

ABSENTEE THOMAS

By ED BRAND

On the evening of the day Jesus was raised from the dead, the disciples had a meeting (Jn. 20:19ff). Their meeting was not the "Sunday evening service" which is so common in our time. They did come together in the evening of the first day of the week, but this was not a "church" meeting. It was simply a meeting of the disciples. They evidently did not advertise it in the *Jerusalem Herald*, for they locked the doors for fear of the Jews. I do not know the purpose of this meeting, but the disciples were there.

Perhaps they met together to discuss what they were going to do in the coming days. They had been told by Mary Magdalene, "I have seen the Lord," so they may have met to see if others had seen him and what they were going to do next.

During their meeting, Jesus came and spoke to them. Most likely he was the last person they expected to see. How he got into a locked room is not explained, but the disciples were overjoyed when they saw him. He not only greeted them with "Peace," but breathed upon them and gave them the Holy Spirit. If they were distraught or unfocused on which way to go, this meeting gave them direction.

But Thomas was not there.

I do not know where he was, nor what he was doing. I know where he was not and what he missed. So did the disciples, because "they told him" (Jn. 20:25).

The next week Thomas was there. Maybe "personal work" works. As in the previous gathering, Jesus entered, though the doors were locked, and greeted them. Thomas saw whom he had previously missed, addressing him as "my Lord and my God." He was, without doubt, glad he was there.

We have too many Thomases. They go here; they go there, but they don't meet with the disciples. Their absence is always reasonable, at least to them. They had a social engagement, or company, or a sporting event, or they promised to go with someone else "to their church." Like Thomas, they weren't with the disciples.

Jesus is not going to walk through closed doors to meet with us. When Jesus returns, it will not be to come meet with the saints, but the saints will go to meet him (1 Thess. 4:17). However, Jesus has not left his people alone (Matt. 28:20). I know where the Lord will be on the first day of the week.

Where will you be?

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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True Beauty

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

Please read 1 Peter 3:1-6 before reading this article. Peter is addressing the subject of how wives ought to conduct themselves. He suggests that the manner in which women live can have a profound impact upon their husbands for good. An unbelieving husband observing the pure behavior of his wife and the respectful way in which she submits to him might be won to Christ. With this in mind Peter admonishes women to aspire to true beauty.

True beauty is not the arranging of hair or the wearing of gold and clothing. Instead it is the inner person that can reflect a beauty that is precious in God's sight. It is a gentle and quiet spirit that is enduring and valuable. It is with this that a woman is to make herself up and clothe herself.

This is a text that is often used to suggest that the wearing of *any* kind of jewelry is forbidden by God. Let's cast aside our own practices and the traditions of men and look at this passage with an open mind.

Can we rightfully interpret this passage to be saying that jewelry is therefore forbidden? The point is often made that it says, "Let it not be . . . the wearing of gold . . . but let it be the hidden person of the heart." No doubt, this is a reference to jewelry, but is it an absolute prohibition? Don't be quick to answer that without observing this form of speech elsewhere.

Jesus said, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*" (Matt. 6:19,20). Is *this* an absolute prohibition of having savings accounts or storing grain in the bins while awaiting that slightly better price?

Jesus also said, "*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life . . .*" (John 6:27). Is

this an absolute prohibition of working for a living? Clearly, these are *not* absolute prohibitions. Their immediate contexts and the context of God's entire word do not permit such an interpretation. This paper could be virtually filled with biblical examples of this style of speech.

The immediate context of 1 Peter 3 also forbids such an absolute prohibition. If jewelry is absolutely prohibited by the word "not," then so is *any* arranging of the hair or *any* clothing. Such an interpretation paints the ridiculous picture of holy women being naked with messy hair.

Also, Peter tells us that the manner of dress that he has just described is the same way that the holy women of former times adorned themselves. Did these women arrange their hair or wear jewelry and clothes? His emphasis is upon the way they dressed their inner selves, but did this mean that they did not wear jewelry? Abraham wanted a wife for his son who was of his own people. When Rebekah was found she was given from Abraham's goods a golden nose ring and two bracelets as well as other jewelry of silver and gold (Gen. 24).

Now, it is true that the behavior of the Patriarchs and their wives was not always exemplary. However, Peter is the one who uses the adornment of these women as an example of how Christian women should adorn themselves today. Peter, under inspiration, is stressing the importance that women should place on beautifying themselves inwardly.

True beauty does not come from the way one's hair is fixed (up or down), the amount of jewelry one has (much or none), or the clothes one wears (fancy or plain). It comes from within as guided by the Spirit of God through His word.

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'STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY RESPONSIBLE BIBLE INTERPRETATION'

By JON QUINN

The paper was a result of a four year effort by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to write a statement on human sexuality (*The Daily Journal*; Dec. 9, 1993; p. 19). While preferring the statements that God has made concerning all aspects of human behavior, I'm willing to give a listen. But I do not like what I hear. Neither do many Lutheran "pastors" and lay people. The headquarters of the denomination in Chicago was deluged with angry phone calls from its people. Many of the denomination's 67 bishops "expressed reservations" about the statement and "some" bishops denounced it outright. The "Rev." Karen L. Bloomquist, who headed the 17-member panel that produced the statement was asked to give up that assignment, though she still remains Director for Studies in the denomination's Division for Church in Society.

Why did the paper stir up such a controversy? Because it left open to question whether or not homosexuality is a sin. The paper said that the scriptures remain inconclusive in regard to "the question facing the church today: the morality of a just, loving, committed relationship between two persons of the same sex."

Wait, there's more! The paper suggested that the church could continue to condemn homosexual acts while accepting homosexuals with love but expecting them to refrain from sex. Then it went on to view this option as questionable on Biblical and theological grounds!

Then it claimed their approaches to this issue, "are strongly supported by responsible Biblical interpretation." It said, "faithful unions could be tolerated and even encouraged as a necessary accommodation or they could be openly celebrated and blessed as a morally equivalent parallel to heterosexual marriages."

Don't ask me! Don't ask me how it can be said by any sensible person that such an approach is "strongly supported by responsible Biblical interpretation." Responsible for what? Is there a grammatical trick being used here or just an out and out lie? Don't words mean anything anymore? I have to ask why "many" of the 67 bishops could only muster "reservations" about such an outrageous position and why only "some" denounced it?

Responsible Biblical Interpretation

"So then, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Let's do some responsible Biblical interpretation right now! Let's read the

words God uses in the scriptures which discuss homosexuality and do our best to discover what they mean. Can they be interpreted honestly to have the meaning that homosexual unions are "blessed" and "morally equivalent" to heterosexual unions? Do they show that Christians ought to "encourage" and "celebrate" such unions? You read them and you decide!

Genesis 19:1-13. We get our English word *sodomy* from the city of Sodom, which openly practiced homosexuality. Their wickedness was great and they were destroyed for it. The ones calling for "responsible interpretation" sometimes like to suggest that Sodom was destroyed for its inhospitality. However, the New Testament refers back to this incident and says "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as they indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, undergoing the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Leviticus 18:22 — "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." How does one go about explaining this one away? The "responsible interpretations" simply say that the nation needed to grow in population at this time, so homosexuality was forbidden because there would be less growth. The same is said with the next passage.

Leviticus 20:13 — "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

The New Testament comments as well on the true Biblical perspective concerning homosexuality.

Romans 1:26-27 — "Therefore, God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men, committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 — "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." Now, how are we going to "responsibly

interpret" those passages and end up with the idea that homosexual unions are to be "blessed" and "celebrated" instead of condemned as sin?

Counseling for "Homophobes"

Romans 1:32 — "... and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but give hearty approval to those who practice them." There has been a flood of very pro-homosexual articles in the news recently. In addition to the one we've already covered, there were no less than seven articles in a recent issue of the *The Sunday Journal* (Dec. 12, 1993; pp. 9-10). In an article entitled "Counselors Prepare for Gay Students to Step Out" it was affirmed what I have always expected: "The same report found 80 percent of counselors strongly disagreed that homosexuality is offensive to God and therefore offensive to them." We are talking about public school guidance counselors here! I guess they have been reading the report the Lutherans put out about it, or something similar. They should have been reading the Bible—what God has said about it—before declaring that homosexuality was not offensive to God!

Homosexuals Attack

On September 19, 1993, the evening services at Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco were interrupted by a mob of about 75-100 protesters. They invaded church grounds, blocked doors, shouted, threw rocks at worshippers and threatened them. They replaced the church's flag with their own, threw eggs, damaged church property. They chanted, "We want your children; give us your children..." (Look at Gen. 19:1-13 again!)

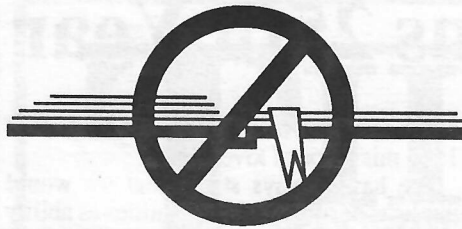
"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were to happen to you" (1 Pet. 4:12). It may be later than we think! But still I cannot help but be surprised that here in America things like this could happen. I do not know if *The Journal* carried this news item, or not. Much of the media turns a blind eye toward anything which might present a negative picture of homosexuals.

I realize that this article lacks "political correctness." It was meant to. Too many liberal religious leaders are already jumping on the bandwagon wanting to please men rather than pleasing God.

Our goal is to glorify God and proclaim His word. That is exactly what we intend to do.

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The Plot to Discredit Religion



By AL DIESTELKAMP

One Thursday evening I turned on the TV, to watch a show I had videotaped while we were out. Sure enough, I had programmed the VCR to the wrong channel. Disgusted with myself for making such a careless mistake (again) I turned off the tape. The scene that was on the TV at the time was a courtroom scene in which arguments were being made concerning the validity of teaching creation science in a school science class. In the story, a science teacher was fired for presenting arguments for creation as one possible "theory" to explain the origin of the universe, and he was suing the school district to get his job back.

It turns out the program I was watching was *LA Law*, a show I don't usually watch. I had heard that the producers of that show had recently added a new character—an unmarried right-wing, fundamentalist, female lawyer. She was representing the schoolteacher in this segment. I was hooked! I had to see how this issue would be handled by the left-wing entertainment media.

Actually, I was surprised that they allowed her to make some pretty credible arguments as she cross-examined students, school officials and "expert" witnesses. I kept trying to "help" her with some arguments she missed, but all-in-all it was pretty good. Of course, in the end, the jury said the school board was right in dismissing the teacher. To have written it any other way would not have been very realistic in today's society.

Up to this point I was happy with the images portrayed of the conservative characters. But there was a side-plot in the show featuring the lawyer's preacher-father who came all the way from Oklahoma to watch his daughter "do the work of the Lord." Even I was "embarrassed" by this so-called "Reverend" who looked and sounded like a carnival huckster. They even made sure he had the stereotypical ecclesiastical tone to his voice. Before the show was over, it was revealed that her father's over-bearing attitude was a major factor in her decision to move far away from home.

Why, do you think, the entertainment industry almost always portrays fundamentalist preachers as arrogant and egotistical? Because it serves their hidden agenda to do

so. They are out to destroy any influence the Bible has on society, and one way to do so is to make people who have strong moral convictions look unreasonable. Yes, there are some preachers who fit that image (in fact, I met up with one just the other day), but they are the exception—not the rule.

When NBC announced that they were adding this conservative character to their show, it was reported to be a gesture to the right-wing minority. They had been accused of not providing a positive image of those holding traditional values. Thus they created a character they said would resist the temptations before her, and remain a virgin. I'll be surprised if they hold true to that. I predict that they will do one of three things: (1) They may quietly phase her out of the program; or (2) They will find some other way to besmirch her character, making her values out to be hypocrisy; or (3) They will wear her down morally and finally bed her down, portraying the idea that abstinence before marriage is unrealistic.

What is alarming is that our friends and neighbors are getting a constant diet of this visual propaganda, and are building up prejudice against anyone who advocates strict adherence to the Bible. This is going to make evangelism even more difficult than it already is. What's even more frightening is the fact that many Christians are sitting by silently while their own children are being gradually programmed to look down on religion. Parents need to expose and counteract the wickedness that is being promoted, including the devaluing of religious belief.

The entertainment industry is not alone in this plot to rid God from the lives of America. The news media, educational establishments and much of our government are willing accomplices. The news media relishes in telling of any scandal involving religious leaders. The elite among our educational system have systematically eliminated true values with what they call "values clarification." Our government has abandoned its God-given role of "the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do good" (1 Pet. 2:14), and taken up the woeful practice of calling "evil good, and good evil" (Isa 5:20).

Indeed, we are in a cultural war! Truth *will* win in the end, but I dread the casualties in the meantime.

To Home-School, Or Not . . .

A growing number of Christians have opted to home-school their children instead of sending them to public schools where they are subjected to humanistic curricula. Unfortunately, there sometimes builds up a rivalry between them and the ones who have not made that choice. This ought not to be.

If a family is sufficiently motivated to teach their children at home, it should be applauded, rather than lamented. To criticize such a noble effort reveals an attitude loaded with jealousy or guilt.

On the other hand, home-schoolers should not look down on those who send their children to public schools. They must not convey the idea that Christians who send their children to public schools are somehow less spiritual-minded.

It was for issues such as this that Paul wrote what he did in Romans 14.

—Al Diestelkamp

Contributions, Deductions and The New Tax Laws

By AL DIESTELKAMP

There has been considerable discussion the past few months about the new tax rules that went into effect with the new year. Of particular concern was a matter which applies to churches and those who contribute to churches. Early reports were that churches would be required to supply receipts for all donors who gave more than \$250 in any one year, and cancelled checks would not suffice as evidence for tax deduction purposes.

At first, even the IRS was not sure how the new rule would be applied. Recently the IRS has sent out an official explanation. It was mailed to churches, but probably few Christians have seen it.

In a nutshell, the publication confirms that if the new rules are not followed it could result in the loss of the deduction claimed. However, it applies only to donations in excess of \$250 *per donation*—not per year. The publication specifically says, "Separate payments are regarded as independent contributions and are not aggregated for purposes of measuring the \$250 threshold." It goes on to warn that if people try to circumvent this requirement by writing more than one check on the same day, they may disallow it.

The publication has more useful information than I wish to print in this paper, but I encourage you to request a copy of Publication 1771 (it's free) from the IRS. You can do so by calling 1-800-829-3676.

'Think' Begins 25th Year

By AL DIESTELKAMP

This begins the 25th year *Think* has been in publication. It doesn't seem that long ago that my father proposed to family members that we publish a small paper intended for Christians. Earlier, in 1956, he, Gordon J. Pennock and Bryan Vinson, Jr., had started *Truth Magazine*, but he longed for a smaller, free paper, produced primarily by members

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Cost of last issue:

Printing & Supplies	\$ 50.00
Domestic Postage	278.59
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TOTAL COSTS	\$417.30
Funds Available for last issue	310.91
Deficit	\$106.39

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Sincere thanks to all who contribute to cover the costs of this paper. This issue is expected to cost approximately \$420, which would leave a surplus of \$444.61 toward the next issue.

of his extended family. Thus, in the Fall of 1969 this labor of love began.

We have always stated that we would publish "as often and in quantities as ability permits." In the first ten years we printed 55 issues. Since 1979 we have consistently printed four issues per year. In total, we have published 112 issues. The first issue cost about \$60, including printing and postage. Presently each issue costs about \$420, most of which (88%) is postage.

For the first 20 years of publication my father, Leslie Diestelkamp, edited the paper and did most of the writing. This begins the fifth year that I have had the editor's responsibilities. I did not inherit my father's knack for sitting down and writing an article on demand. I love to write, but it comes with much more effort. Thus I have depended on others, within and without the family, to help in the writing responsibilities.

I have always been the one responsible for the design and layout of the paper. Through the years I have tried to occasionally change the layout style to make the paper as readable and attractive as possible. This issue reflects a slight change in style from past years, using slightly wider columns. I wanted to change to a more modern type style, but every one I tried took up more space, so I reverted to *Times Roman* for the articles.

From the beginning of this paper we have determined that we would not ask for donations, but from the beginning we have always received voluntary donations. Because of the high cost of postage, if these donations were to cease, we would not be able to continue for long. There have been a few lean times, but many generous readers have supplied our needs when funds got low. We are grateful!

Speaking Of Dad . . .

By AL DIESTELKAMP

I'm frequently asked, "How's your dad?" I thought it might be well to write a short reply in this paper.

When I ask dad how he is, he often says, "fair." He doesn't like to complain, and yet he usually can't honestly say, "just fine." One of his favorite explanations is, "I'm not sick; I'm just not well."

It's hard to write this, knowing that he'll read it, but the past year has been somewhat of a struggle for him. He has had several spells of vertigo which leave him dizzy and weak for several hours or days. In addition, he has had an aggravating skin condition which causes much discomfort. Other than these two conditions, he seems to be in pretty good health for one who is 82 years old.

Dad does lament not being able to do what he loves so much—preach. It is frustrating for one who has preached so much, for so long, not to be able to develop new lessons. Occasionally he will preach on an appointment basis, but he has even had to cut back on that lately.

He and his wife, Myrtle, live right across the street from the meeting place of the West Side church in Aurora, Illinois. They are there every time the door is open, except on rare occasions due to illness. He is still able to do his second favorite thing—listening to others preach (except when they don't speak loud enough for him to hear—and if that happens, he'll tell you).

Some, who haven't been around as long, also ask about "my mom." Though my mother died many years ago, I'm not offended by the question. I know they're asking about Myrtle. I'm happy to report that she seems to be in even better health than dad. Of course, she's not as old!

THINK

ON THESE THINGS

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