

"Thinking" Biblically

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Preacher: Fred Stone

[0 : 00] You know, the overwhelming majority of us in this room have some knowledge of the Bible. Think about it.

Most of us had parents, grandparents, or someone who took us to church and probably either read us the Bible or Bible stories.

Most of us in this room have had several pastors and teachers in probably several different churches over our lifetimes who taught us the Bible, who went to great lengths to try to help us to understand and apply the teaching of God's Word.

Now, I know that there are some in this room, you didn't grow up in church. No one ever took you or taught you, but God worked through your circumstances or certain people outside your family to bring you under the influence of God's Word.

I say that because most likely you wouldn't be here right now if you didn't have some interest in learning from the Bible. Now, given that we've all been exposed to at least some biblical teaching, would you describe yourself as someone who thinks biblically?

[1 : 34] I want to make a clarification. The last two weeks, I asked a similar question, but the emphasis was on thinking. Do you think about what's true and right and lovely and these kind of things that we looked at from Philippians 4.8?

I even asked, do you think? Because everybody doesn't think. But the focus today is on the second word. Do you think biblically?

Do you look at life, put it this way, through the lens of Scripture? Do you look at what's going on around you?

What's happening in your life? What's happening in our country? Do you think about the issues of today? Things about what's right and wrong? What's true and false?

What's helpful or hurtful? Do you think about it in light of what you know the Bible teaches? Now, if we are Christians, we should answer that question with a very strong yes.

[2 : 47] But do we? Let's be honest. We don't always think, period. But we don't always think biblically, do we?

We don't always look at the situations, the people in our lives, the circumstances, in light of what we know the Bible teaches.

A lot of times we look at things according to how it affects me, according to how I feel, or according to how it affects my children or my grandchildren, or somebody we care about.

I want you to think, when you don't think biblically, is it because you don't understand what the Bible is, the actual Word of God?

Or, would you say that there are times you don't think biblically because you don't care?

[3 : 58] Even if it is the Word of God, you're going to do what you want to do. You're going to do what will most help you, regardless if it's right or wrong, true or false, helpful or hurtful to other people.

Well, today's message is designed to teach us why we need to think biblically by showing us that the Bible is the most unique, powerful, and life-changing book that has ever been written.

And I think Paul clearly and concisely explains that in 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, a scripture that I hope is familiar to most people in this room.

Look at it on the screen. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

This verse is going to help us understand why we need to think biblically, why we need to look at the Bible as the filter through which we look at everything and help us make all our decisions.

[5 : 17] Let's look first. The Bible is God's authoritative word. And here's why we should think that. Paul explains clearly what the Bible is.

It's authority. It's source. It's origin. Look at this. All scripture is breathed out by God. That's the English Standard Version. All scripture is God-breathed, NIV.

All scripture is inspired by God. New American Standard. The word inspired literally means God-breathed. Paul is telling us that all scripture originates with God.

Every book. When we talk about the Bible, we're talking about 66 different books. All kinds of books. And Paul says all scripture originated with God.

He's talking about every book, every chapter, every verse, every word of scripture. Now what this means is every time you open the Bible and read whatever passage, whether it's poetry in the Psalms, whether it's a long story about the life of Abraham or Joseph or David in the Old Testament, or whether it's Paul's specific teaching about how we should think that we looked at the last two weeks.

[6 : 41] Every time you open the Bible, whatever the passage, you are reading the word of God.

The God-breathed word. Now Paul's not alone in this very high view of the authority of scripture.

Peter fully understood that scripture was the authoritative word of God, and he explains it like this.

He says, Peter is actually being more precise in telling us that the writers of scripture wrote as they were directed by, influenced by, the Holy Spirit.

Jerry Bridges, I think, does a good job of explaining what that means, how that came about. Bridges says, what Peter is telling us is that the Holy Spirit so moved upon and influenced the minds of these men as to render them the instruments of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will to us.

This means that within the framework of each man's vocabulary and writing style, the Holy Spirit guided them that they chose exactly the words, not just the thoughts, that he intended them to use.

[8 : 08] We need to understand that God didn't dictate his word to these people. They were not in some kind of spiritually ecstatic state, in some kind of fog.

They didn't know what they were doing. God providentially, throughout their lives, prepared each Bible writer with the life experience, the vocabulary, the ability to speak or write what he wanted, spoken and written down.

Each man that God used to write the scripture, they were writing fully aware that God was working in them, but they didn't write about things they didn't know about.

They didn't use words that were not a part of their vocabulary. It was not something artificial. God worked in them in a supernatural way to cause them to think what he wanted written the way he wanted it written.

And so what we have is actually his word, his written word. Now when Paul and Peter penned these words, they were referring to the Old Testament. The New Testament, when Paul and Peter were writing, it was still in the process of being written.

[9 : 37] Some of their letters, some of the gospels were already written. Some of them were bound together and were circulating among churches. But the New Testament writers, they knew what they were doing.

They knew what they were writing. They understood that they were writing the authoritative word of God. I'm going to give you some examples. Peter referred to Paul's writings as scripture, which would be Paul's letters.

Look at this. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures.

Peter considered the writings of Paul. These letters like Philipians. This letter to Timothy, this second letter to Timothy.

[10 : 42] Peter considered what Paul was writing to be scripture. And what he's pointing out here, there are false teachers that just as they twisted the real meaning of the Old Testament scriptures to make it say what they wanted to say, they did the same thing in the New Testament, such as Paul's scriptures.

Now, Paul quoted the words of Jesus that are actually recorded in Luke chapter 10 and verse 7, and he calls them scripture. I want you to look at this.

Paul writes, this is in 1 Timothy 5, for the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. He's quoting from Deuteronomy 24.

And the laborer deserves his wages. That comes from Luke chapter 10 and verse 7. So as Paul was writing that, he quoted scripture from what we would say, the Old Testament and the New, both the Word of God.

Paul understood that he was writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that he was writing the Word of God as well. Look at two examples from 1 Corinthians. The things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.

[12:05] And then in 1 Thessalonians 2. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the Word of men, but as what it really is, the Word of God.

Paul understood that God was working in him, inspiring him to speak His Word as he taught the various churches where he went and preached and started churches.

And as it was written down, it became the written Word of God. One other thought along this line.

Jesus prepared His apostles for the task of writing Scripture by telling them that the Holy Spirit would enable them to accurately remember and record what He taught.

It's in John chapter 14 and then chapter 16. The night that Jesus was arrested, the next day He was going to be crucified. John 13, 14, 15, 16, what some people refer to as His farewell discourse. He covered a lot of subjects. But one of the things He covered was He told those guys later on, the Holy Spirit is going to enable you to remember, to recall, and then to record what needs to be written.

[13:39] Look at it. John 14, 26, but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

And then John 16, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. Now, all of these Scriptures you've seen, all of this to this point, we have every reason to conclude that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.

We in this room, the overwhelming majority of us are professing Christians. We call ourselves children of God. I say all this to say, we as God's children need to have confidence, absolute confidence confidence that when we open the Bible, wherever, this is God's authoritative, binding word.

This is God's truth. It is what's right and wrong, what is true and false. He's telling us how we should believe, how we should live.

Now, do you have that kind of confidence? You open the Bible, this is God speaking. This is God's guidance.

[15:06] That's what we need to have if we're going to ever be able to truly think biblically, look at life through the lens of Scripture. But let's look at the second reason why we've got to think biblically. The Bible is God's profitable word.

God's profitable word. That's how Paul describes the Bible. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable. Some translations use the word useful. Profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Because the Bible is the word of God, because the Bible is God breathed, it is profitable. It is useful. We can use this word.

It is practical for us as Christians. You know, every true child of God loves their Heavenly Father and wants to please Him.

That's something the Holy Spirit does in you and in me when He comes to live within us. When God saves us, I mention this frequently.

[16:12] When God saves us, He puts His Spirit in us. It's the Holy Spirit who gives us new desires, a new outlook, new loves.

And one of the things the Holy Spirit does, He gives us a real love for God, our Heavenly Father. He makes our relationship with the Father real.

Paul describes this in Romans chapter 8 and in Galatians chapter 4, He describes how the Holy Spirit so works in us to cause us to have a certain kind of affection for God as our Heavenly Father.

And He uses this phrase, the Holy Spirit causes us to think or to say, Abba, Father. A term of affection. Papa, Dad.

That's how we should think of God. And what I'm saying here is, if we are Christians, God is not abstract to us. He's not some supreme being out there somewhere.

[17:18] If we are Christians, we are indwelt by the Spirit of God and God the Father is real to us. We love Him. We have a relationship with Him.

We don't know everything about Him. There's a lot of things we do not understand for sure. We don't always feel as close to God every day as we do some days. But if we're Christians, the Spirit of God lives within us and we care about pleasing God.

And if what I've just said is foreign to you, you don't have a clue what I'm talking about. Take that as the Lord speaking through His Word, Romans 8, Galatians 4.

Take that as God saying, you're not a Christian. I don't know you. If you don't love me, if you don't have this desire to please me, something is terribly wrong.

And it's probably that what you know about me is just theory, just thoughts.

[18:29] It's not a relationship. Paul identifies four ways here in 2 Timothy 3 that the Bible is profitable or useful to us. First, the Bible is profitable for teaching.

This refers to positive teaching. God makes His ways, His will known to us through the pages of Scripture. So if we're serious about wanting to do God's will, please God by doing His will, we'll want to read the Bible.

Discover His ways, His will. Discover what pleases Him and what does not please Him. Such teaching that Paul's talking about is essential for us to be involved in if we want to please God.

If we don't know what God's will, we can't do it. If you don't know what some, if you want to please somebody in your life, think about it. There's somebody that you know, that you love, maybe you're sitting with them right now, and it brings great joy to you, brings a smile to your face to do something that pleases them, that brings a smile to their face.

Well, when you really want to do that because you know them, you know what will please them.

What will please me may not please your son or husband.

[19:53] What would please my wife, Lisa, may not please you. But we know what will please the person we want to please.

And so that's the kind of things that we do. To know how to please God, we've got to know his word. Paul, next one he says, number two, the Bible is profitable for reproof or some translations say rebuking.

This is the negative aspect of teaching. It describes correcting error. Somebody said, the Bible is like a basketball referee that lets the player know when he commits a foul or he steps out of bounds.

The referee upholds the rules of the game. Well, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to convict us of sin.

Sin can be thought as breaking God's rules, stepping out of bounds. So the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to correct us.

[20:58] Let us know when we've done what does not please God. Now, let's apply this. Here's an example of how the Bible is profitable or useful for teaching and rebuking in terms of what we actually believe.

One of the most popular errors being taught in the world today is that all religions are basically the same. The mindset of our culture today is all religions are equally valid.

including including no religion. And to be politically correct today, if you're a Christian, good for you. But you also need to say to the Jew, good for you.

To the Muslim, good for you. To the Buddhist, good for you. The mindset of the world, all religions are basically the same.

They're all equally valid. And so, whatever path you choose, you're going to wind up in the same place. Ultimately, the paths to heaven through Christianity, Judaism, Islam, whatever, they all reach the top where God is.

[22:24] Well, the Bible is very useful in helping us to understand that's wrong. That's heretical teaching.

On one hand, it's foolish teaching. Because the Bible teaches something that's totally different from what Judaism teaches. Judaism teaches something that's totally different from what Buddhists

believe.

You can't believe they all can't be right logically. Even if you're an atheist, you cannot accept that they're all equally true. But, let's go back to the Bible. The Bible teaches there is only one way for any human being to be right with God and that is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus said it this way, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. The apostles heard Jesus say that.

They embraced that as the truth and they said it in Acts 4.12. And there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

[23 : 34] The world says there's many ways to God. The Bible teaches there's only one way.

That's not all the Bible does. The Bible rebukes, reproves, corrects, straightens out anyone who teaches otherwise.

A good example of this is Galatians 1 verses 8 and 9. Paul said, but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one that we preach to you, let him be accursed.

Some translations say eternally condemned. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Paul would not accept this universal belief that everybody's okay as long as you believe something, as long as you're sincere, it's okay.

Years ago, not in this church, I spoke with a man, in fact, I was not his pastor, but I spoke with a man who was a deacon, long-term deacon in a Baptist church, and I don't know how the subject came up, but he told me very clearly he did not think that there's only one way for a person to be right with God.

[24 : 58] It can't be that you have to believe in Jesus to be saved. He made this statement that he believed that many people who sincerely held to their belief system, whatever it was, that they'd be in heaven one day.

Paul would be irate at someone who would say that. Paul would say that's a different gospel, and anybody who would preach a different gospel like that, anybody who would lead somebody astray like that, let them be eternally damned is what he is literally saying.

That's how strongly he believed that you got to correct or you got to rebuke error, and Paul made no, mince no words, did he?

The Bible is profitable or useful in that it teaches us the truth and it rebukes us when we are in error. Number three, the Bible is profitable for correction. Correction means to confront what's wrong and straighten it out. Teach the correct way.

[26 : 14] The Bible gives us practical instruction on how we should live our lives in this world. The Bible gives us practical instruction on how we need to love our wives as husbands, how we need to discipline our children the right kind of way as fathers.

The Bible talks about how we need to try to get along with everybody, Romans 12, as far as it depends on us. The Bible talks about how we need to learn to forgive people, let things go, don't hold grudges.

The Bible is very practical in talking about how we need to be honest in our business dealings, not cheat people. Do what's right, do what's fair.

Number four, the Bible is profitable for training us in righteousness. God doesn't just correct us when we do wrong. God gives us positive instruction on how we can please Him in the kind of things I was just mentioning.

The Bible trains or disciplines us to live in a right relationship with God and other people. You can say it this way, the Bible trains us or disciplines us to live a holy life.

[27 : 41] Now, let's apply this. Let's think of an example of correction and training and righteousness that we find in the Bible. What I'm doing, I didn't intend for this to be a real full-blown series, but it is thinking biblically.

What I'm trying to do is apply the scripture to some practical things that are going on today in our country or just things in this world. I started off by talking about we need to think biblically about governmental authority that first week at the end of June.

And what I was talking about how today law enforcement officers, they've been demonized as a whole profession, but the Bible does not do that.

The Bible talks about law enforcement officers having the God-given responsibility to enforce the laws, to administer justice.

They have a good and honorable place in this world and they should be respected. The bad ones should be weeded out for sure, but the law enforcement profession is an honorable profession with a God-given responsibility.

[28 : 56] The next week I preached on the thinking biblically about racism and it seems in this culture today that the real focus is on not that both black and white people can be prejudiced, but only that white people can be prejudiced.

And there's a great emphasis on that racism is just embedded in our culture, it's systemic, it's upheld by law and in institutions and it is not, as I pointed out in that sermon, we need to look at what's going on in our world today in light of what the Bible teaches.

One of the great errors of today that I've not brought up in quite some time, and I'm going to bring it up today because it needs to be brought up, same-sex marriage has become legal in this country.

The Supreme Court basically, in effect, legalized through law same-sex marriage.

It is not the Supreme Court's place in our Constitution, in our government, to make laws, but to interpret them. But they sometimes get that twisted.

[30 : 16] Same-sex marriage has become legalized by the ruling of the Supreme Court in this country. today's culture willingly accepts homosexual behavior as normal.

It's just another way to live. And today's culture condemns anyone like me, like you if you do, condemns anyone who calls it sinful behavior.

There are many liberal churches and their entire denomination that will ordain a gay man or a gay woman as a pastor in the church.

There are many liberal churches that will affirm same-sex marriages. This is our world today. This is today's culture.

Well, the Bible corrects this erroneous and sinful behavior and teaching by pointing out how God condemns such relationships and such behaviors.

[31 : 24] I'll give you two examples. One from Romans chapter 1. Look at this. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.

And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Now, the next one comes from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. And I want you to note, I want to stress this. Paul mentions people who practice homosexuality as being condemned by God, but it is in a list of many things that are condemned by God.

So let's look at it. He's writing to a church, remember, the Corinthian church. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, that includes people involved in premarital sex, people involved in any kind of sexual relationship with someone other than your husband, if you're a woman, or a wife, if you're a man.

[32 : 53] Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

It's Paul's there. Paul is really just saying here, no one who lives, no one who willingly lives engages in such a sinful lifestyle is a Christian.

Therefore, no one who lives this way openly, unashamedly, they're not a part of the kingdom of God.

Let's move on. Writing to these same church, the very next phrase, and such were some of you, but you've been washed.

You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. Paul is condemning sinful behavior of any stripe that a person willfully, intentionally engages in with no remorse.

[34 : 17] That's just who they are. They're not a Christian if that's who they are. They're not going to be in heaven. But, these very kinds of people engage in these kinds of behaviors, some of these people were saved.

They repented of their sin. They were forgiven. God changed them and enabled them to overcome that sinful lifestyle. God's word condemns sin, but God's word is filled with grace and the offer of salvation and forgiveness to all sinners who will repent of their sin and turn to Jesus Christ in faith and commitment.

I want to pause here and point out, everybody who came out of that lifestyle, those different lifestyle. Let's look at a person who was a drunkard as the scripture says here.

There are men and women who are alcoholics who truly are born again. They repent of their sin. They trust Jesus. They're forgiven. They're cleansed and made right with God. But some of these people fall back into alcohol for a while.

[35 : 42] God is such a demon that they give in to the temptation and they sin again. That does not disqualify them from the kingdom of heaven. If they're truly saved, when they sin like this, sooner or later they're convicted, they're broken, they repent of it, and they come back to the Lord.

That would be true about somebody who is engaging homosexual behavior. Such a person may be saved, forgiven, made right with God, but fall back into that for a time.

But if they're truly Christians, they'll know it's sin, it's wrong, and they'll come back to the Lord in confession and repentance. The Bible corrects wrongness behavior.

And then look at this. The Bible also trains us in righteousness. And so we're on the subject here of homosexuality, same-sex marriage. The Bible trains us in righteousness concerning the subject of, let's just say, marriage.

Heterosexual relationships. Male-female relationships. The Bible teaches us how God created and designed men and women to live together in a proper marriage relationship.

[36 : 51] The beginning, Genesis 2. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. That's the foundation for marriage. That's God's plan for most people.

Some people will be single. If you're not going to live single, this is God's plan to live, if you're a man with a woman in a one flesh, permanent relationship. Jesus emphasized that God intended marriage, Jesus emphasized now, that God intended marriage to be a permanent relationship between a man and woman.

Look at this. And the Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? He answered, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?

So they're no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore? God is joined together. Let not man separate. In the context of Matthew 19 here, Jesus is talking about it is not God's will that a marriage end and divorce.

If you're married and you're having problems, don't give up on your marriage. Don't give up on your spouse.

[38 : 17] No matter what anybody else tells you, pray. Work with your spouse. Work with a Christian counselor. Father, fight for your marriage.

Do everything that you can to save it, but not just to save it, to make it what it should be. A mutual, meeting one another's needs, loving, intimate relationship.

But, while divorce is never God's ideal, God does allow divorce under certain conditions.

Jesus went on in this chapter, chapter 19, to point out one, sexual immorality. Paul points out another one in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, desertion by an unbelieving spouse.

There are grounds for divorce. And when that happens, it was not God's ideal, but God forgives.

[39 : 26] God wipes the slate clean. God can give you a fresh start. And I want you to hear that word of hope and grace as well. But my point here is the Bible is very useful.

It's very practical. Very practical. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to correct us. We make sinful choices. And it doesn't matter what the world says. And the Word of God, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to train us to make the right choices that please God and make our lives better.

I want to throw this out real quickly here. One of the great disappointments to me and many Christians over the years, there have been Bible-believing, evangelical seminary professors, pastors, other church leaders who have taught the truth about same-sex marriage, homosexuality, that it was sinful behavior.

Until their son or their daughter or someone close to them came out as gay. And then they changed their beliefs.

What that means is such a person made what their son or daughter or friend did as the standard for their behavior or their standard for what's right and wrong.

[40 : 52] They abandoned the truth of God's Word in favor of how it affected someone that they loved. We don't have that option as a Christian.

Love your children. Love people. Bend over backwards to meet their needs, to be a friend, to help them. But never let someone else and their beliefs or their lifestyle be the standard for your beliefs and your lifestyle.

You know, the only way we can think biblically is know what the Bible teaches. Number three, the Bible must be read and studied. And that's going to be something we're going to probably just, I'm going to conclude in the newsletter.

I didn't realize it till the first service this morning, but I didn't talk fast enough to get through point three. So I'm going to go straight to the conclusion here. Can you honestly describe yourself as someone who thinks biblically and therefore you live biblically?

You've developed your beliefs and your lifestyle based on what you know the Bible teaches. Is that true? Let me ask it another way.

[42 : 10] Is that how you want to live? Do you want it to be true? Do you want it to be true? Hear me real carefully here. If you've listened to this sermon and you're just basically indifferent or you don't care or you reject it, you need to do some very serious soul searching because the Apostle John says that living according to the truth of God's word is one of the indications of whether or not you are a Christian.

Look at this. John writes in 1 John chapter 2, and by this we know that we've come to know Him if we keep His commandments. Whoever says I know Him but does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps His word in Him truly, the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him. John's real clear.

If we're Christians, we'll not just believe the Bible to be God's word. We'll seek to live according to it. If you're a child of God, living in fellowship with God, there's no doubt you desire to think and live according to the truth of God's word. And if that is how you would respond this morning, then you need to thank God for the work He's done in bringing you to this point.

[43 : 43] You're a trophy of God's grace if that's how you think. And ask God to help you to continue to believe and behave according to the truth of His word.

But if you really and truly don't care, get this over with, I'm going to do what I want to do, live the way I want to live, don't call yourself a Christian. And if that bothers you, if what John says, who does not keep His commandments is a liar, if that bothers you, good.

Let it drive you to your knees in humility and brokenness, repent of your sin and trust Jesus now and truly commit your life to Him. The final thought here, if you have fully known what it means to think and live biblically and deep down, that's what you want right now.

The truth is you are not, maybe because you just drifted away from the Lord. You just let your life get too busy. You just drifted away unintentionally. Or maybe you've rebelled for whatever reason. I want to encourage you to confess your sin, your drift, your rebellion, whatever it is, and come back to the Lord now in a new, wholehearted commitment to Jesus as the Lord of your life and to the Word of God as your ultimate authority for what you're going to believe and how you're going to live.