

"Thinking" Biblically (Part 1)

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- [0 : 00] Thank you. What's your greatest fear? What is the most frightening thought that's ever crossed your mind?
- You know, I'd never thought of that kind of question until recently. Everybody has certain things they're afraid of. Everybody deals with certain kinds of fears.
- What's your greatest fear? Well, I read something that helped me to know how to answer that question.
- D.A. Carson, the New Testament scholar, made this statement. It always makes me fearful to remember that God knows my thoughts. Hebrews 4.13 reminds us, Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.
- Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Now, I want you to look at what that verse is saying.
- [1 : 05] Think about it. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Some translations make that more personal and say no creature is hidden from God's sight.
- I think this verse reveals what should be, at least for most people, our greatest fear. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.
- God knows everything about us. Every single thing about us, He knows. And that includes our thoughts, our desires.
- Now, we all live with people. Family members, close friends, they know a lot about us. But no one but God really knows what's going on up here and here.
- And one day, we're going to have to stand before God and give an account of everything about our lives.
- [2 : 20] Not just what we've done, but what we've said. What we've thought. D.A. Carson went on to point out that King David understood this about God, which led him to write this after his sin with Bathsheba.
- It's like a prayer from Psalm 139. He writes, Carson explains this verse clearly.
- Now, look at this.
- He concludes, If you think holy thoughts, you'll be holy. If you think garbage, you'll be garbage. Carson is right in saying that from God's perspective, the real measure of an individual lies in what they think.
- That's why David wanted to be accountable to God for what he thought. That's why he said, search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. David wanted to know, if my thinking is not right, show me, Lord.
- [4 : 09] Don't let me have the wrong kinds of thoughts and desires because I'll act on it. What I think will come out in what I say and in what I do.
- And so David prayed, search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts with the idea, make it known to me so that I can confess sinful thoughts, change unhealthy thoughts before I act on it.

Jesus clearly taught that the source of our sinful behavior is our sinful thinking, our sinful thoughts and desires. Look at these verses.

From the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said this, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder. And whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

He's talking about murder begins in the heart, in the mind, with anger. He goes on to say, You have heard that it was said you should not commit adultery.

[5 : 29] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Adultery begins in the heart, in the mind, in fantasies.

And then look at one more. We've looked at this in recent times, but I want to just look at this as a reminder. Jesus said this, What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. Now I want you to note, think about these verses.

Jesus doesn't really make a distinction between our thoughts and our desires. It's all a part of what's inside us. Sometimes we think about it in terms of these thoughts, these desires, these attitudes, these feelings.

It's all what's inside. And that's where whatever comes out begins. Now, in the last two messages I preached, I used the title, Thinking Biblically.

[6 : 29] The first one was about governmental authority with a special emphasis on law enforcement men and women being the ones who enforce the laws. They're the agents of governmental authority.

And then thinking biblically about race. My goal was for us to look at those two current hot-button issues from a biblical perspective instead of just a personal feeling perspective or even our culture's perspective.

As Christians, it's important that we learn to think biblically. Some people in describing this concept talk about developing a Christian worldview or developing a biblical worldview.

The idea is we as Christians, we need to learn to look at life, all of life, through the lens of Scripture. We need to learn to look at life, what's going on around about us, and be able to discern truth and error, right and wrong, good and bad, as we'll see in the passage in a moment, what is lovely, what's not.

Today, I want us to step back a little bit and look at what it means to think biblically in general.

[7 : 46] And one of the best places to start is found in Philippians chapter 4, verse 8. It's going to be on the screen. A lot of you know this because Philippians chapter 4 is a lot of people's favorite chapter in the Bible.

But let's look at it together. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Now, before we get into that, I think it's interesting how several commentators point out that these qualities, look at it on the screen there, you know, whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, these kind of qualities.

They're not uniquely Christian virtues. In the Greek world, here in Philippi, Macedonia, where Paul was writing, as these people had this read to them, Paul's letter read to them, they were familiar with these concepts being admirable, what a person, a right, good person, would seek to, how they would seek to live.

I want you to look at how Frank Thielman describes how these were common, desirable qualities in the ancient world. He says, the list of virtues that Paul asked the Philippians to think about is not a distinctively Christian list and could have been embraced by many right-thinking people in ancient times.

[9 : 24] It also assumes that the pagan world had some notion of good and bad, right and wrong, duty and irresponsibility, beauty and ugliness, honor and shame. He says elsewhere, Paul speaks of Gentiles who have the requirements of God's law written on their hearts and says that occasionally they actually do these things.

That's in Romans 2. What this is describing is that all human beings are created in God's image. And so all people, unbelievers of all stripes, all people have a sense of conscience, a sense of what's right and wrong, what's good and bad.

Now everybody's conscience is not the same. Some people have a very tender conscience. They are easily convicted of something being, they have a lot of guilt maybe, easily it comes.

Some people have a more calloused conscience. And our conscience changes over time. Some people become harder. Some people become softer. As Christians, the Holy Spirit lives within us.

And the Holy Spirit enlightens our conscience. And so we as Christians, we should have a conscience that is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and we are from within.

[10 : 54] We have a desire to do what the Bible would say is what is right, what is good. And not do what would be not right, what would be evil.

We should be people who desire to speak the truth, to be truthful, not to lie, not to be easily led astray by that which is not true.

But more often than not, people violate their own conscience. Christians and unbelievers by consciously choosing wrong over right.

That's what sin is. We violate our conscience, our God-given sense of right and wrong. We violate the clear teachings of Scripture. We break God's laws.

That's the effect that sin has on us. And Paul explains that in detail in Romans chapter 1, verse 18, through chapter 3, verse 20, a long, lengthy explanation about what sin does in a person's life.

[12 : 00] Now, Paul understood how powerful sin affects our thinking. It powerfully impacts how we think.

He also knew that the key to changing the way that we think, or changing the way that we live, is to change the way we think. If you want to change some things about your life, generally speaking, is first of all, you've got to change your attitude, your thought process.

You've got to change the way you think in order to change the way that you live. Now, that's why he calls us to think rightly, or think biblically, in verse 8.

So let's look at now what this means. What does it mean to think biblically? Well, anytime we look at a question like this, I think it's important to answer, first of all, what it does not mean.

Thinking biblically does not mean that you deny reality. I'm sure there's some people in this room, you thought, as we read through that verse, verse 8 there, finally, brothers, whatever's true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, think about these things.

[13 : 11] And I'm sure some people said, how in the world can you do that and live in the world we live in today? This world we live in today is anything but true and honorable and lovely and pure and all of that. So what you're saying is to think this way, you've just sort of got to close your eyes what's going on around about you.

No. Paul would never say that. Jesus never taught anything like that. As Christians, we are never to pretend that all is right with the world.

We're not supposed to close our eyes to the cold, harsh realities of life. That's just a part of what is the world we live in.

D.A. Carson explains this well. Look at this in writing about verse 8. This is not some escapist demand to avoid the harsh realities of our fallen world.

The sad fact is that many people dwell on dirt without grasping that it's dirt. The wise Christian will see plenty of dirt in the world but will recognize it as dirt precisely because everything that is clean has captured his or her mind.

[14 : 26] There is much around about us that is opposite of these virtues Paul lists. There's a lot around about us you see in people's lives.

You see in the media things that are untrue that are dishonorable that are unfair that are filthy that are ugly. That's what Carson is calling dirt.

And the problem is that too many of us as Christians don't recognize the dirt. Or even worse we don't mind the dirt.

We accept it. we embrace it. We live it. What we need to do in order to learn to think biblically we need to recognize the dirt around about us in this world wherever it is in whomever it's in.

We need to call it what it is. If we can clean it up we have that kind of power influence we need to get involved and try to clean it up.

[15 : 43] If we can't we need to avoid what we can avoid. We don't need to dirty ourselves with the world's dirt. That's I want you to understand.

Paul is saying when he talks about think about what's true and lovely and honorable. He doesn't mean pretend that everything's good. He does not say and be naive. But what does he mean?

Well thinking biblically means that we need to think intentionally about the right kinds of things. We need to learn to think rightly think biblically and what he's doing here is listing several ways that we actually do that in this list.

Let's start looking at it today and we'll come back and finish it next week. Number one think about whatever is true. Whatever is true. We need to think that way.

Now broadly speaking truth is that which corresponds to reality. Kent Hughes describes it like this. Everything that is true is from God because all truth is God's truth.

[16 : 52] All things that are true that's God's truth. Wherever is true and right wherever you find it in this world that is of God.

Q's goes on to say this mind seeks whatever is true in every avenue of life from faith to science to relationships to public life to business.

Paul is telling us to think whatever is true. Think that way in every realm of life wherever you see it even a pagan even in a place you didn't think you'd see it that which is true that which corresponds to reality learn from it.

Learn from him or her. That's in the general sense. In this general sense we're to think in terms of what's real what's accurate what's rational what is proven in any area of life.

We're to do that instead of just believe everything you read on the internet or believe fall victim to every conspiracy theory out there about everything that's happening in the world today.

[18 : 18] We need to be discerning people part of looking for what the truth is learning to be wise but more specifically whatever is true refers to whatever is ethical whatever is truthful whatever is dependable as opposed to what is deceptive what is phony what is a lie.

The reason that I preached on government authority law enforcement officers carrying out government authority and race in my last two sermons is to point out a lot of the untruthful things that are being said in mainstream media and also to describe what is true about governmental authority about race according to scripture.

Now since I preached those two sermons I have found an article of an interview with Ed Young he is pastor of Fellowship Church in Texas described as one of North America's largest churches they even have satellite campuses in other states not just in the Fort Worth Dallas area.

In the interview Ed Young describes how some Christian leaders have abandoned the truth about race. Now listen Ed Young he has a father who is pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston Edwin Young some of you may have heard of him he is a former pastor in Columbia in Taylor South Carolina he has some South Carolina roots well this is Ed Young Edwin's son I will have sort of a lengthy quote here I do not agree with every word that he says but I think he makes a very powerful statement someone in his position that we need to hear today.

look at this woke Christian leaders and pastors today are jumping on the hype train of what culture is currently applauding but they don't really look at what the hype train is connected to for example many of the things culture applauds are connected to relativism abortion transgenderism the breakup of the nuclear family.

[20 : 43] one example of the hype train many Christians have been far too eager to jump on in recent months is the promotion of the Black Lives Matter organization.

I wholeheartedly agree with the phrase Black Lives Matter I believe in it and the church should champion it. We should stand up for equality and justice. I believe we need to lead out but I can't support or agree with the core beliefs of the organization Black Lives Matter matter.

It is tied to abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism and the breakup of the nuclear family just to name a few. I want to stop the quote.

The Black Lives Matter organization does not truly believe that all black lives matter. They do not believe that the lives of black law enforcement officers matter.

in the riots and looting that has taken place since Memorial Day, there have been at least two black law enforcement officers or former officers who were killed by the rioters, by the anarchists.

[22 : 02] police officers and the Black Lives Matter organization has said nothing about the murder of these two black officers.

There have been black businessmen. One received a lot of national attention, a former fireman who scraped together everything he had, had his own business.

And in one of the riots, it was burned to the ground. There was another city in which a black business owner wrote on the window of his business.

This is a black owned business. They broke out the windows of his business. The Black Lives Matter organization does not care about all black lives.

They do not care about black conservatives. They do not care about the lives of black Bible-believing Christians. And I say that and can back that because of their silence.

[23 : 20] when black policemen are killed, black business owners lose everything they have and their very statements of who they are and what they are deny basic Christian values as Ed Young pointed out just a moment ago in that quote.

I want to continue with Young's quote now. Racism is an obvious issue that must always be addressed. We must call it out and point people to the answers found in the person of Jesus Christ.

I'm all for supporting legislation that pushes the ball of equality down the field. But real change is only going to happen when we have a heart transformation.

Too many leaders are fearful to stand. Where is the boldness? Both sides of the aisle have dropped the ball. We must have open conversations, face our fears, and find solutions that work.

I think that we have more of a systemic sin problem in our world than a skin problem. Most people I know aren't racist.

[24 : 35] I want to stop there and I want to make that statement as well. Most people I know in this world are not racist. But according to the mainstream media, everybody who is white is a racist in this country today, it seems.

Ed Young, most people I know are not racist. Some are, and I know some who are as well, and they're wrong. He says, some are, yes.

And I believe there's a skin problem. I just don't believe it's systemically the core issue. The real issue is sin, not skin.

That's the root issue. But we're too fearful to say that because we could be misunderstood and maligned. So what he's saying is that we as Christians, especially too many Christian leaders, they're so afraid of being misunderstood and maligned, that they keep their mouth closed, and by their silence agree to the lies and half-truths that's being promoted by the mainstream media day after day after day.

We need to learn to think about what is true and about every issue in life, regardless of what this cultural hype train, and those on it, rather, are saying.

[26 : 09] But I want to be real clear. Don't look for the mainstream media in this country today to find the truth. They don't know it.

The ones who do are not allowed to speak. They're fired. If you're not liberal enough, you can't work for mainstream media today.

You'll be terminated. It's the mainstream media liberal, socialists, who are driving today's cultural hype train.

And they're going to run it into the ground. Eventually, they're going to wreck our country if they're not stopped. And the only way to be stopped is to combat their lies with the truth.

combat their half-truths with the full truth. We're going to come back next week and look at the rest of Paul's list of virtues here.

[27 : 14] But I want to conclude today by looking at where we must look first to find the truth. So the second question today, how do we develop the habit of thinking biblically? Well, the best way to learn to think truthfully is through consistent Bible reading and study.

I want to be clear. This is not the only way. Paul said, look again in verse 8, whatever is true, we can find truth in many realms of life.

But the first, the best source of truth, the infallible source of truth is the Word of God.

We need to understand it is impossible for us to get rid of the deception, lies, and garbage that comes into our minds without replacing it with an entirely different way of thinking.

And I'm talking about biblical truth is a different way of thinking. You know, throughout Israel's history, as you read through the Old Testament, it seems that everything, whenever something new about to take place, a new leader was installed, there was a great emphasis for that leader to get prepared to lead the people into whatever the new endeavor was going to be by saturating his mind with the Word of God.

[28 : 45] One of the best examples of that is found in the first chapter of Joshua. Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of the nation of Israel. And he was going to lead the people of Israel into the promised land.

Here's one verse that emphasizes what I'm talking about. God said this to Joshua, This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. That was God's way of saying, Joshua, If you want to have success, you've got to do things my way, according to my plan.

You know, we live in a day where everyone is busy. Everyone is busy. And most people's minds are filled with a lot of clutter.

A lot of things that don't matter. A lot of things could be just called junk. Kent Hughes describes this as our greatest danger today. Look at this.

[29 : 54] The greatest danger in our busy, increasingly post-literate world is that we make little or no effort to think God's thoughts after Him. To hide His word in our hearts so that we may not sin against Him.

That comes from Psalm 119.11. We cannot be profoundly influenced by that which we do not know. I said earlier, the Spirit of God lives in every Christian.

He influences us according to the truth of God's word. But we're going to miss out on some of His influence if we don't know the truth of God's word.

Jesus emphasized this. You know, before Jesus, on the night He was arrested, He was going to be crucified the next day. Jesus prayed for His people. Here's an example of, or here's part of His prayer.

It's in John 17. Jesus prayed for our spiritual growth, our sanctification. He prayed like this. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.

[31 : 01] There's no way in the world we can be growing Christians apart from regularly reading and studying God's word.

There's no way we're going to be sanctified, as Jesus said, apart from the truth of God's word saturating our minds. You know, Paul said in Romans 12, too, that the only way we can avoid conforming to the mindset of this world is by renewing our minds.

And what he was talking about was learning to think about that which is true. Learning to think biblically. Let's wrap it up.

I want you to think with me now. I've got some questions. How well are you dealing with the deception of this world? Do you read, watch, do you take in the information, the news that comes from this world in a discerning way?

Do you try to sift through what you hear, see, read? Try to discover that which is true, that which is obviously not, that which is very biased.

[32 : 26] How well are you dealing with the deception of this world? Number two, do you need to make some changes in the way that you think?

Do you need to make some changes in the things you are exposing your mind and heart to? Things you're taking in. Because what you're taking in affects what you think, how you feel, and it comes out in how you speak and how you live.

Do you, as a Christian, maybe need to make a new commitment to daily read God's Word? I mean, read it in order to get into your mind who God is, how He is, what His will is, what pleases Him, what doesn't please Him, that kind of thing.

You need to make a commitment to daily read His Word and regularly study it. Now, for an example, we're studying God's Word together here on Sunday mornings.

Eventually, we'll start back Sunday school and we'll do it there too. There is more good, solid, biblical teaching available online today than any time in the world in history.

[33 : 48] Our church subscribes to Right Now Media, which gives us access to all kinds of good, solid Bible teaching. You need to take advantage of that more than you are now to help you to think more biblically.

You know, that's the first and best source of truth available to us. I want to encourage you to set a time and place that you're going to read God's Word every day if you're not already doing that. Make an appointment with God and ask God to help you not just to read it, not just to read the words, but to think about it, to believe it.

Ask God to help you to understand it. Ask God to help you to put it into practice, to teach it even and model it to people around you, your friends, your family members.

And when I say make an appointment with God and read His Word, do what you have time to do. I want to encourage you to start in the New Testament. Start in the New Testament.

Whether it's morning, noon, or night, make it a habit of reading a paragraph, a chapter, whatever you have time to do with a prayer.

[35 : 09] God, teach me. Help me to understand. Help me to do it. Help me to model it. We need, as Christians, more than any other time in history, to learn to think.

A lot of you, your job, your schoolwork requires you to truly think. Put yourself into it. But when it comes to living out your faith, reading God's Word, you're a dummy.

Because you ignore it. Or because you skim it. Because you don't take it as seriously as you do your schoolwork or your job.

And that's an indictment on you if that's the case and your commitment to God and to living for Him in this world. And if that's the case, it can change today.

Confess and repent of that as sin. And ask God to help you to get even more serious about knowing Him and His way and His will through His Word than you are about your schoolwork and you are about your job.

[36 : 23] Be committed to your schoolwork. Be committed to your job. Just be more committed to God and live in life His way. As revealed in His Word.

Let's pray together. Father, show us how we should respond so that we can be Christians, your men and women who think biblically and as a result who live like your people and have the kind of influence you want us to have as your representatives.

Let's just pray. Talk to God. Listen to God. Obey God during these next few minutes. Keep us a prayer.

God bless you.