



Connie
Diestelkamp

1943 - 2020

CONNIE MAY DIESTELKAMP was born in Oak Park, Illinois, on September 30, 1943, the firstborn child of Fred & Virginia Hennecke. She died in Bloomington, Illinois on January 2, 2020. All the days of Connie were 76 years, three months, and 2 days.

She is survived by Al Diestelkamp, her husband of 58 years; four children, Andy Diestelkamp (Karen), of Pontiac, Illinois; Laura Alvarez (Mike), of Cortland, Illinois; Suzy Miller (Scott), of Bloomington, Illinois; and Lance Diestelkamp, of DeKalb, Illinois. Also surviving are her mother, Virginia Hennecke, (age 96) of DeKalb, Illinois; two brothers and a sister: Karl Hennecke (Bonnie), of Jefferson City, Missouri; Matthew Hennecke (Sherry), of Louisville, Kentucky; and Ardis Howell, of San Antonio, Texas; 17 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren; many nephews and nieces, as well as a host of brothers and sisters in Christ. She was preceded in death by her father.

Connie's parents were not Christians when the family moved from the Chicago area to Ft. Worth, Texas when she was a child. There a loving neighbor invited Connie and her mom to worship where they heard the gospel. Shortly after her mother obeyed the gospel, Connie also surrendered and was baptized into Christ. Later, her father also obeyed the gospel.

It was in September, 1956, when she first met her husband-to-be at a Wednesday night Bible study in Brookfield, Illinois. Five years later they were married.

Until disease rendered her unable, she was an active member of the Edgebrook Lane church in Sycamore, Illinois. She was a teacher of the Bible to children and women, given to hospitality, full of faith and good works. Connie was a homemaker and remained a stay-at-home mom during her entire married life. She was a strong advocate for that role for married women.

Connie's battle began as early as 2008, but it wasn't until January, 2010, that the diagnosis was Parkinson's Disease with dementia. In March of 2017 she was recommended for Hospice Home Care. In April, 2017, it became necessary for her to be moved to where her daughter, Suzy, and family would be able to help with her care.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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When Death Is Imminent

By AL DIESTELKAMP

I don't know who first said it, but I remember my dad often saying, "The old must die...and the young may." It was his way of warning about the uncertainty of life and the need to be prepared at all times. Solomon wrote about "a time to die" (Eccl. 3:2), but unless man usurps authority by taking a person's life, just *when* that time comes in a given situation is in God's hand. However, there are indicators that may lead us to believe that death is imminent. I have found that when the death of a loved one is imminent, having to watch and wait reminded me of lessons I have learned along the way.

I was well aware of the truth that "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18), but it became personal to me as my wife's illness progressed. Having been married for over fifty years, I had little "alone time." Through the years, Connie had been there for me in every way. As her condition worsened, the loss of intimacy left me "alone" in several ways—not just sexually. She was the one in whom I would confide. She was a second conscience for me. She would tell me when I was off base with something I preached. She would also defend me when I was unfairly criticized. The loss of this "oneness" was especially noticeable when I had some good news to share, and suddenly I would realize she was not "all there" to hear it.

I learned that caring for one who is critically ill or dying is a lot of work and requires a great deal of patience. I had always believed I was a fairly patient person, but caring for my wife required even more patience than I anticipated. There were two things I consistently requested in my prayers during this long journey: I asked for sufficient health and additional patience

to be able to participate in her care. I thank God for answering those prayers.

Things that under normal circumstances might cause me to be irritated didn't seem important to me. When Connie wouldn't respond to a simple question such as, "Do you want more to eat?" or not comply when I asked her to open her mouth, it would frustrate me; but I couldn't bring myself to be angry with her. When I think about it, God is probably frustrated with me when I don't react as I should to His Word; but I'm thankful that He is "a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth" (Psa. 86:15).

I also learned that expressing and showing love that is not acknowledged hurts a little, even when it *can't* be returned. Though I tried to make sure I told Connie often of my love for her, it's been about two years since she has been able to respond. I do remember the last time she responded. After telling her that I loved her, I asked her, "Do you still love me?" She whispered, "Oh, so very much." The emptiness felt in not hearing love expressed has caused me to wonder if I have failed to express my love to God often enough, especially since He has revealed and demonstrated His love for me so abundantly (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

When death of the love of my earthly life was imminent, I realized how blessed I have been because of her. Wisdom asks the question, "Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). When this Scripture is read, I will be tempted to raise my hand and answer, "I found her!" Yes, our children will also "rise up and call her blessed" (v.28). She had the charm and the beauty that is said to be "vain," but along with them she was a woman who feared the LORD, and is worthy of being praised (v.30).



Have the Humility to Reveal Your Sins

By NATHAN COMBS

Ever since Adam and Eve hid in the bushes after eating the forbidden fruit, people have tried to conceal their sins. David impregnated the wife of a trusted soldier, and then tried to cover it up by secretly murdering him so he could take her into his harem. Judas secretly went to the Jewish leadership to betray his Lord and acted the part of a faithful disciple until the moment he approached Jesus in the garden with the temple guards. In considering these Biblical examples, the harm of papering over sin is clearly seen. But sin concealment is not just an ancient problem—we personally face it as well.

The reality is that all of us are dealing with sinful struggles. The apostle John bluntly tells Christians that “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). It’s one thing to agree with this Scripture in principle, but it’s quite another to actually live like we believe it. When we take the time to actually look carefully at our own sinful attitudes and deeds, we probably don’t feel like sharing those things with other people! It’s much easier to keep our problems hidden, put on our clean Sunday clothes, smile artificially, and pretend like we have spotless lives.

James, the brother of Jesus, writes in James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power

as it is working.” Have you obeyed this verse recently? Have you approached a strong Christian, opened up about a sin, and asked him to pray for you? There are many excuses we might offer, such as “I just don’t have strong relationships I can trust.” Although the verse certainly implies that we would approach a “righteous person” to intercede on our behalf, there is no human relationship so strong that it removes the painful sting of revealing sin. Regardless of how trustworthy another person is, confession is *inherently* uncomfortable. Consider Adam and Eve: they had every reason to trust their Creator, yet they did not immediately run to God and only divulged their sins when forced.

Rather than delaying confession until we can feel entirely comfortable with the situation (which will never happen), we need to embrace humility and get busy opening ourselves up. Just a chapter before James 5:16 is James 4:10: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” Interestingly, when God rebuked Job’s sinful three friends (Job 42:7-9), he didn’t tell them to directly pray to him for forgiveness, he told them to go to Job and have him pray for their souls. How humbling it must have been for them to ask the man they had bitterly argued with to intercede on their behalf! But then, humility was the point. Are we more interested in preserving an illusion of spotlessness or in allowing the Lord to heal us through obedience to his words?

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JUDGING, PRE-JUDGING, AND PREJUDICE

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

Perhaps one of the best known statements of Jesus is “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). Ironically, it is often cited by people to *critique* those by whom they feel criticized. However, Jesus is not condemning all critiques of others. This is made evident by: 1) the inconsistency created if His words are taken as an absolute prohibition, 2) the immediate context (vs. 5), and 3) the larger context of Scripture which actually requires making judgments (e.g. Jn. 7:24; 1 Cor. 5).

Contextually, what Jesus is condemning is inconsistent and hypocritical judgment. He is addressing the proclivity we have to judge others more critically than we judge ourselves. Of course, this tendency easily produces numerous misjudgments and prejudices against individuals and their “ilk” which, if unchecked by self-control and sound thinking, leads to a host of generational and cultural prejudices which cause strife and division.

Jesus is prioritizing self-critique as being necessarily first in order to then be able to adequately help others with their problems. This does not require perfection from us before forming an opinion, offering a critique, or rendering a judgment. This is again evident by the fact that we are called to do so, yet none of us can rightly claim perfection. For example, parents are not perfect in their own lives or in their parenting, but this reality does not forbid them to

train their children (Eph. 6:4) which will, of necessity, require critiques and judgments. Still, humility and love must temper all discipline.

God created us to learn, discern, critique, and make judgments. As thinking people, we are constantly doing this; and such judgments are naturally made through the lens of our own limited experiences. This is one of the ways in which we both prosper and attempt to protect ourselves from harm. For example, a woman who was sexually molested by a man will naturally have a tendency to be wary of males. Thus, when she is approached by a male, she may become nervous. Based on her experience, she is making a judgment that she is in potential danger. This is a pre-judgment. Any circumstance which departs from the norm of perceived safety is immediately judged as suspect. This is a natural process and is not inherently wrong.

However, we are not mere animals who must react with “fight or flight” when confronted by these conditioned responses. As beings created in the image of God, we can and are expected to exercise self-control. We can reason that our initial reaction based on limited information is not logically or justly applicable to all persons despite our experiences and, therefore, does not require “fight or flight.” Thus we check our initial judgments with sober-mindedness, patience, mercy, and love and temper prejudicial responses and behaviors. This is how the mind of the spirit controls the reac-

tions of the flesh and thus bears good fruit (cf. Gal. 5:16-26).

Judgments happen in a host of circumstances daily for all of us about everything from the mundane to sublime, from the harmless to the serious. When I experience anything with any of my five senses, my brain immediately begins to process it and make judgments despite the fact that I do not yet have all information necessary to make an accurate or fair judgment; but this fact alone does not stop my brain from thinking or making such judgments. Thus, one intuitively evaluates and makes judgments about everyone’s motives and attitudes and potential based on their appearances, words, and actions. By experience we know that many pre-judgments are inaccurate. Still, while acknowledging that “you can’t judge a book by its cover,” we will look at the cover and make an initial judgment.

This is why it is imperative that God’s Word be the foundation of our learning. Indeed, the ability to discern good from evil is a sign of spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:14). Without doubt, the culture in which we are raised and the values imparted by our parents and society at large are formative to the kinds of judgments we make. This is why we need to create a culture of Christ in our hearts and our homes so as to be better people and render better judgments in all cases.

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SUBMITTING TO A KNOW-IT-ALL

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Nobody likes a know-it-all. We've all had experiences with one. This is the person who drones on and on about things you've never considered and is always able to add more information than you knew existed on a host of topics. Sure, you want the nerd on your team if you are involved in some kind of trivia game, but otherwise he not only annoys but intimidates you and makes you feel generally uncomfortable.

Perhaps this is why people are not very fond of preachers. Sure, we want them to feed us something spiritual if we choose to go to church, but otherwise they're not really cool to hang out with because they have a tendency to be wet blankets as they constantly turn ordinary, everyday things into teaching opportunities. Sure, there are preachers who attempt to ditch this stereotype—and in their efforts to become relevant to their culture—become spiritually irrelevant and useless to the kingdom of God. They conform rather than speak words which might actually challenge and transform a remnant of their perverse generation. Yeah, I know. There I go talking like a preacher, like somebody who thinks he's got it all figured out, like a know-it-all who supposedly gets cheap thrills from looking down on people as being scripturally ignorant and/or morally inferior.

Without a doubt, Jesus had some of His sharpest criticisms for the religious leaders of His day who arrogantly acted like "know-it-alls" but were hypocrites. Indeed, there is plenty of this still going on among modern preachers from the televangelists to the mega-church types whose aroma is more akin to Starbucks than it is to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-17). Of course, you know that many of these leaders are also just trying to be relevant and failing miserably from the divine perspective. Humility is an essential part of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ; social relevance or acceptance are not essential.

However, let's not pretend that animosity toward and discomfort with "know-it-alls" is entirely their fault. If we are ignorant or stubborn or apathetic or immoral we may also bear some of the blame.

Scripture reveals to us a very consistent pattern of most people rejecting God and the men He sent to confront them in their sins. Note the kinds of things these people said to/about those who dared to challenge popular thought. "This one came in to sojourn, and he keeps acting as a judge," (Gen. 19:9). "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" (Ex. 2:14). "I hate him because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Ki. 22:8). Indeed, as

one prophet observed, "They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly" (Am. 5:10). Indeed, to speak "uprightly" is often met with charges of being self-righteous and judgmental.

Stephen, an early Christian, publicly called attention to this unholy pattern of rejection saying, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Ac. 7:51). Then the religious leaders "stopped their ears...ran at him...cast him out of the city and stoned him" (vss. 57,58). The pattern of rejection continued, and it continues still.

The meekest, most humble, most compassionate Man to walk this earth knew it all and constantly turned ordinary, everyday things into teaching opportunities (also known as parables). He spoke with great authority and challenged people to change their ways to conform to His, and they literally crucified Him for it. Jesus of Nazareth was *not* any part of the human problem. Indeed, He is the only solution to mankind's problem. The problem is not with Jesus Who knows it all. The problem is with those who stubbornly refuse to

submit to Him as Lord. Historically, most people reject Jesus as the solution, so we should not be surprised that our problem persists.

Nobody likes a know-it-all, and *that* is the problem. Our omniscient God has graciously invited us to get to know Him, and most people continue to reject His invitation. Why? Because *we* are the ones who are arrogant though ignorant. Because we are the ones who are stubborn though sinful. Because we are the ones who are apathetic though lost. Because we are the problem, behaving as if we know better than our Creator. Indeed, it is way past time for the know-it-alls of this world to humbly bow before the eternal Know-It-All Who patiently has given us time to repent. Don't continue to be a part of the problem. Don't conform to this world. Don't assume that relevance has anything to do with current carnal trends or the traditions of men. Humbly submit to Jesus as *the* solution to our problem! Confess Him to know it all, and no longer allow your pride to ignore or resist His relevant teaching and direction for your life.

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Devoted to God in Everything A Heart Like Jesus

By **MATT HENNECKE**

The Bible has little to say about Jesus as he grew into adulthood. We do, however, have one brief glimpse of Jesus, at the age of twelve, responding to his mother when she, worried about him, asked about his staying behind in Jerusalem. Jesus responds, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's house?" Other translations put it this way: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's *business*?" (Lk. 2:49). You may notice in your Bible the word "house" or "business" is in italics. That means it has been added by translators. Why? Interestingly, the Greek text doesn't have a noun to translate as either "house" or "business" so translators added a noun. So, a completely literal translation would read: "Did you not know I must be about my Father?" That sounds strange doesn't it? Without the added noun ("house" or "business") it feels like something is missing or has been omitted. We're left hanging, wondering "our Father's...what?"

Now I'm not suggesting I know anything about Greek or about translations, but it is interesting that without the added noun Jesus' statement seems much more expansive. In other words, Jesus' focus isn't just on his Father's house or just on his Father's business, but on his Father's — everything. Leaving off the noun may actually convey better what Jesus was saying. So what's the point? Well, there is a dangerous inclination many of us have to compartmentalize our lives. We develop a compartment for family, for work, for recreation, for hobbies, and for worship. In other words, if we're not careful we may push the Father into a compartment separate from all others and only devote ourselves to Him during worship or Bible study. If we do, then we are not being about our Father's *everything*.

Jesus was wholeheartedly devoted to his Father. Jesus focused on his Father in the temple, while at home, when he ate, when he did chores, when he practiced carpentry, and when he died. In short, Jesus was focused on his Father when he did anything. That is devotion. That is the heart of Jesus. Does your heart beat wholeheartedly for the Father in *every* aspect of your life?

~ Source: *A Heart Like Jesus* by Matt Hennecke, CEI Bookstore

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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THE ATHENIAN WAY

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The inspired description of the philosophers in Athens encountered by the apostle Paul is that they “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Ac. 17:21). I get the impression that this characterization was not a compliment, but the apostle Paul took advantage of it and grasped the opportunity to reveal something truly “new” to them as he preached the gospel. The results were that some mocked, some wanted to hear more, and some believed (17:32, 34).

While I wouldn’t dare accuse my brethren of spending their time in “nothing else,” I sometimes think that some may have embraced a touch of the Athenian way. I understand the excitement one experiences when discovering something that he has not previously realized or heard before. I get it! I also know that there is benefit in hearing out viewpoints from those who present something that is new to me or varies from long-standing thought or conviction.

In reality, since “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for



every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), there is nothing really “new” to discover other than what we have previously overlooked or misunderstood. Therefore, if we discover something new to us, it better be from something old and unchangeable—the Word of God.

When looking for something new, the tendency is to “look between the lines” of the biblical text. This is where speculation is born. The tendency is to determine what

Jesus or the Holy Spirit is *thinking* rather than what is actually said or written. Then instead of offering the new “understanding” as a possible alternative to the literal interpretation, it is often dogmatically presented as fact.

In other cases, the search for something new is prompted by dissatisfaction with the old. One may read something in Scripture that is a “hard saying,” and think, “Surely there’s some other explanation!” So the search begins for a way to circumvent the obvious. Such is the case with one brother who admitted that he couldn’t believe Jesus really meant what it seems He was saying regarding divorce and remarriage and set out to find another answer. He was so excited to find his desired “answer” in uninspired writings of Jewish Rabbis that he wrote a whole book appealing to historical context to negate what was otherwise apparent in the Lord’s wording.

The search for some new interpretation of Scripture just for the sake of finding something different from popular thought or in an attempt to explain away a literal meaning not to our liking is not edifying. Sometimes popular thought is accurate, and words often mean just what they say.