

DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

The Practice of Loving God

OVERVIEW

This is a study about the life of the Christian mind. It is about thinking—*disciplined thinking*. What does it offer in light of other Christian studies and books on thinking? Our focus here is actually more about love to Christ, applying the gospel to everyday life, sanctification, practical holiness, stability of heart, cleanness of conscience, perseverance of faith, joy of the Spirit, and peace of mind. Most books about thinking are written for a different purpose. Typically, they tend to address the role of reason and its intersection with faith or the dangers of rationalism and humanism or the dangers of non-intellectualism or the disciplines of philosophical apologetics or the history of thought in the church or the parameters of the intellectual life of Christianity. These are good purposes. They serve to help and edify disciples of Christ and many such works serve their end well. Indeed, the art of thinking is a fascinating and God-glorifying marvel that we would all do well to appreciate more. But our purpose here is quite particular, namely growing in the knowledge, practice, and joy of loving the Lord our God with all our minds through a consciously disciplined thought-life.

PURPOSE

Only when the gospel is made alive in one's soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, can the mind be *disciplined* to love God. So long as the mind remains in its natural state, even the right knowledge of God will not induce love to God since the mind, left to itself, is at enmity to Him (Rom 8:7). The unregenerate mind cannot love God. The new birth (cf. John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:3, 23) is a necessary precondition to loving God with the mind. No one can arrive at the goal of this study by mere thinking; it can only come by grace. The grace of God, in the gospel of Christ, is the only hope for the mind of man—*yours and mine*.

To those who love God, this study is prayerfully designed to address our hearts and minds for the promotion of more love to Christ—more consistent love, more concentrated love, more pervasive love, more powerful love, more extensive love, more enjoyable love; love that is deeper, higher, holier, and truer. Love to God without hypocrisy emphatically begins and subsists in the redeemed mind that thinks rightly on the right things.

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Discipline of the Mind for the Love of God

OUR SITUATION

The Real You: Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength

Defunct by Default: Seven Effects of Sin on the Mind

A New Creation: Recovering the Glory of Regeneration

OUR STEWARDSHIP

Battle for the Mind: Valuing and Stewarding the Redeemed Mind

Habits of the Heart: The Importance of Discipline in our Thought-Life

Art of Redeemed Thinking: The Practice of Godliness

OUR STRATEGY

Resolve: Pursuing God's Glory and Our Joy

Fight: Preparing for Temptation

Love: Practically Valuing Christ More

OUR SUPPLY

Word: Seeking the Mind of Christ

Prayer: Seeking the Will of Christ

Spirit: Seeking the Power of Christ

OUR SATISFACTION

Feelings: Leading Our Own Hearts

Hope: Renewing Our Minds Daily in the Gospel

Joy: Striving with Our Minds for Joy in God's Glory

CONCLUSION

Resting in the Love of God

INTRODUCTION

Is there anything more basic to the life of a disciple (from *mathētēs*: 'learner') than disciplined thought? Is there anything more essential to knowing and delighting in God than thinking? Is there anything more centrally connected to the variety of choices that constitute our daily 'walk' than thinking? Is there anything more instrumental to loving God than thinking? The life of the redeemed mind is a precious responsibility that we must steward with diligent care.

Everyone thinks—we cannot avoid it. As the heart contracts to pump blood, so the mind thinks to process life. It is as a waterwheel firmly fixed in a rushing river; so long as life flows, the mind turns. The river is flowing, but what work is your waterwheel accomplishing? The turning of the waterwheel does not determine greatness, rather it is what the waterwheel turns—what it works on, what its energies are used for—that distinguishes the mill. The quest of the godly mind is godly thoughts; a thought-life that is engaged in the honorable work of thinking all things for the glory of God. The key is to keep the ever-turning waterwheel of the mind rightly engaged upon the right work—this takes deliberate discipline. All think, but

not all do well in their thoughts. Thinking is common to all, but the rule, pattern, and aim of thinking drastically differ for those who love God—or *at least ought to*.

It is not so much the mental act of thinking that is our concern here, the objective and pattern of thinking is much closer to the point. It should be noted that the goal presented here is far deeper than what is commonly afforded to the role of the mind. The discipline of the mind is most foundationally for the purpose of godliness—it is our most essential means of sanctification. It touches our faith, joy, peace, hope, perseverance, satisfaction, contentment, integrity, stability, zeal, vigilance, usefulness, spiritual maturity, humility, and above all, love. The most excellent employment of the mind is love, and the most excellent object of love is God. The mind, then, is a distinguished means to the end of love to God.

There is no love to God in worldly thinking. Yet the highest rule of life for the redeemed is to “love the Lord your God ... with all your mind” (Mk 12:30). Godly thinking in a worldly land requires serious discipline. There are no shortcuts. That’s what this study is about. Or stated another way, the summary burden of this study is aimed at this: *the love of God through a disciplined thought-life*.

1. Sin comes from _____.
2. The discipline of the mind is _____.
3. Isaiah 26:3 equates a “mind stayed on [God]” with _____.
4. To “walk by faith” involves _____ (2 Corinthians 5:6-7; Colossians 2:6).

If we have received Christ himself in our inmost hearts, our new life will manifest its intimate acquaintance with him by a walk of faith in him. ... Walking implies continuance. There must be a perpetual abiding in Christ. How many Christians think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Jesus, and may then give their hearts to the world all the day: but this is poor living; we should always be with him, treading in his steps and doing his will. Walking also implies habit. When we speak of a man’s walk and conversation, we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, if we sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget him; sometimes call him ours, and anon lose our hold, that is not a habit; we do not walk in him. We must keep to him, cling to him, never let him go, but live and have our being in him. “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him”; persevere in the same way in which ye have begun, and, as at the first Christ Jesus was the trust of your faith, the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit, so let him be the same till life’s end; the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the people of God. O Holy Spirit, enable us to obey this heavenly precept. — Charles H. Spurgeon

5. The discipline of mind is also illustrated by _____, _____,
_____, and _____.

“The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition, is the great business of a Christian’s life” — John Flavel

LOVE TO GOD

We are commanded to love, and love is a function that begins in the mind.

Mark 12:30 - And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

To love him with all the heart, is to give him precedence in our love, to let him have the cream of our affections; to love him not only appreciatively, but intensively, as much as we can. As the sunbeams united in a burning glass burn the hotter, so all our affections should be united, that our love to God may be more ardent. — Thomas Watson

Many low and carnal considerations may work men to watch their words, their lives, their actions; as hope of gain, or to please friends, or to get a name in the world, and many other such like reasons. But to watch our thoughts, to weep and lament over them, this must needs be from some noble, spiritual, and internal principle, as love to God and a holy care and delight to please him.
— Thomas Brooks