

# SCRIPTURE

SEEKING THE MIND OF CHRIST

If a person does not become what he understands,  
he does not really understand it.  
— SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *The Diary*

What good is godless discipline? What profit is there in disciplining the mind on error? How healthy is dieting when your diet includes a regular dose of poison? What does mastery over your mind accomplish if that mastery is guided by delusion? Disciplined deception only leads to destruction. The value of the discipline of the mind will never rise above the final quality of your mind's authority.

Who or what is the final authority over your mind? What do you submit your mind to as its ultimate and highest authority? Authority is vital to right thinking. What thought determines what thought is right? The mind is our most precious and powerful faculty of being—we must be exceedingly careful concerning to what we subject our minds. To submit our minds to an authority is to submit our lives and destinies to that authority. How arresting, then, is the thought of allowing my mind to be conditioned, shaped, and trained by godless sources.

**Colossians 2:8** - See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

**1 Corinthians 2:16** - "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

It is one thing to say that we value God's word, it is entirely another to be transformed by it. In the former, the mind sits above Scripture—even if in admiration of it. In the latter, the mind submits to Scripture to be governed, shaped, and trained by it. In the former, the mind is judge over Scripture. In the latter, the Scripture is judge over the mind. Only when we yield our minds to the authority of God-breathed Scripture will we find the first supply needed in the discipline of our minds for the sake of loving God.

There are several key principles at work in seeking the mind of Christ. These are presented in order of logical progression below for the sake of establishing the mind's first supply for a disciplined thought-life that brings glory to God and joy within.

## #1 – REVELATION

“To think Christianly is to think in terms of Revelation.” These are the words of theologian and literary critique Harry Blamires. He goes on to say,

How in practice we Christians use the word *truth* when we are thinking and speaking christianly is to indicate the full breadth of the chasm separating the Christian from the secular mind. For the Christian, truth is supernaturally grounded: it is not manufactured within nature. The violence of the collision between the secular mind and the Christian mind in this respect is often underestimated. One may say without exaggeration that failure to distinguish clearly between the Christian conception of truth and the conception of truth popularly cherished in the secular mind has been one of the most unfortunate neglects of our age. ... Briefly one may sum up the clash between the Christian mind and the secular mind thus. Secularism asserts the opinionated self as the only judge of truth. Christianity imposes the given divine revelation as the final touchstone of truth. The marks of truth as christianly conceived, then, are: that it is supernaturally grounded, not developed within nature; that it is objective and not subjective; that it is a revelation and not a construction; that it is discovered by inquiry and not elected by a majority vote; that it is authoritative and not a matter of personal choice.<sup>1</sup>

The discipline of our minds must be fixed on God, first through His objective self-revelation. God has chosen to reveal His mind to us in Scripture for the sake of our minds. The task of the prophet was to make known the mind of God. The task of the disciple is to realize the mind of God in the Word of God. To this end God gave us His word. John Owen repeatedly emphasized the high importance of Scripture as God’s means of intelligent self-revelation: “It is granted that God hath given us his word, or the holy Scripture, as a declaration of his mind and will; and, therefore, he hath given it unto us for this very end and purpose, that we may know them and do them.”<sup>2</sup> God’s word is the very means of God revealing His mind and will to us. Richard Sibbes wrote that love to God “sets the mind on work to study, Wherein shall I please God? And it will study God’s truth, and not serve him by our own inventions. We must serve and love God after his mind; that is, as he hath commanded. It will set the wits on work to understand how he will be served, and to love him with all our soul, and with all our heart; that is, with the marrow and strength of our affections, with all my strength.” Sinclair Ferguson well said, “Only as God’s Word makes its impact on the way we think, live, and feel will we develop hearts that are characterized by obedience to God and filled with love for Him.” The Dutch Puritan, William Brakel, wrote, “The Word of God is the only rule whereby the condition of our hearts, thoughts, words, and deeds should be governed. ... If people neglect to retain the Word of God in mind and heart, they will begin to elevate their own intellect as their Bible, and thus will mislead themselves and be a cause for concern to others.”<sup>3</sup> Richard Mayhue rightly says, “Scripture

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<sup>1</sup> Blamires, 107.

<sup>2</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d.), 175.

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelms À Brakel, *Christian’s Reasonable Service, The* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

is the mind of God. Not all of His mind, to be sure; but all that God cared to give us. To think like God, we must think like Scripture.”<sup>4</sup> The first point to remember in the supply of the discipline of the mind is that it begins with God’s self-revelation: holy Scripture.

John Frame summarizes this first principle well:

The Spirit works in and with the Word. All that we know about God from Scripture forms our basis of faith. Now Scripture, as we’ve seen, makes God central to everything. He is not only the Creator, Provider, and Redeemer, but also the supreme authority for all of human thought. His attributes, as we have seen, provide standards for our thought. We are to think God’s thoughts after him, or presuppose his Word in all our thought and life.<sup>5</sup>

## RECEIVING

The mind must first receive Scripture as the very Word of God. James 1:21 reminds us to “receive with meekness the implanted word.” The picture of the word being implanted is the portrayal of God’s sovereign hand planting His precious word within the heart of man. It is a call to then receive this gift with all humility and meekness because it is both a gift to have a mind to understand it and immeasurably valuable. A testimony of this type of reception is noted in 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received 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, which is at work in you believers.”

**Isaiah 55:8** - For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

**Job 15:8** - Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?

**Je 13:9-10** - “Thus says the LORD: Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing.

God’s word will particularly judge the unrepentant who walk in the stubbornness of their own hearts rather than inclining their minds to the word of God.

The problem that we face is illustrated by John Piper: “I have found in almost forty years of preaching and teaching and struggling with people who want to be authentic Christians, that the way they think about Christian living is often absorbed from the cultural air we breathe rather than learned from categories of Scripture.”<sup>6</sup> This is where we need to turn for the discipline of minds—Scripture.

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<sup>4</sup> Mayhue, 114.

<sup>5</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 740.

<sup>6</sup> Piper, *Future Grace*, 2.

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

Never was there a man who thought with such clarity and precision in logic and with such God-centered humility and righteousness as Christ. Christ reveals His mind for our minds. We must discipline our minds after the likeness of His. Indeed, “How we think and who we think like determines the course of our lives.”<sup>7</sup>

We shall walk even as He walked (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). But should we expect to walk like Him if we do not think like Him? Should we expect our outward walk to be more excellent than our inward thought? Just as a crippled man, no matter what his intentions may be, cannot walk better than the capability and condition of his body. So it is with our spiritual walk; we cannot walk better than the capability and condition of our mind.

Now, our *capability* comes from regeneration and union with Christ, through the inner working of the Holy Spirit (more on that in the next chapter). So God furnishes the power to glorify Christ in our thoughts; it rests not in our might or self-willed determination. But the *conditioning* of our mind falls to the account of our stewardship. If we are—as regenerate Christians—to walk as Christ walked, we must condition our minds to think as Christ thought.

Isaac Ambrose wisely said,

If Christ's life is ours, then we shall walk even as He walked. Such is the efficacy of Christ's life, that it will work suitably, and make our life in some sort like His life. The apostle observes that our communion with Christ works on our very lives: “He that abideth in Him walks even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). And to this purpose are those holy admonitions “Walk in love, as Christ also loved us” (Ephesians 5:2), and “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you” (John 13:15), and, “As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Then is Christ's life mine, when my actions refer to Him as my copy, when I transcribe the original of Christ's life, to my life. Alas! What am I better to observe in the life of Christ: His charity to His enemies, His reprehensions of the Scribes and Pharisees, His subordination to His heavenly Father, His ingenuousness towards all, His effusion of love to all the saints, if there be no likeness of all this in my own actions? The life of Jesus is not described to be like a picture in a chamber of pleasure, only for beauty and entertainment of the eye, but like the Egyptian hieroglyphics whose every feature is a precept, whose images converse with men sense and signification of excellent discourses. To this purpose Paul says, “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ is the image of His Father, and we are the image of Christ. Christ is God's masterpiece, the most excellent device, and work, and frame of heaven that ever was, or ever shall be. Now Christ being the top excellency of all, He is most fit to be the pattern of all excellencies whatsoever, and therefore He is the image, the idea, the pattern, the platform of all our sanctification. Come then, O my soul,

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Mayhue, *Seeking God*, 113.

look unto Jesus, and look into yourself, yes, look and look, till you are more transformed into His likeness.<sup>8</sup>

### VALUING

**Ps 119:14** - In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

**Ps 119:72** - The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

**Ps 119:127** - Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.

**Psalm 119:161** - Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.

### ENJOYING

**Psalm 19:8** - the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

**Ps 119:24** - Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

**Ps 119:103** - How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

**Ps 63:5-6** - My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, [6] when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

**Pr 13:13** - Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.

**Pr 16:20** - Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

**Pr 19:16** - Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die.

**Ro 7:22** - For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,

**Jeremiah 15:16** - Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

## #2 – CONSUMPTION

### DESIRING

**1 Peter 2:2** - Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

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<sup>8</sup> Isaac Ambrose, **DBD**, 98.

## READING

### READ IT REVERENTLY

We are to read Scripture “as the Word of God, not of man, believing implicitly that what it approves is right, and what it condemns is wrong.”<sup>9</sup>

I dwell on these things more because this is an age of reading. There seems no end to the producing of many books, though few of them are really profitable. There seems a rage for cheap printing and publishing. Newspapers of every sort abound, and the tone of some, which have the widest circulation, speaks badly for the taste of the age. Amid the flood of dangerous reading, I plead for my Master's book, I call upon you not to forget the book of the soul. Do not let newspapers, novels, and romances be read, while the prophets and Apostles be despised. Do not let the exciting and sensual swallow up your attention, while the edifying and the sanctifying can find no place in your mind. ... Take heed what you read. I suspect there is more harm done to souls in this way than most people have an idea is possible. Value all books in proportion as they are agreeable to Scripture.<sup>10</sup>

### READ IT REGULARLY

Again, Ryle says, “A quick glance at the Bible now and then does little good. ... But store up your mind with Scripture, by diligent reading, and you will soon discover its value and power. Texts will rise up in your hearts in the moment of temptation. Commands will suggest themselves in times of doubt. Promises will come across your thoughts in the time of discouragement.”<sup>11</sup>

**Moody:** “A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months, or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God’s boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it.”

**Blanchard:** “How often do we face problems, temptation and pressure? Every day! Then how often do we need instruction, guidance need greater encouragement? Every day!”

**Sproul:** “Here then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.”

The Word of God should dominate our minds:

- **At dawn** — **Ps 119:147** - I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.
- **Daily** — **Ps 119:97** - Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
- **Throughout the day** — **Ps 119:164** - Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules.

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<sup>9</sup> Ryle, 63

<sup>10</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Thoughts for Young Men*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Ryle, 64.

- **Nightly** — **Ps 119:55** - I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. **Ps 119:148** - My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise.
- **At midnight** — **Ps 119:62** - At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules.

## STUDYING

Jonathan Edwards wrote, “Scriptures, when they come to the mind, let them come ever so suddenly, and with ever so great impression, are not to be taken as revealing any more to us than is contained in them as they lie in the Bible; that is, a scripture coming to the mind proves no more to be true than reading it proves.”<sup>12</sup>

Those who would know the mind of God in the scripture must compare one part of the scripture with another, and put those parts together that have reference to the same thing, for the latter discoveries of divine light explain what was dark and supply what was defective in the former, *that the man of God may be perfect*.<sup>13</sup>

**Ezr 7:10** - For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

**Ac 17:11** - Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**Pr 23:12** - [12] Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

## MEMORIZING

### FIGHTING FORGETFULNESS

**Ps 119:9-11** - [9] How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. [10] With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! [11] I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

## #3 – MEDITATION

I fear that we are all too pragmatic in the investments of our daily lives. Our culture has trained our minds to so think. It seems that “how-to’s” have replaced simple meditation. We don’t take enough time to meditate on God’s word and we are poorer for it. Instead, we often turn to ‘digests’ of information. The prevailing attitude of our day

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, “Love More Excellent Than Extraordinary,” from *Ethical Writings*, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 229–230.

is: "just give me the steps to do." As though we don't have the time to digest God's word ourselves, we turn to already-digested thoughts for our nourishment and guidance.

A mind that is harassed and fragmented by external affairs is hardly prepared for meditation. If we are constantly being swept off our feet with frantic activity; if inwardly we are fraught with distractions and anxiety, we starve our soul. We cannot control the world around us, but in Christ we can control the world within us. Regardless of how it is done, the aim is to center the attention of the body, the emotions, the mind and the spirit upon "the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

### NOT EASTERN IN NATURE

Is meditation Christian? What about Transcendental Meditation? In both principle and practice, the two are literally worlds apart; they are opposites.

**Eastern meditation seeks to empty the mind; Christian meditation seeks to fill it.**

**Luke 11:24-26** - "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' [25] And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. [26] Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

### BIBLICAL MEDITATION

**Psalms 1:1-3** - Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Likened to the process of a **coffee percolator**: after cycles of small amounts of water rising through the center tube and returning through exposure to ground coffee beans, key qualities from the bean transfer to the water and the water becomes coffee. Temperature, time, and the right exposure to the grounds determine the quality of transfer.

(a) God (b) God's Will (c) God's Works

**Ps 119:2** - Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,

**Dt 6:6** - And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

**Pr 4:4** - he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

**Pr 22:17** - Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge,

**Pr 23:12** - Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.



**Job 22:22** - Receive instruction from his [God's] mouth, and lay up his words in your heart.

## #4 – APPLICATION

**Jn 17:17** - Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

**Psalm 119:105** - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

We should endeavor to make the best use of Bible.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

### FOR TEACHING

### FOR REPROOF

### FOR CORRECTION

### FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

## DISCIPLINE

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA** (150-215): The mind is led astray by pleasure, and the virgin center of the mind, if not disciplined by the Word, degenerates into licentiousness and reaps disintegration as reward for its transgressions.

Discipline helps us to do what is worthy when the novelty of that worth fades.

It is the training of the mind away from self, impulse, and novelty so that God increasingly becomes our center, consistency and stability increasingly mark our walk, and valuing what is most valuable increasingly becomes our drive.