

'See Then That You Walk...'

By DENNIS ALLAN

As we developed from infants to toddlers, we all had to learn how to walk. We soon learned certain restrictions on where we could walk, as parents and other concerned people guided us away from dangers and down paths of safety.

To serve God acceptably, we also must learn how and where to walk. Paul's letter to the Ephesians instructs us in the proper walking of God's children. He says to see that we . . .

... **Walk In Good Works** — We are to walk in good works because we were created in Christ Jesus for this purpose (Eph. 2:10-10). The privilege of obeying God has been offered equally to Jews and Gentiles. After turning from sin to serve God, we are no longer to walk according to the ways of the world (Eph. 2:1-3).

... **Walk Worthy of Our Calling** — As we were called into Christ through the gospel (Eph. 3:6), we are told to walk worthy of that calling with an attitude of meekness and a desire for peace (Eph. 4:1-2). It is obvious that Christians, to please God, must continue to serve. Paul described it elsewhere as working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Christians are not to walk in the ways of the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6-7).

... **Walk In Love** — As we walk in love, we are to follow the example of Jesus, who willingly gave Himself for us (Eph. 5:1-2). We should be willing to humble ourselves to benefit others, just as Jesus did in His ultimate sacrifice (Phil. 2:4-8).

... **Walk As Children of Light** — We are to walk as children of light, excluding all works of darkness (Eph. 5:8-11). Light represents sincere and truthful illumination, as contrasted to secretive works of dishonesty (Eph. 5:12-13). Our fellowship with Jesus Christ and with one another is based on our walking in light (1 Jn. 1:3-7).

... **Walk Circumspectly** — Finally, we are to walk with our eyes open and with awareness of the will of God (Eph. 5:15-17). We must be wise and aware of God's will, and we must make efficient use of our time on earth. Paul's emphasis is upon a careful life that will glorify God and make preparation for eternity.

Walking as Christians may not come naturally to us, but God expects us to learn how to stand firm and press forward. If we will follow His instructions, we can reach our goal and eternal reward (Phil. 3:14).

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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GETTING RID OF THE GRAY

By AL DIESTELKAMP

In discussions involving controversial issues, it is not unlikely to hear someone who is having difficulty accepting what the Bible says, declare: "That's one of those gray areas." The implication is that God hasn't made Himself clear enough for us to fully understand what He means. The statement is usually followed with a warning against "judging" or of being "legalistic." Almost invariably, one who takes this approach appears not to take a firm stand on either side of the issue at hand, but later ends up in support of the more liberal viewpoint.

Now, I'm ready to admit that there are difficult subjects discussed in the Bible. I don't claim to understand everything clearly, but I don't think it's because the Bible is hiding the truth in a fog. The problem with my lack of understanding is not with revelation, but with me!

There are two common human failings which make the truth on a subject look unclear:

1) Failure to Study the Bible.

We cannot expect to understand what God has revealed without putting forth a serious effort to search the scriptures. Jesus taught that if you will "seek, you will find; knock and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Furthermore, if anyone thinks he is not wise enough to understand the scriptures, he can ask God for wisdom who "gives to all men liberally . . . and it will be given to him" (Jas. 1:5);

2) Failure to Accept the Bible.

It is only fair that if you go to the word of God for your answers that you accept what is written. That's why Luke reports that the people in Berea were "more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness" (Ac. 17:11). These people not only "searched the scriptures daily," but were of a frame of mind that they were ready to accept what they read.

For man to believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to reveal truth, and then to claim that some of what is revealed falls into the category of "gray areas" borders on blasphemy. God isn't trying to hide truth. He doesn't want any to perish (2 Pet. 3:9) and wants us to be "sons of light" (1 Thess. 5:5). He commands those of us who once walked in darkness to "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). It is absurd to think that God has obscured the light in which we are commanded to walk (1 Jn. 1:7).

Let's be honest. The real problem isn't with the light of God's word, but with the fact that men want to walk in darkness. Millions will be condemned because "the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19). He who practices evil "hates the light and does not come to the light" (Jn. 3:20) so that he can continue in sin without feeling bad.

Instead of accusing God of filling the Bible with "gray matters," we need to use the *gray matter* that God gave us to understand and apply the truth.

God made some things
gray . . .
like elephants,
mice and
rain clouds.

He made some things
black & white . . .
like zebras,
dalmatians and
truth!

What Will You Be?

By RAY FERRIS

It is commonly understood in the physical realm surrounding us that different substances in the universe react in different ways to the same action or force. As an illustration, we call your attention to the reaction of wax, meat, clay, wood and water as acted upon by fire. The wax will melt; the meat will fry; the clay will harden; the wood is consumed; and the water boils away in a vaporous steam. The same force is at work upon these different substances, but the effects differ greatly.

There is a similarity in the fact that different people will react differently to the same influences in their lives. The same sermon will get different responses from various individuals. An atheist may be moved to mock and ridicule. A truth-seeking sinner may be moved to obey the Lord. A weak Christian may be strengthened in his faith to live closer to the Lord. A mature saint may be caused to express thanksgiving to God and to glorify His name. Do not lose sight of the fact that the same sermon with the same force at work (the gospel is the power of God when men believe it—Rom. 1:16) was at work upon each of these “substances” also.

It is surely taught in the scriptures that there will be “trials” or “testing” of our faith and loyalty toward God and his word. Read from Peter’s first epistle these passages: 2:19-25; 3:14-17; 4:12-19. James also assures that God does not tempt us to do that which is evil (sin), but that our temptations are caused by the base lusts we have within us for evil. However, he also informs us that when we have been tried by such temptations and have endured that we are blessed (James 1:12-16). Paul reveals to Timothy that all the godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), and tells the Corinthian Christians that even our works will be tested (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Passages could be multiplied to express the principle.

Do not fail to realize that many and varied forces will be at work to influence your life. However, be sure also, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Surely a lesson for us from these observations in nature and from these words of the book of God is to recognize we can use even the problems of life as the stepping-stones to greater maturity and service for the Lord; and that what we make of ourselves is not determined primarily by the

forces that exert influence upon us, but by what we make of ourselves, with God’s help, by the ways we react to such influences and forces.

What will you be? For the most part, it is up to you. The intensity of the desire we have for a given thing is the single most sig-

nificant element that determines whether we achieve success or experience failure. Do you want to go to heaven when you die? How strongly do you desire it—enough to put the Lord and His kingdom before everything else in the world? If so, you will make it.

Spiritual Ostriches

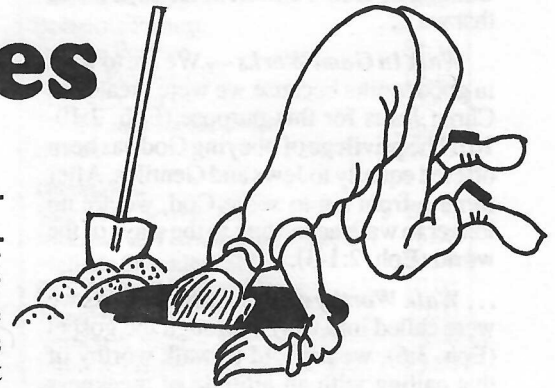
By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

How many of us would rather stick our heads in a hole than face up to a challenge? Our answer probably depends upon the nature of the challenge. The ostrich has gained the reputation of being a bird that sticks its head in the ground when it feels threatened. Of course, we all see the foolishness of such action. Just because the bird cannot see the predator that is about to pounce upon him does not mean that it is not there. If we can see the absurdity in such behavior in things physical, then why can we not see that it is equally preposterous to behave so in things spiritual?

Nevertheless, the most confident and courageous of persons in matters that pertain to this life can be found sticking their heads in the ground when it comes to taking a stand for spiritual truth. We see patriots ready to go to war against a foreign tyrant who dares to threaten our nation and/or its interests. We see citizens ready to challenge corruption in government and put their reputations on the line. Where is this zeal when it comes to taking a stand for the truth and righteousness revealed by God through the scriptures?

Perhaps the atheist is correct when he charges that Christians have blind faith. I dare say that many, if not most, who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ are in fact just followers of man-made, tradition laden creeds and are woefully ignorant of what the Bible actually has to say. The truth of this is borne out by the unwillingness of most to even attempt to engage in some sort of meaningful discussion of what God expects of us.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope



that is in you, with meekness and fear;...” (1 Peter 3:15). Yet, instead of being ready to give a reasoned defense, many so-called Christians are ready to stick their heads in a hole. Many of the same people who vigorously oppose the humanistic doctrines of moral relativism and the denial of absolute truths will in turn take a very liberal and relativistic approach to the word of God. They have an apathetic view of the authoritativeness of God’s word. They are “pro-choice” when it comes to the creeds and denominations that are available. In justification of such ambivalence they ask with Pontius Pilate, “What is truth?”

Many will give lip-service to the idea that the Bible should be our standard of truth, but woe unto the man who really believes it and tries to apply that standard to see if churches and their doctrines measure up. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” (John 8:32). Sure, all like the idea of being made free from the bondage of sin, but it is first necessary to “know the truth.” Again, many have neither the time nor the desire to make an honest pursuit of truth. Instead of thinking for themselves and reasoning from the word of God they prefer to be led about mindlessly by the edicts, traditions and creeds of men. These will never make anyone free!

It is a myth that ostriches bury their heads. Likewise, true Christians don’t either!

TURNING THE TABLES

By RICK LIGGIN

As a result of the violent and cruel persecution conducted by Saul and his zealous company, the Jerusalem church was forcibly scattered abroad throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria (Ac. 8:1). No doubt, this fierce persecution was the work of Satan, devised to halt the spreading of the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately for Satan, he underestimated the power of God and the degree to which God's servants were committed to Him, for we learn that "... those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Ac. 8:4). That which Satan did in an attempt to stop the message of Christ from being preached actually resulted in helping the message to be broadcast even further.

A similar incident is recorded in the Philippian letter. Paul had been placed in bonds because he preached the gospel of Christ. And yet, in spite of his chains, the

faithful apostle wrote: "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). Paul went on to explain that, because of his imprisonment, most of the brethren were now more confident and bold to speak the word of God without fear (Phil. 1:14). Again, that which the devil intended as a deterrent to the gospel of our Lord turned out to be an aid to its proclamation.

From these two episodes in New Testament history we observe that our God is so powerful that He can completely turn the tables on Satan. God, with His dedicated disciples, can change the devil's destructive devices into tools with which He (God) advances His own cause. To His own advantage, God uses the workings of Satan against Satan.

Now, if we make a personal application of this observation, it can be a wonderful faith-builder for us as we struggle with

evil. Our God is so mighty and so much in control that He can (if we are faithful) use the onslaughts of Satan to our advantage. Those things which Satan plans to use against us can—with God's help—result in making us better people. This is clearly implied by James when he exhorts us to rejoice in the face of adversity. He tells us that "the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (Jas. 1:2-4).

The more we are able to endure the trials of the Devil, the stronger we will be. Consequently, that which was intended by Satan to make us weak and sinful, with the help of God, ultimately results in spiritual strength.

Therefore, my brethren, do not be dismayed in the face of any adversity or trial. Our God is able to turn the tables on Satan. Satan may intend it for our detriment, but God can use it for our good.

Where Have the Children Gone?

By ED BRAND

"Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psa. 127:3). The birth of a child is a wonderful and special event. Even a quarter of a century later, I can recall the flood of emotions which accompanied the birth of our firstborn. Those feelings were repeated with the secondborn as well. I do not understand how it could be otherwise. Not only do we perpetuate our species, we also leave a part of ourselves for the future.

Solomon said that children were a blessing. When Esau asked Jacob whose were all these children, Jacob responded, "The children whom God hath graciously given thy servant" (Gen. 33:5). The Bible promotes the familial ties which bind parents and children. I am glad that it is so.

Not only are children a blessing to parents, they are a blessing to the nation. Solomon suggests God rewards the nation by the birth of children. In the past months, some of our national leaders have indicated how important our children are to the welfare of our country. I concur with their assessment. Our children are our future.

What is happening to our greatest national resource? They are being murdered and abused in alarming numbers. They are being shown every day that our society is often a dangerous one.

Not only are they being murdered and brutalized, many of them are being pushed into adulthood long before they are ready. They have to learn how to fend for themselves after school, since no one will be home until after work. Sometimes they are unsupervised, even while one parent is home. One recent tragedy occurred while a 5-year old boy was watching television with his older sisters at 4 a.m. He found a hand gun and shot himself dead. Do you also wonder what business children have being up at 4 a.m. watching television?

Peer pressure is put on older children to act like adults. They want to mimic their role models in dress, action and vocabulary. They want to be people of the world when they are 10 years old. A recent article in *Newsweek* (7/26/93) exposed this preoccupation with fast

living. Let me quote one paragraph which condenses the whole article: *"It's not really that I want her to be a little girl forever. It's just that it would be nice if she were a child during her childhood. Instead, she's been bathed in the fantasy of bodies and beauty that marinates our entire culture. The result is an insidious form of premature sexual awakening that is stealing our kids' youth."*

I do not know Joy Overbeck's religious convictions, if any, but I do know she has analyzed an all too-common condition in our culture. And my dear brethren, we live in this culture. Are we perpetuating this vicious cycle by pushing our children into adulthood before they are ready? I'm all for our people learning the value of money and honest work. Sometimes they get jobs which make it difficult, if not impossible, to attend Bible classes and worship. Job pressures will come soon enough without youngsters having to deal with this conflict before they are spiritually mature to do so. We parents ought to help our children to formulate habits which will enhance spiritual development, not hinder it. When children make wrong choices (and they will), parents ought to overrule them and explain why. That's one reason God gave children parents.

I like the way Joy closes her piece about *"Sex, Kids and The Slut Look"* (I didn't have the nerve to use that title for this article). She said: *"As for me, I don't care anymore if my kid has a hissy fit in the junior department. She's not wearing the Slut Look. Let her rant that I'm a hopelessly pathological mom who wants to keep her in pacifiers and pinafores forever. Let her do amateur psychoanalysis on me in public until my ears fry—I've shaken the guilt heebie-jeebies and drawn the line. So you can put those white lace spandex leggings back on the rack young lady."*

Our children are a precious commodity which we must nurture and care for. They need loving instruction and as much time as necessary to make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Some of the most important lessons they will learn are in this interval. One thing seems quite clear: They need time to be children; to enjoy the relative freedom of those short years before they are thrust into the rat race of modern "living."

BROTHER AFAR

OPPORTUNITY IN POLAND By RAY MADRIGAL

Although there has been a great interest in recent years to bring the gospel to Eastern Europe, one country that has been neglected is Poland! Families have moved to spread the borders of the Kingdom in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and even Russia. Yet right in the middle of all this evangelistic enthusiasm lies Poland, a remarkable land just jouth of the Baltic Sea and west of the former Soviet Union. This country is inhabited by nearly 40 million people, many who are eager to learn the gospel.

Let Me Tell You About Kasia

Last Spring I had the fortune to meet Kasia Bania, a 17-year-old foreign exchange student from Katowice, a city of over 400,000 population located in the southern region of Poland. Kasia was nicknamed "Kate" by her friends in the U.S. As a guest of the Smallman family in Metropolis, Illinois, Kasia attended Bible classes and worship services of the 32nd Street church in Paducah, Kentucky. She immediately showed great interest in learning more about the word of God and how it could make a difference in her life.

Although Kasia at first entertained many liberal beliefs in organic evolution, abortion and homosexuality, she was open to investigate these "western" ideas in light of the Bible. We steadily studied the evidences supporting the inspiration of the Bible as the word of God, creationism, the plan of salvation and God's plan for the family. In May, Kasia obeyed the gospel and immediately made plans to teach her family and friends in Poland—no easy task in an area where no sound church exists.

Who Will Go? Who Will Help?

A few short weeks after her baptism, and after some concentrated "new converts" studies, Lasia returned home to her native Poland, eager

to live and share her faith with others. In her most recent letter, she writes:

"After having burnt midnight oil for several days, I had to go to the hospital to have my appendix out. Before the operation I prayed to the Lord so that everything was O.K. with me because I have so many things to do in my life. I would like so much to serve the Lord and people. After operation when I was still in the hospital I got a lot of letters from my friends from USA. They made me happy. I read each of them several times. I also got a letter from Mr. Rick Liggin and Mr. David Diestelkamp from Slovakia. I do not feel alone here. When it is hard for me, I take the Bible, read it and think about what I have read."

Not a bad attitude at all! Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of us would apply that same formula to our times of trouble and loneliness? Pray, read the Bible, and think about it (Phil. 4:6-8)!

Kasia is eager to study and learn more about God and His will. Her parents and other family members are also interested in learning more about the Bible. Who will go to preach the gospel in Poland? Who will help me go for an extended preaching trip—perhaps 4-6 weeks? God has opened an evangelistic door through this intelligent exchange student. Who will walk through this door of opportunity? (2 Tim. 2:2). Who will have fellowship in these evangelistic efforts? (Phil. 4:15).

Encouraging "Neighbors"

As you can tell from the excerpt of Kasia's letter, the Liggin and Diestelkamp families have already made contact with her through the mail. Also, Charlie and Maria Brackett, who are serving the Lord in Prague, will also communicate with Kasia when possible. Al Wanous and his wife, Christians living in Warsaw, will encourage Kasia whenever they travel through southern Poland. Although these efforts are certain to

encourage Kasia, a concentrated effort needs to be made in Katowice. In the meantime, let us encourage our young sister in Christ. If you or others (especially young Christians) are interested in writing Kasia, her address is:

Kasia Bania
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42-463 Mierzecice
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Those who would like to respond to the challenges herein may contact:

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