

Bratislava Address

The Rick Liggins and David Diestelkamp families arrived in Bratislava, Slovakia on January 28th to begin gospel work there. We hope to print news from them in the next issue of this paper. Both families can be addressed as follows:

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Number 1

Misrepresentation Between Quotation Marks

By AL DIESTELKAMP

For many years I have been alarmed at the way that a few brethren, seemingly obsessed with the notion that a false teacher stands behind every pulpit, have "played fast and loose" with what others have written or said in order to "expose" what they perceive as error.

One very common technique that is used by some to discredit another is to pull a statement out of its context. It is easy to see that men have been doing this to the inspired writers of the Bible for centuries, and many false doctrines have resulted. There are very few statements which cannot be misconstrued, so we must all take care that we do not corrupt someone else's message by isolating a statement from its context.

For awhile, one journal even ran a regular column in several issues where the author quoted (anonymously) two people, and the reader was challenged to guess "Who Said It?" Then the reader was told to turn to another page where it was revealed that some gospel preacher's out-of-context statement was saying something similar to some famous Calvinist. It didn't matter how many times the quoted brother denounced Calvinism and explained the statement, the author of the column had succeeded in putting doubts in a few peoples' minds.

I have before me a transcript of a sermon in which the preacher, speaking about Nazi Germany, said it started with "An idea that had a lot of good merits to it, a lot of good merit." He went on to say, "There are a lot of good things about Nazism." From these out-of-context statements I could make a pretty strong argument that he is a "neo-Nazi." However, if you heard the context from which the quotes were taken (though the statements may still be arguable) you

*Some brethren,
it seems, don't let
the truth get in the way
of a good sermon
or article*

would understand that he is *not* a disciple of Adolf Hitler.

Another often-used method of misrepresentation is paraphrasing or misquoting what someone has said. The aforementioned transcript was of a sermon responding to another preacher's sermon. I must say that I don't believe I have ever seen such blatant disregard for accuracy in my life as in this one sermon! How do I know the quotes are inaccurate? I also have a transcript of the sermon to which he was responding. Let me give some examples:

The responding preacher said "I heard Thursday night that we must, quote, *make major changes in our structure and organization or in the next fifty years we will cease to exist*, unquote." I have italicized the words he claimed to hear from the lips of the other preacher. When you look in the other transcript, here is what you actually find: "I believe that unless the church, holding onto the gospel, makes changes in the outward appearance that the church has, and the outward expediencies we have, it's going to be hard for us to survive the next fifty years." Ignoring the appeal for "holding onto the gospel," suddenly the responding preacher converts the other preacher's "changes in the outward appearance," and "outward expediencies" to "*major changes in structure and organization*." There is just no excuse for such misrepresentation!

In another part of the responding preacher's sermon he said he "heard a guy condemn the preaching of the old Jerusalem gospel like Peter and Paul preached," and said "he started talking about this elastic gospel," when in reality he had spoken extensively about the need to "hold fast to the word." Never did he condemn preaching just like Peter and Paul, nor did he even make mention of "an elastic gospel." It was simply a figment of the listener's over-active imagination.

Still later, the responding preacher accused the other preacher of advocating that "we need to try anything, even if it's wrong!" I couldn't find even a "forty-second cousin" to that statement in the sermon being reviewed. Here is a case where the listener was hearing what he thought would be said.

The apostle Paul was accused in a similar fashion. He was accused of saying "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8). He charged his accusers of slander. Anyone who makes it appear that someone is saying anything even slightly different than what was meant, is guilty of slander, and needs to be reminded that "whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18).

Evidently those who engage in misusing other peoples' statements don't realize that when they do that, they lose their credibility. If they pull statements out-of-context, or misquote, they can't be believed in anything they write or preach. Every statement they make will be suspect.

Even if you think that someone is in error, or is a false teacher with a "hidden agenda," you have an obligation to treat him "just as you want men to do to you" (Lk. 6:31).

While some people may find the "witch-hunt" type of preaching and writing exciting, it isn't the truth, and shouldn't be endorsed or tolerated.

Priorities of a Good Husband

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

I am sure that many women, upon seeing the title of this article, could quickly scribble out what *they* think should be the priorities of every husband. However, I am not really interested in that, nor should you be anxious to see what I think. Yet, we should all be keenly interested in what God thinks. If all husbands made God's priorities their own, then we would solve many of the problems that face us today. The breakdown of the God-established family has led to the breakdown of our society. This country will not continue long with the present rate of erosion of the family unit. This is not an over-dramatic threat from some puny preacher. It is a promise from the annals of human history which records what we are doomed to repeat because of the hardness of our hearts. At present I see little hope of changing our national course, but that does not mean that we have to personally follow the masses into destruction and condemnation. Husbands, let's get our priorities straight.

#1 Is God

"That goes without saying," might be your first thought. You are right. It goes without saying far too often. It is probably for that reason that God has become a figurehead priority in the lives of some, but without the power or authority. Let's not let it go without saying anymore, men.

The top priority of a good husband is to love God more than his wife. Luke 14:25,26 makes it clear that family, self and even one's wife must be loved less than Christ. You cannot be a follower of Christ and place Him second to anything or anybody. There is no equivocation or exception. God must come first! Of course, the world will scoff. They cannot imagine how the family unit can be strengthened by husbands making their wives "play second fiddle" to some god. The point, however, is that we are not just talking about "some god," but Jehovah God, the creator of all that is good, including the family. All human relationships (working, educational, parental, spiritual, etc.) including marriage will be vastly improved if those involved in them will make God a higher priority than the relationship itself. Therefore, the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever can never fully be what God intended it to be until both are willing to submit to Him. With that in mind, notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Should keeping the marriage together be the top priority of a husband or wife? It is a very high priority, but it is not number one.

If a wife threatens to leave her husband if he will not make their relationship of first priority, what shall he do? If he refuses and she divorces him, who valued the relation-

ship more? In verse 12 a husband is instructed to remain married. He is forbidden to divorce just because his wife is not a believer. Yet, because a husband must put his relationship with God before the marriage, he cannot compromise any of God's will in order to save the marriage. So, if *she* departs, let her depart. This is not said to trivialize the marriage relationship, but to recognize priorities. Remember Matthew 10:34-37. Jesus did not come to bring family or even marital peace. He recognized that loyalty to Him would result in strife. Still, this should only be true in relationships where one who rejects Christ cannot tolerate the Christian's beliefs or practices.

#2 Is His Wife

Put this article down and read Ephesians 5:25-33. The Scriptures have some points that are meaty and more difficult to understand, but this passage is *not* one of them. Husbands, love your wives. How? As Christ loved the church. The depth of Christ's love was demonstrated in His willingness to die for us. So too, husbands must have a self-sacrificing love for their wives. However, this selflessness does not only manifest itself in the extreme of death. For example, often we are quite noble in our avowed willingness to die for the cause of our Lord, but how seriously can He take us when we have trouble *living* for Him. If something as simple as assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:24,25), giving (2 Cor. 9:6,7), or praying (2 Thes. 5:17) cannot be made a priority, would we give our lives? We are too tired or busy to assemble. We can only spare a pittance when a need arises, but "we'll die for you, Lord!" Yeah, right.

Likewise, one might nobly proclaim his macho willingness to die for his wife, but can she believe that to be anything more than a boastful bellowing of bad breath if he: 1) never says, "I love you"; 2) fails to "praise her in the gates"; 3) speaks disparagingly of her to others? Men, we are to love our wives as our own bodies. We are to nourish and cherish them. We are to be concerned about their emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. A man should count his wife as a blessing, not as a "ball and chain." We should be openly thankful for them to God, to others and to them. At the end of verse 28 is a little gem that I believe has been frequently overlooked: "*He who loves his wife loves himself.*" A properly nourished and cherished woman is a loving wife. An investment that pays big dividends. Husbands, the next time you feel like you are being neglected, consider how your wife might feel. You reap what you sow.

In 1 Peter 3:7 husbands are told to live with their wives in an understanding way.

All relationships, to be successful, require a certain amount of understanding. A husband should be sensitive to and care about the needs and wants of his wife. He is to: 1) Give honor as to a weaker vessel. This is not as much emphasizing her relative fragility as it is how she should be handled: like a delicate vase. Praise her beauty. Handle with care. Put her in a place of esteem; 2) Give honor to her as a joint heir of the grace of life. Recognize her to be of equal value to God and the progress of His kingdom. Husbands, if we do not do these things, let's not think that God is going to hear our prayers or regard us highly no matter our other spiritual efforts.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 makes it clear that the sexual relationship was created for the wife every bit as much as it was for the man. Ephesians 5 applies to the sexual realm as well. It is a husband's responsibility to take into consideration his wife's desires and needs, not his own. Remember, "*he who loves his wife loves himself.*" While the husband has been given the place of headship in the marriage, he does not have authority over his own body. His wife does. A man who does not make his wife's sexual needs a priority and deprives her without consent sins. The relationship of a husband to his wife comes ahead of all other human relationships, bar none. It is his life's number two priority behind his relationship to God.

#3 Is His Children

This is only inserted here to show its location in the priorities of a husband. The marriage relationship must always be a priority over the parent/child relationship. Ephesians 6:4 gives fathers the responsibility to see to it that the children are properly trained. It is a job of high priority, but not above that of the marriage. Just as a husband who places God first will properly love his wife, so a father who places God first and his wife second will properly love his children. No marriage should ever be threatened by the children with which God blesses it. The marriage bond is for life (Rom. 7:2,3). One leaves father and mother to cleave (Gen. 2:24). This cleaving is only for husbands and wives. The parent/child relationship is not a *cleaving*, but a gradual preparation for *leaving*. When the children have left, the husband and wife must cleave until death.

Some may be uncomfortable with the clear demarcation of priorities that has been made. It is important that we clearly establish what relationships take precedence, for if we homogenize them, then we risk forgetting what is important and what our priorities should be. Karen and I teach our children this ranking of priorities. They know that I love Mommy more than I love them, and they know that I love God more than I love her. What the world fails to see is that that's the only way to love them all the most.

Spiritual Embezzlement

By MATT HENNECKE

Several months ago my wife and I were driving through a neighborhood of large, beautiful homes. Each sat stately on an acre or more of property and boasted long, winding driveways and extensive landscaping. As we slowly drove along, awed at the obvious wealth, I couldn't help but ask the question: "what do these people do for a living?" I work hard for a living and make a good wage, but there is simply no way I can afford a home like these. And it wasn't just one home. There were several subdivisions of homes each costing nearly \$1 million!

A few weeks later the answer to my question—at least for one of the wealthy homeowners—was splashed across the headlines of our local paper: "Banker Arrested for Embezzlement." The newspaper recounted how a vice president of a local

bank had embezzled more than \$700,000 from his employer. The article went on to explain that over a period of several months the vice president had "held back" significant amounts of money from the accounts over which he had responsibility. The paper predicted a quick trial and a high probability of conviction. The paper also predicted the banker would be going to jail for his crime.

As I thought about this incident, I couldn't help but recall the story of Ananias and Sapphira and the fact that they had "held back" part of the price of the land they had sold (Ac. 5:1-9). Their sin wasn't in giving part of the proceeds of the sale, but in attempting to convince others that they had given it all. In other words they had "held back" part of the truth. Note Peter's question to Sapphira: "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much" (vs. 8). It was true Ananias and his wife had sold the property. It was true they were giving proceeds of the sale to the church. What wasn't true was the amount they were giving. They were holding back. Theirs was spiritual embezzlement.

Of course, none of us would ever think of embezzling. Right? Before we answer that, let's consider a valuable commodity that's been entrusted to us: the truth. As Christians we have been given the responsibility not only of obeying the truth, but conveying it to others. I'm afraid that sometimes we "hold back" the truth. That is, we stop short of telling the whole truth because we're afraid of how others might react: we're afraid they may either hate us or hurt us.

Consider for a moment some who told the "whole truth" despite the possible dire consequences. In 1 Samuel 3 the responsibility for informing Eli he was to be punished for the iniquity of his sons fell to Samuel. Imagine what it must have been like for young Samuel to be the bearer of bad news. He probably felt a strong temptation to either soften the news, or to "hold back" from telling Eli everything. Nevertheless, Samuel "told him every whit, and hid nothing from him" (vs.18).

The apostle Paul provides another good example of this "spiritual integrity," this willingness to tell the "whole truth" regardless of the consequences. In Acts 20 he describes his willingness to teach and preach despite adversity and imprisonment. In verse 20 he says: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house . . ." In verse 27 he says: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul was entrusted with the truth and was true to that sacred trust. Later, when dis-

cussing the Lord's supper, he reiterates his duty to tell the whole truth: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23). The divine revelation Paul received wasn't filtered or softened in the retelling.

These days I'm afraid we sometimes "hold back" from telling the whole truth. We reason that those who are young in the faith won't be able to handle it. Or, we are afraid of the reaction of persons if we tell them of their *whole* duty to God. We decide to keep some things about God's will quiet until some more appropriate time. Perhaps this is most evident when we find ourselves teaching someone who is living in an adulterous relationship. We tell them of God's plan of salvation, but put off telling them their commitment to God requires them to end their sinful relationship. Why? Because we're afraid they may not like the whole truth, and so we "hold back" the part of the truth they may find objectionable. Like Ananias and Sapphira, we have "embezzled" the truth, and that's dishonest.

The Bible seems clear on the matter: whether we embezzle money from our employer or the truth from potential converts, the ultimate consequences will be the same—spiritual death.

WHO'S HURT WHEN YOU QUIT?

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP

An old preacher said to his audience, "Some people think they hurt the church when they get mad and quit, but they are wrong about that. It never did hurt a good tree for the dried apples to fall off."

The lesson is that people who might have a spiteful attitude and who try to show their anger in an effort to hurt the church, actually only hurt themselves. There are a very few people who may feel that the church can't get along without them. They want to be begged constantly, so they won't quit.

Actually I would be glad to beg such people to be faithful, but my reason is not that they will harm the church, but that they will be lost if they quit. If they are as the dried-up apples, they can do no harm by "dropping off." The "tree" will not only survive, but will be free from this extra load. But if they quit, they will have cut themselves off from the source of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

Don't quit the church, for when you do, you quit the Lord. He does love you, but he won't save you outside the blood-bought body, the church for which he died (Eph. 5:25).

If you love the Lord who died to save you, you will certainly love the church which is HIS.

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BROTHER AFAR

HAPPENINGS IN NIGERIA By ROBERT E. SPEER

Nigeria Calls . . . Again

In 1965 I made my first trip to Nigeria, living there with my family for 24 months. In 1974 and again in 1977 I made six-week preaching trips there. Then, in January and February of this year, I made my fourth preaching journey to the West African nation. Each trip was preceded by an invitation from others for a specific work to be done.

The latest invitation was extended by J.R. Bronger, one of the elders of the Traders Point church at Indianapolis. This church had supported Robert Diaso in Nigeria since 1966. Brother Diaso, whom I have known since 1965, once lived in my compound, had been in some of my earliest classes there, has long been preaching in his own Region and State. I was asked to introduce Bronger and Diaso. Thus, nearly 28 years after the first visit, and some 15 years after the last visit, I was again privileged to enter that great land called Nigeria.

J.R. Bronger, Ken Green of Huntsville, Gerry Sandusky of Madison, Indiana, and I attempted to make the trip together, but Ken's visa did not arrive in time. He joined us one week later.

Starting At Warri

Our first objective was Warri, the home of Robert Diaso. The city is located 260 miles from Lagos. After worship and preaching opportunities on Saturday and Sunday, the Warri workshop began on Monday. A "workshop" is a lecture-style series in which several issues are discussed. This series was scheduled from 10:00-2:00 each day, with 21-25 in attendance. Gerry spoke on "Galatians"; J.R. on "Ephesians"; and I spoke on "1 & 2 Timothy." Ken was present Thursday and Friday, speaking on "The Cross."

Travel to Other Cities and Villages

While J.R. and Ken remained in Warri, Gerri went 30 miles north to Sapele, to work with

Henry Kerume, preaching and conducting daily Bible classes for area preachers. I went still another 30 miles north to work with David Kerume in Benin City, preaching there and in nearby villages.

We returned to Warri on January 30th, and the next day visited churches outside the city. It was my privilege to be with Johnson Bakpar, a former student from 1965. We visited four villages that day, including Ewu where Johnson and I first preached in 1965, establishing the church there. In the intervening years some 17 preachers have come out of that church!

We arrived at Ondo mid-afternoon, Tuesday, February 2, and left on Thursday (four days early). The early departure was brought on by three events: (1) I arrived there ill with what the doctors diagnosed as food poisoning; (2) a national strike of federal workers; and (3) a student demonstration. The latter two events caused "disturbances" and we were advised to move on to Ibadan.

Although we arrived early, we took part in a class and worship service on Friday, giving me an opportunity to preach. While Gerry and Ken preached in Ibadan on Sunday, February 7, J.R. and I returned to preach in Ondo. Returning to Ibadan that evening, all four of us had opportunities to preach to area churches.

On February 8 the Ibadan Workshop began, meeting from 9:00-2:00 Monday through Friday. Gerry spoke on "Holiness and Revelation"; Ken on "The Cross"; J.R. on "Ephesians"; and I had a series on "The Home." We also preached to area churches every night.

Our last Sunday, while Ken and Gerry stayed in Ibadan, J.R. and I went to Lagos. J.R. preached at Araromi, and I at Ajegunle, both in Apapa, Lagos. That evening we went to Abeokuta (45 miles north) where I gave my last sermon in Nigeria. On Tuesday, February 16 we headed home.

Immediate Needs in Nigeria

Two preacher/teacher training classes will be getting under way not long after this paper is mailed; one in the East and another in the West. Since the one in the East has already received publicity and appeals, let me tell you about the one in the West.

At Ibadan, the principal teachers will be Ezekiel Akinyemi and Sunday Ayandare, assisted by other able teachers and preachers. There will be great emphasis placed on the Bible text. Additionally, Cogdill's two books, *New Testament Church* and *Walking By Faith* and Billy Moore's *A Workbook on Authority*, will be used. The cost is \$50 per man per month, which includes feeding, housing and supplemental materials. The class will be limited to 12 students. If you would like to assist one man for a year (or part of a year) let me hear from you and I will tell you how it can be done.

Another immediate need concerns song books. Without enough books of any one kind to go around, three and sometimes four books are used. If you have boxes of used song books sitting about that you would be willing for others to have, let me hear from you.

Summary

In other trips, efforts were made to cover as many miles, to visit as many cities and villages, and preach to as many churches as time and energy would allow. On this trip specific areas were targeted, resulting in fewer miles travelled, fewer places visited, and fewer churches/brethren preached to. Yet, most of our goals were met. We believe it was a worthwhile trip.

I thank God for the generosity of Americans who have had fellowship with saints around the world. I rejoice in every new place receiving the word. I do make a plea, however, that we not forget our brethren in Nigeria. They have struggled long, but they still need us. Indeed, in your thoughts and prayers for this lost world, do not forget the work of the Lord in Nigeria!

ROBERT E. SPEER, the author of this report, having worked seven years with the Thayer Street church in Akron, Ohio, plans to relocate this summer to a place yet to be determined. His address and phone number are: 641 Elma St., Akron, OH 44310; (216) 535-4626.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

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