Texas, area we have just been through an epic flood. While water was the means of destruction, thousands of people were saved from destruction by that very water as they entered boats that lifted them above the destruction and carried them to safety. While water was a means used in their deliverance, would anyone call this "water salvation," as if the power were in the water? It was by the *grace* of the responders and the people's *faith* to enter the boat that resulted in their deliverance.

Peter wrote that eight people were "saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:20, KJV; "saved through [by means of] water" NKJV, ASV) in

the greatest flood of all. Was that "water salvation"? Noah was saved by the *grace* of God (Gen. 6:8) and his *faith* to build and enter the ark (Heb. 11:7). "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21, NASB; "There is an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism" NKJV).

The fact that "baptism now saves you" is no more "water salvation" than in the case of Noah or in the local flood here in Texas. It is by the *grace* of God who sent His son to die for us and was raised from the dead ("through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" v.21) and our *faith* to obey that results in our being saved—"He who *believes* and is *baptized* will be saved" (Mk. 16:16 NKJV).

18542 Crestline Rd., Humble, Texas 77396  
e-mail: sp63@mac.com

## Raymond & Velva Breuer: Long Lives... Well-Spent

Raymond and Velva Breuer were both cousins of my father, though they were not related to one another prior to marriage. He died August 4, 2017 and she died August 6, 2017, both at the age of 97, and having been married 77 years.

After his retirement from Ford Motors, Raymond "redeemed his time" fruitfully by preaching and working the next 10 years with the church in Warne, North Carolina. Eventually they returned to Missouri where he served as one of the elders of the church in Hallsville, Missouri.

Even when their advanced age required them to move into a "retirement home" they did not retire from spiritual work but instead, Raymond started a weekly class called "Bible Study With Ray" for residents of that facility.

Through the years Velva was a "keeper at home" and a faithful partner of Raymond, as well as loving mother to six children.

Raymond and Velva never retired from service to the Lord until they died. Now they can rest from their labors. May their number increase!

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

*Philippians 4:8*

AL DIESTELKAMP, *Editor*  
260 N. Aspen Drive,  
Cortland, IL 60112 • (815) 785-0401  
e-mail: aldiestel@gmail.com  
Web Page: www.thinkonthesethings.com

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

260 N. Aspen Drive  
Cortland, IL 60112

**Return Service Requested**

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

# Being An 'Enabler'

By RICK LIGGIN

In the field of civil law, there are sometimes people who "aid and abet" criminals, and there are also those who "contribute to the delinquency of a minor." To do either of these is against the law, and those who do it become criminals themselves. In the field of psychology, there are sometimes people who are identified as "enablers," because they enable others (often their own loved ones) to be involved in addictive behavior. "Enablers" are not necessarily people who would themselves participate in the addictive conduct; they may actually even oppose it. But by their actions they make it easy for the addict to continue in his addiction.

In spiritual matters, we also unfortunately have people who "aid and abet" evildoers, or who "contribute to the delinquency" of sinners, or who become "enablers" of those who are doing wrong! Now, you might be thinking of those who practice deeds that are "worthy of death," while also giving "heartly approval" to those who practice "such things" (Romans 1:32). But these are not the "enablers" we are talking about. The "enablers" we are talking about would not practice the sins that they "aid

and abet." In fact, they would oppose and carefully avoid such practices in their own lives. And yet, they enable others (especially when the "others" are their own family or loved ones) to practice sinful behavior.

How does that happen? In what way do they "aid and abet" evildoers or "enable" those who are given to sin?

Often, it is done by downplaying the person's sin or by even offering excuses for the "poor helpless sinner." More often than not, they enable sinners by their silence. Instead of lovingly confronting the sinner (Matt. 18:15) and exposing his crime (Eph. 5:11), they ignore the sin and pretend it isn't really happening. Even worse, they hamper the local church's efforts to correct the sinner by continuing to socialize and associate with the one who has been collectively disciplined by the group (1 Cor. 5:1-13). When will we learn that this does not help the sinner to correct his ways? It only enables him to continue in his evil deeds!

Don't you dare be an "enabler" of sin! Don't you dare "contribute to the delinquency" of one who is caught up in a trespass or "aid and abet" a sinner in the error of his way! Instead, be an encourager and "enabler" of that which is good, even if it means you must confront and oppose some-

one you love. If you really love someone in sin, you will not enable him to continue in the error of his way; you will, instead, do whatever you can to turn him back to God...to "save his soul from death" and to "cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20).

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

## Voluntary Partners

### Cost of past issue:

Printing & supplies	\$ 85.00
Tabbing service	40.00
Postage	396.92
Website renewal fees	62.62
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 584.54</b>
Funds available for past issue	1,367.49
Surplus	\$ 782.95

### Donations: (as of 9/22)

Anonymous, KS	\$ 300.00
Anonymous, Houston, MS	200.00
Krystal Jackson, IL	100.00
<b>TOTAL DONATIONS</b>	<b>\$ 600.00</b>
Surplus from past issue	782.95
Funds available for this issue	\$ 1,382.95

We are ever grateful to God for our voluntary partners. Our annual mailing permit fee is due, which will raise our costs for this issue to approximately \$750, leaving a projected surplus of about \$633 for a future issue.