

Living Like a Christian By Thinking Rightly About Ourselves

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[0 : 00] What is your normal way of stating your beliefs or opinions about most things? Would you say that the way you express yourself is, I feel such and such a way, or I think such and such a way?

In today's postmodern culture, we are encouraged not to think seriously. Instead, we are encouraged to just feel deeply.

Now, the problem is not that it's wrong to have strong feelings. Nothing wrong with feeling deeply about people and things in your life.

What gets us into trouble, though, is when we fail to think seriously about truth, about facts, about reality.

When we allow fuzzy, momentary feelings to have priority over clear, big-picture thinking, we're setting ourselves up for disaster in many areas of life.

[1 : 18] Let's take finances, for example. All across this country, all the research shows that many, many people are struggling to survive financially because they are in over their head in debt.

And many people got that way because they did not think factually. They didn't think realistically about their financial situation before they bought the house or car or gadgets or other stuff.

That once it was done, they realized, I couldn't afford that. What got them into trouble was their failure to think about the reality of what my income is, what my necessary expenses are, what I have in savings, what I'm obligated for.

What they did, instead of doing that, they made an emotional decision to buy what they wanted because at the time, it just felt so right.

The Apostle Paul understood the importance of thinking rightly. And he stressed it as he began Romans chapter 12 as something required of every Christian who's serious about having a right relationship with God and living in a right relationship with other people.

[2 : 55] Turn with me, if you would, to Romans chapter 12, verses 3 through 5 today. 3 through 8 is the block. We're just going to have time, though, to go through 3 through 5.

6 through 8, we'll come to another time. Let's read it. Last week, we were in verse 2 of chapter 12. And just note for a moment.

He said, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. It matters what we think. Now, he goes into...

He strongly emphasizes how we think in the next verse. Let's go ahead and start. Verse 3 for today. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

[4 : 09] Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them, if prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, maybe talking about encouraging, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

Before we look at the specifics of this passage, I want you to note how Paul strongly emphasizes the importance of us thinking rightly.

Look at the phrase in verse 3, just the part that says, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.

Now you just look at that, and the word think is emphasized three times. It's obvious that he is really focusing on that. It was even more in the original Greek that he wrote, according to commentator

Colin Cruz.

He points out how Paul is just going all out to stress the word think. Look at what he says. Paul engages in a play on words here by employing the verb to think in its varied forms.

[5 : 36] Translated literally, it reads, do not think more highly than what is necessary to think, but think in order to think soberly. Can he be any clearer?

Thinking correctly is essential for living in every area of life. If we're going to be the people that God's created and called us and worked in us to be, at work, at home, at school, in sports, whatever you do, we've got to be people who think.

We've got to be people who think consistently, seriously, realistically. That's what he's telling us. Now, I want us to look at the specifics of how we can live like a Christian by thinking rightly about ourselves.

First of all, think objectively about yourself. That's really what he's saying here in verse three. Think objectively or realistically.

He's saying do it about two things. First, don't think too highly of yourself. Look at the phrase, for by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, I want you to note the change in the tone as Paul addresses the matter of how we think about ourselves.

[6 : 59] Two weeks ago, we saw in verse one, he made sort of what you'd call a brotherly request of these Christians in Rome. Look at it in verse one.

He said, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God. In that, as he began chapter 12, Paul, as a brother in Christ to his brothers and sisters, he makes an appeal.

He makes, he is trying to sort of, what you might say, gently persuade them based on positive motivation, how God has just shown his mercy in various forms to us.

That's why I'm asking you to make the commitment of your life to him. Well, here in verse three, that changes. Paul is using a more authoritative tone here.

Look at it again. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you. By the grace given to me, that's how Paul in other places refers to his calling as an apostle.

[8 : 04] And his calling as an apostle is what gave him the authority to write these letters, to start churches, to put people in office, to demand that the church exercise discipline at times.

And so what Paul is doing here, he is issuing a command or a warning to everyone among you. What he's saying here, he wants everybody to understand. This is not a kind appeal. I am warning you seriously.

I am commanding you about this. And what he's saying here, obviously, everyone among you, this applies to all Christians of all times.

There are no exceptions. Here's what he's talking about. The problem he's warning us about is pride. Pride. Look at what he says.

[9 : 03] I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Evidently, there were some members of that church who had an inflated opinion of themselves.

Now, can you imagine that? People in church thinking too highly of themselves. There's times when we all do, don't we?

There's times that we all battle pride. Well, it's a serious thing and Paul is very serious about it. One reason, pride will destroy our fellowship with God quicker than anything.

That's why both James and Peter, in their letters, they make this same statement. Look at it. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

You know, there's some people in life that they're against you, they're opposed to you, but you don't care. There's some people that are opposed to you because, and you don't care because they have no power over you.

[10 : 10] They have no authority. You just don't care what they might say or think or do because they can do nothing to you. They have no influence over you or anything about your life.

But for God to oppose us, that ought to make us sit up and take notice. God resists or God opposes the proud.

That means you and me if we're arrogant. We're not in fellowship with God. We're not close to Him if we think too highly of ourselves.

Let's think about with people. Isn't it hard to have real, meaningful fellowship with someone who is just full of themselves, just very prideful?

It's almost impossible because they're just focused on themselves. You can't have close, sharing life together kind of of a relationship with someone if all they're concerned about is themselves. [11 : 22] They cannot invest in you because they're fully invested in themselves. They don't really care what's going on in your life. They don't want to listen to what's going on in your life. because they're only concerned about themselves and they won't let you know that.

They won't let you know who they are, what they have, what they've done. Everything's all about them. They can't have real relationships. They certainly can't have good, healthy relationships because that requires give and take.

And they just want to take it. They just want it all for themselves because life's about me. Now in this passage, Paul is probably addressing a specific form of pride, thinking too highly of ourselves because of our position in the church or because of our particular gift or talent.

So he's talking to, he's emphasizing the church here. He's emphasizing we've got gifts. We're to work together as we'll look at in a moment. Now, we need to understand that no one should ever think of themselves as being indispensable to the well-being of their church.

No matter who you are, no matter what you do, you, me, we can be replaced.

[12 : 46] The fact is, if any one of us dies this week, Pickens First Baptist Church will meet next Sunday. No service will be canceled.

It won't even be abbreviated. And I think to myself, if I'm the one that drops dead this week, there'll be probably somebody that does a much better job preaching and in a couple of weeks people will be saying, Fred who?

That's the way it works. That's the way it is at your job. That company's not going to close down if you don't show up tomorrow. That's the way it is on your team.

Next man up. You get hurt, you quit, next man up. Next man up. Paul wants us to understand, do not, do not think more highly of yourself because you've got a certain position, you've got a certain talent, you've got a certain gift, you do this or you do that.

That's just pride. There's no place for that in our church family he's saying. Now, if we'll think objectively about ourselves, we will not have a problem of thinking too highly.

[14 : 07] But at the same time now, if we think objectively about ourselves, we shouldn't think we're nothing. We shouldn't think we have nothing to bring to the table.

Let's look at the second thing. Think realistically about yourself. Think objectively about yourself but also think realistically. Look at the phrase. Think with sober judgment.

That means think sensibly. Think accurately. Think realistically about yourself. And there's some value there. You're created in the image of God.

If you're a Christian, you think Jesus Christ gave His life so that I could be forgiven and made a child of God.

If you're a child of God, He's put His Spirit in you. If you're a Christian, you have gifts that God has given you for the purpose of serving Him and other people in this church.

[15 : 07] R.C. Sproul points out the importance of this kind of thinking. Look at what he says. Paul is saying that just as we are not to think too highly of ourselves, neither are we to despise our God-given value.

The opposite of not being arrogant about your abilities is not that you deny that you have any talents or gifts or abilities. God wants us to acknowledge what He's given us.

If you're a Christian, you've been given certain spiritual gifts. You have certain natural talents. You have certain abilities. You've been given special opportunities. Everybody hasn't been given, each of us individually.

So we need to acknowledge that, not be shy about using that. New Testament scholar Leon Morris points this out, the importance.

Look at it. Being sober-minded means recognizing that God has given us and being zealous in its use as well as humble. Recognizing what God has given us and being zealous in its use as well as humble.

[16 : 15] it is very important for you to do a self-evaluation. To recognize what God has done for you. How He's gifted you. How He has equipped you to serve Him in this body.

Pickens First Baptist. And then use what He's given you for His glory and people's good. It's important also that you recognize in the broader scale, broader scheme of things.

You need to use all the talents and abilities that God has given you in every area of your life. You know, you need to think in terms of how God has made me, equipped me, put me in certain situations, given me opportunities, and then you need to make the best of those opportunities. You need to excel in who you are and what you do. That is not arrogance. That's being a good steward.

Just make sure that you never forget that who you are and what you have and even your opportunities, those are all things that God has given you. I want you to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7.

[17 : 31] Paul makes a statement. He's asking, he's making the statement in the form of rhetorical questions that should just remind us everything that we have comes from God so there's no place for pride in our lives.

Look at it. For who makes you different from anybody else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? use what God has given you? But always give Him the glory. Always acknowledge and thank Him. Use what He's given you humbly to serve Him and serve other people. Paul says something else about thinking soberly at the end of verse 3.

Look at it. He says, we are to think with sober judgment each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. In the context of what's being said here, especially about the spiritual gifts in verses 6 through 8, Paul's using this word faith to describe our ability to understand and use the gifts that He's given us.

[18 : 41] He's not talking about saving faith here. He's talking about our ability to understand and use the gifts that God gives us. And such faith would also involve trusting God to use us to be a blessing to other people, to help other people.

Let's think about the big picture here. No one should ever think of themselves as the most important member of this church. That would be thinking way too highly of yourself.

But at the same time, no one should ever think of themselves as the least important member of this church. Each of us needs to think of ourselves as vital members of this church family if we're members here with God-given gifts and talents that God has put us in the church so that we could use those in a way that would help Pickens First Baptist be the well church that we've identified as our purpose.

The worshiping, evangelizing, learning and loving family of faith that God's called us to be. And so what we need to think here for a moment now is are you using your gifts?

We can't look at any one person and say you're the most important member of the church. But at the same time we can't look at any one and say you don't matter. We all matter. And we've been put together if we're Christians, members of this church, we've been put together by God sovereignly with the gifts and talents and abilities that we have to do what He wants us to do.

[20 : 25] That requires us all to take that responsibility seriously and be involved in some kind of ministry, some kind of service. Are you?

You are helping determine how strong our church is by the way you use your gifts and talents and abilities in the life of our church.

By your involvement doing what God's equipped you to do, whatever it is, you're contributing to the health of the church. By your not being involved, you're contributing to the sickness or ineffectiveness of the church.

That's a fact. That's what the passage is talking about. Think about this. Act on this. This is leading to the next point. We need to think biblically about your place in the body of Christ.

We need to think biblically about our place in the body of Christ. Look at verses 4 and 5. Paul explains that the church is one spiritual body, the body of Christ.

[21 : 33] Notice how he describes it in verse 4. I will look at one phrase. As in one body, we have many members. We have many body parts. One body.

Many body parts. So we, though many, are one body in Christ. His point is that all of us together, we form one spiritual body, the body of Christ.

All of us together, we form one spiritual family, the family of God. This is an emphasis on the unity of the church. It is our responsibility to look at us.

On one hand, we're one body. We're one family. And we matter as a family. We need to do all that we can to promote family, harmony, and unity and do whatever it takes to prevent division.

Divisiveness is something that God condemns very strongly in the New Testament. I want you to look at some examples. Later on in Romans chapter 16, look at what he writes. I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you've been taught.

[22 : 56] Avoid them, for such persons do not serve our Lord Christ. Another statement Paul writes to Titus and says, as for a person who stirs up dissension, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.

You know that one of the last things that Jesus prayed for all his disciples and future disciples that actually says in John chapter 17, one of the last things Jesus prayed for is that we would be united. That God's children would be united. Look at what he says. Jesus prayed that they may all be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Unity in the church is a sign that we really are God's people, that Christ really is our Lord. So it's vitally important that we work to build unity, maintain unity, and do whatever it takes to avoid division.

Now Paul also explains that the church is made up of different body parts and our different body parts are to function differently. Note how he makes this point.

[24 : 14] Also in verse 4, the members, the body parts, do not all have the same function. Verse 6, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

Now Paul illustrates this in great detail in 1 Corinthians 12 by comparing the church to a human body and each member of the church is like a part of the human body.

The point is each member of the church is important to the body, the church body. Just like your hands, your feet, your eyes, your ears, they're all an important part of your human body.

We need to recognize the value of one another. And we're very different. Different is good in this way. He's talking about diversity in the church, diversity in the midst of unity.

We need to recognize people who are just different, maybe they have a different background. They have a different way of looking at things. But the real focus is on they have different talents and gifts and abilities that they bring to the table.

[25 : 31] Now, sometimes there could be a tendency to be jealous of someone who gets up and teaches or someone who gets up in front of everybody and sings or is serving in some kind of real visible way.

We've got to guard against that. We need to think in terms of that's their gift, that's their talent, that's how God's using them and be all for them.

thankful for them. Take advantage of their gift for our own benefit. Likewise, no one should ever think of their gift of serving quietly behind the scenes as being of lesser importance than those whose ministry is public.

There's a lot of people on Sunday and throughout the week who serve for the well-being of our church in ways that very few people know about and even fewer notice.

But if they didn't do what they did we would all notice. It all matters. Think about it this way. My heart is working right now but you don't see it.

[26 : 50] You see my hands, you see my body, you hear what's coming out of my mouth. Well if my heart wasn't working behind the scenes nothing else would happen with it.

It's all important. What you see, the ones you see and the ones you don't see. What is important is that we understand how God's made us, how God's equipped us and we be who we are and be faithful in our responsibilities.

One other thing needs to be stressed here. That is don't expect everyone to do the same thing that you do. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes people think, well this is where I'm just, I'm involved, I'm passionate, I love it, why doesn't everybody else?

One reason is they don't have the heart that you have for it. They don't have the gift or the talent. They don't just see it the way that you see it. So don't expect people who don't have your gift, who do not have your maybe heart passion for it, to be excited in joining you as you do what you do. You know, we don't really expect everyone to sing or teach. Why should we expect everyone to do any other spiritual gift?

[28 : 20] any other or use any other talent like everybody else? Thinking about our spiritual gifts is what Paul is going to address next in the last three verses.

We're not going to look at that today but as a part of the unity, here's the point. We need to think responsibly about our spiritual gifts. Verses 6 through 8. We'll look at that at another time. What I want us to see is we'll wrap this up this morning.

God has given us this passage to emphasize we need to think. Christians need to be thinking people. Specifically, he calls us to think rightly about ourselves, who we are in this church, who we are before God, how God's made us.

We need to think about ourselves and we need to think rightly about our church. church. Now, as God has spoken through his word and through his spirit, I do believe that he makes known to us how we should respond to his teaching.

But here's what I want you to understand. God is not calling us to respond to what he's saying based on how we feel. He is calling us to respond based on thinking rightly about ourselves, about our church, in light of the clear teaching of his word.

[29 : 57] Now, I want you to listen to the Lord, think seriously about what he's saying about you.

about your pride, about your gifts, about your involvement in ministry in the life of this church. Think about our church and how we exist to serve God through the worship, evangelism, learning, and loving of our purpose statement, which comes from Acts 2, 42-47.

How are you involved in that? Listen to the Lord, think, and then obey him in your response. Let's pray together.

Dear God, help us now to understand what we need to do in order to leave here today thinking rightly about ourselves, about your church, our fellowship here called Pickens First Baptist, and our own spiritual gifts, and how and where we should use them.

Lord, if there's anyone in this room who is not a Christian, help them to understand that the first need they have is to confess and turn from, repent of their sin, put their trust, their confidence in Jesus, that when he died on the cross, he actually took their punishment, paid the penalty for their sins.

[31 : 37] Help them right now, dear God, to trust Jesus and call upon him to save them. In an attitude of prayer, you listen to the Lord, you respond to him.

And I'll be here at the front and be happy to pray with you if you'd like to during this time. for more. because of providing forgiveness or for