



# THINK ON THESE THINGS

*Philippians 4:8*

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## Coping With Our Mistakes

By **DAVID DIESTELKAMP**

Nobody knew Jim was the one who did it, so he just shrugged and turned away. He didn't get far before there was a hard tap on his shoulder and, in an accusatory tone, someone said, "But I saw you do it!" While still walking away, he mumbled, "It's no big deal," and when someone voiced an insistent, "What?!" he said, "It didn't hurt anyone... everyone does it—in fact you've done it yourself!" Jim managed to avoid them for a while, and he hoped it was over.

Wait, wait, wait. Is that how we handle our mistakes? Do we deny them? Are we skilled at making excuses for what we do wrong? Is it our goal to escape facing problems we have caused and wish they will somehow go away? When we make a mistake—whether spiritual or physical, sin or just a slip-up—we need to stop and notice how we are dealing with it.

### Denial Isn't Resolution

"When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer" (Psa. 32:3-4). It's sleepless nights. It's fear of being discovered. You can't get it out of your head. You feel like something is dying on the inside; your strength is gone, and life has lost a sense of joy, peace, and meaning.

When David tried to keep silent about his sin, when he hid and denied it, his life was eaten up by it—spiritually, emotionally, and physically. To make matters worse, living a lie sears the conscience (1 Tim 4:2). Hearts are dulled, and spiritual ears and eyes aren't

open to pure truth anymore (Matt. 13:15). Self-justification leads us to "call evil good, and good evil... put darkness for light, and light for darkness... bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20). But the truth is still there. Denial, lies, and rewriting doesn't change or resolve anything.

### Excuses Aren't Resolution

"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate"... "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12-13). Beginning with the very first sin, the art of excuse making was born. So which excuse will we use today: bad crowd, bad parents or childhood, public school, stress, illness, weakness, "It didn't turn out as planned," "I can't help it," "I was made this way," "Everyone does it," "It didn't hurt anyone," "I have stronger desires than others," "You don't understand my life..."?

"Abraham is our father" was a popular first century Jewish conscience salve (Jn. 8:33-41). But explanations and exceptions and excuses don't change the past—they don't make a mistake into something right, and they don't make sin into righteousness.

### Escape Isn't Resolution

"But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jon. 1:3). We don't like to be around problems. So we avoid people we have offended and hurt. And we don't feel like being around people who are peacemakers—people who show us our problems and urge us to resolve them. We scoff at Jonah—fleeing from the presence of the Lord! But how often have we run and hid from dealing with mistakes and sin?

I asked a friend why people kept using drugs and alcohol when it clearly often didn't make them feel good and exacerbated their problems. She said it was because it dulled what they didn't want to feel and made it so they didn't have to face life. There is a sense in which the book of Ecclesiastes is one man's attempt to escape life (and death). But distraction, pleasure, burying one's self in work, and numbing one's senses are all empty. In the end, nothing has been resolved. The problems, mistakes, and sins are still there.

### Repentance, Admission, and Forgiveness Are Resolution

Remember David who was being consumed by the guilt of his sin in Psalm 32? Now see how it was resolved: "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. 32:5). It's not about pride, what others think, always being right, or defending one's self. Those things fuel denial, excuses, and escape.

We need to be people who resolve our mistakes. When we're wrong, whether it is sin or not, we accept it, admit it, and apologize. As sons of God, we are peacemakers (Matt. 5:9) who want to quickly agree with our adversaries (Matt. 5:25). And we crave forgiveness more than having a false veneer of perfection. So we admit our faults to others (Jas. 5:16). We confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9). We say that we're sorry and ask to be forgiven, without denial, excusing, or hiding. This is how things are really resolved with one another and with God.

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# The Failure of Fatherlessness

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

**M**any people consider their family relationships to be the most important relationships they have in life. It is in the context of family that we typically feel the most comfortable and the most loved. So, what comes to your mind when you think of your *father*? Is it positive or negative? Do you think selfless or selfish? Do you think provider or neglecter? Do you think protector or abuser? Do you think leader or follower? Do you think of respect or disrespect? Do you think trainer or taunter? Do you think tender or tyrannical?

Whether or not you have a good association with and appreciation for the role of fathers likely has much to do with your personal experience with your own father. From a purely biological perspective each of us has had a father, and we would not exist without them; but most would agree that there is much more to good fathering than simply fertilizing an egg.

Fatherhood is being diminished in our culture, and this is the fault of fathers failing to be what God has called them to be, to lead as God has called them to lead, to teach what God has called them to teach, and to love as God has called them to love. The resulting damage of these failures is incalculable, but it is ultimately manifested in a culture that rejects God as its Father and rebels against His Word to its own hurt spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically.

Fathers, we are our children's first impression of Father God. We need to take this seriously. If we do not, then our children's view of God is going to be warped. Fathers are explicitly given the responsibility to train their children in God's ways (Eph. 6:4), and this would have to include modeling God in our leadership, discipline,

love, and grace. To fail to do this is to fail our children and to provoke them to wrath. What does that mean? What does that look like? Fatherless homes produce 63% of youth suicides, 70% of all inmates, 71% of all high school dropouts, 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers, 85% of all children who show behavior disorders, and 90% of all homeless and run-away children.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, we are being told by some modern social engineers that the role of fathers is unimportant. As our world grapples with questions about marriage and gender roles, many—in an effort to affirm and make people feel good about their personal inclinations and choices—are failing to consider the impact that such selfish choices will have on future generations. Children's needs are not being reasonably and adequately considered.

Certainly, there are too many who can point to abusive men who have been poor husbands and fathers; but those individual experiences are no warrant for re-engineering the family and removing fathers from a role that is more essential than many are willing to admit. The conscious decision of many men and women to have sexual relationships outside the commitment of marriage (fornication—Heb. 13:4) dishonors marriage and the intimacy that God intended only for that permanent relationship (Gen. 2:18-25) and also naturally conceives children who, through no fault of their own, are born into uncommitted and insecure relationships. Culturally, we have come to believe that this is no "big deal." Yet, even if the divine intent for human reproduction is unwisely and carelessly discarded as antiquated, the social consequences ought to arrest our attention.

For decades we have observed an increase in what used to be called juvenile

delinquency. This has happened in conjunction with a general lowering of standards in all areas, including the redefinition of marriage and family. Any right-thinking person wants to find solutions to these increasing social ills; but, unfortunately, most are trying to fix moral problems without a moral standard. Social efforts to do this through a civil government that has rejected any use of biblical standards as unconstitutional has only exacerbated the problems.

We reap what we sow. This is a scientifically sound principle (Law of Biogenesis) which has a spiritual counterpart (Gal. 6:7,8) given by God, the Creator of nature and Author of Scripture. If we sow radishes, we cannot expect to reap corn. If we sow to the flesh, we cannot expect to reap spiritual fruit. If we disregard God's standards and redefine His terms in an attempt to validate our desires, we should not be surprised when we get bad results.

In an article entitled "Family fragmentation: Can Anything Be Done?"<sup>2</sup> syndicated columnist Michael Barone observed and bemoaned the problems of fatherlessness from a purely secular perspective and concluded, "Few Americans want to stigmatize single parents. But should we be afraid to tell people there's a better way?" No, we should not be afraid. Yet, in the name of love (redefined), we have labeled ideals, standards, and moral judgments as hate speech when, in fact, these things are *exactly* what is needed to correct the awful trend toward social chaos. Simply put in biblical terminology, we need to repent! Fathers need to repent of their abuse, failures through neglect, and abandonment. If fathers don't repent and change, then not only will our social problems multiply, but we'll be damned (cf. Matt. 3:7-12)

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics gleaned from various sources: <https://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics>  
[http://fatherhood.about.com/od/fathersrights/a/fatherless\\_children.htm](http://fatherhood.about.com/od/fathersrights/a/fatherless_children.htm)

<sup>2</sup><http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/family-fragmentation-can-anything-be-done/article/2557756>

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## WHAT AMERICANS DO WITH THE FREEDOMS GOD GAVE US

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

*We have...*  
**FREEDOM FROM WANT**, but we have used it to indulge in materialism and every desire of the flesh.

*We have...*  
**FREEDOM OF SPEECH**, but we have used it to tell foul stories, slander, and freely take God's name in vain.

*We have...*  
**FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**, but we have used it to glorify evil lifestyles and crimes.

*We have...*  
**FREEDOM OF WORSHIP**, but we have used it as freedom from worship, letting other matters take precedence.

# TAKE HEED TO YOURSELF

By AL DIESTELKAMP

If you've ever flown on a commercial airline you've witnessed a flight attendant giving safety instructions "in case of an emergency." First-time flyers may give undivided attention to the routine while experienced flyers busy themselves with their electronic devices or other distractions. The memorized instructions have become so ignored that some flight attendants have turned the memorized instructions into a comedy routine which delights even the most frequent flyers and distracts the nervous ones from the seriousness of the information.

I recently attended a half-day seminar designed for caregivers of loved ones who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and dementia. Before discussing how to deal with the common physical and cognitive issues of the patients, the doctor projected onto a screen a picture of a flight attendant going through the safety routine. He specifically drew our attention to the instructions given in the event of the loss of cabin pressure which causes oxygen masks to drop from above. If traveling with a small child or other person unable to administer the oxygen without help, one is instructed to put on his own mask before aiding a dependent one. This instruction goes against what one would do by instinct but is necessary because one must be able to breathe in order to help the helpless. The doctor's point to the caregivers was to take care of yourself (physically and emotionally) so that you can provide the care needed for the loved one.

There's also a lesson in this regarding our spiritual health. I immediately thought of the apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy to "Take heed to yourself and to doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16). A few verses earlier, Paul had urged Timothy to make sure he was able to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (v.12). Timothy would be able to help his brethren to conduct themselves in righteousness only if his own life was in order.

The true Christian is to "look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). In order to do this, he must first put his own life in order. I am not suggesting one must have attained sinless perfection before teaching others, but he must at least be self-controlled and submissive to the Lord and willing to repent when confronted with his sin.

Besides the previously mentioned admonitions which Paul gave to Timothy, the



notice James issues to teachers that they will "receive a stricter judgment" (Jas. 3:1) is followed by some "take heed" warnings about the need to control an unruly tongue. Also, the Hebrew writer's lament that some, by reason of time, "ought to be teachers" but instead needed to be taught the very first principles (Heb. 5:12) proves that teachers need to "take heed to themselves" in preparation to effectively teach others.

Elders are told to "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." (Ac. 20:28). While there is no fault in placing emphasis on evangelism, the shepherds' primary role is to "shepherd the flock of

God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2). The kingdom of Christ is not advanced by evangelism unless the existing flock is protected, fed, and maintained. This requires discipline and gospel preaching and teaching that includes refutation of false doctrines (even when advanced by sincere, morally upright, but mistaken religious people). The apostle John wrote, "Look to yourselves" as he warned about someone coming among them who "transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ" and commands "do not receive him" (see 2 Jn. 7-11).

The apostle Peter tells wives who want their unbelieving husbands to become obedient to the Lord to be submissive and display "chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (1 Pet. 3:1-4). In other words, he is essentially telling them to first "take heed to themselves," and it will be noticed.

Fathers who want to bring up their children "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4) will succeed only if they will first "take heed to themselves" and be the spiritual leaders and examples in the home. Fathers who become "busy" with other activities which take priority over their children are guilty of spiritual child neglect. This includes preachers. It is good for preachers to be able to hold gospel meetings, attend lectureships, and be involved in other spiritual works, but those who over-book themselves for such activities, taking them away from home too much, need to learn to turn down some requests and opportunities. To do otherwise is like a parent on the plane affixing his oxygen mask on his face first and then proceeding to help other passengers while leaving his own child to die.

"HE CONDEMNED THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH TO DESTRUCTION BY  
REDUCING THEM TO ASHES,  
HAVING MADE THEM AN EXAMPLE TO THOSE WHO WOULD LIVE UNGODLY THEREAFTER."  
(2 PETER 2:6 - NASV)



ANOTHER CASE OF THOSE "BEING DEAD, YET SPEAK"!

Karl Diestelkamp



# Are You Beautiful?



By RICK LIGGIN

**M**odesty aside, do you think you're attractive? Do you think you're beautiful, if you're a woman, or handsome, if you're a man? Are you concerned about being beautiful, staying beautiful, and being around beautiful (handsome) people? No one wants to be ugly. All of us, to some degree, want to be beautiful or handsome...or, at least, attractive. But how do you determine who is or who is not beautiful? How do you define beauty and attractiveness? For many people, especially men, attractiveness and beauty are judged only by what a person looks like, by his or her outward appearance.

This was Samson's problem! You will remember that most of the stories about him involve a woman: first, his Philistine wife (Judg. 14:1-20); then a prostitute (16:1-3); and finally, Delilah (16:4-21). And how was it that Samson chose his women? It was by what she "looked" like to him! That is certainly how he picked his wife. He saw this Philistine woman in Timnah, and he wanted her; so he said to his father, Manoah, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me" (14:1-3; 14:7 - NASB).

Are we as shallow as Samson was in how we "judge" beauty today? Does "beauty" depend on what a person "looks like" to us? Are we too *physically* oriented when it comes to how we define "beauty"? Let me ask you: what is "attractive" to you? On what basis do you decide who is "beautiful"?

Well, let's talk about this from God's perspective for just a minute. How does God define beauty? What's attractive to Him? One thing is for sure: God does *not* see as man sees! When He looks for beauty, He doesn't look so much on the outward man. God looks at the person's heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). Physical strength and physical beauty are not what God considers attractive. "He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His loving-kindness" (Psa. 147:10-11). "The LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted one with salvation" (149:4). God can make hundreds of strong horses or human legs; He can make strong and beautiful human bodies. And so to see strong legs run—legs that He has made, and made to run—this does not "delight" the Lord.

What the Lord "favors" is those who fear Him and patiently wait in faith for His loving-kindness (cf. 147:11). You see,

a respectful, patient, and trusting heart is one thing that our God simply does not make. Such a heart is something that a man *voluntarily chooses* to give back to God... and this is what "delights" the Lord! And with God, you don't have to fret about whether or not you're physically beautiful or attractive enough, because what is not physically beautiful (the afflicted), God will "beautify...with salvation" (149:4). And the salvation that the Lord gives to a person who turns in faith to Him makes that person beautiful to God. So understand, God does not define "beauty" like we do! He looks, not at the outward, but at the inside...at the "hidden man of the heart" (cf. 1 Pet. 3:4).

Now please consider that since this is how God judges beauty—not looking at the outer man but at the heart—shouldn't we judge beauty the same way? In the book of Proverbs, there is a section where a father and mother are strongly urging their son to avoid the adulteress woman (Prov. 6:20-25). The son is specifically told: "Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids" (6:25). There is a "beauty" that must *not* attract us. It is the outward, the physical, the flesh! Instead, we must look for the inner beauty. We must teach our children (especially our sons) not to be attracted primarily by outward beauty. We must look more inwardly at what the inner man looks like before we decide if she really is attractive. One who is physically attractive on the outside but ugly on the inside is just plain ugly! She is *not* beautiful!

I am afraid that we simply have not taught our children enough about what makes one beautiful. We live in a society that emphasizes and is obsessed with outer

physical beauty! And we get caught up in it, too! We need to help our children to look at—and for—the inner beauty of a person. And we need to set the example for them by doing the same ourselves.

Do we delight in the physical...the outward? Or, like God, do we delight in the inner spiritual beauty of a person? Do you see and appreciate the beauty of saved men faithfully serving God, regardless of what the outside looks like? For ourselves and for our children, we need to develop and look for the inner beauty, the attractiveness that comes out of a person's heart! So, once again, are you beautiful? Well, I guess that all depends on how you define beauty!

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# THINK

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