

# (Awake! Series): Consider Your Ways

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer urges listeners to reflect on their lives and prioritize their souls over trivial pursuits.*

**Duration:** 39:05

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:18, Haggai 1:5, Haggai 1:7, Matthew 24:40

**Topics:** "Consider"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the arbitrary nature of worldly pursuits and the neglect of one's soul and relationship with God. He emphasizes the importance of considering the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The preacher expresses concern for young people who may be more focused on social activities rather than seeking God. He urges listeners to reflect on their ways and come to God for salvation and forgiveness.

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## Transcript

So for a brief word tonight, I have two texts. They are found in Isaiah 118. First, the words of the Lord, Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with a sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. I'm only concerned tonight with that opening word from God, Come now and let us reason together. Then in Haggai, the first chapter, Haggai one time, and also the same was repeated in the seventh verse.

Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways, consider your ways, come and let us reason together. Now I want to reason with you a little bit tonight, and I'll start by saying that which you already know. The difference, the chief difference anyway, between a man and an animal is that man reflects and a beast does not.

A man and an animal, the man and the animal, they start out with about the same amount of data and the same kind. When a new puppy is born into the world, or a new cat, they have about the same data furnished to the senses. The sun is there, or it isn't there.

It's a warm day or it's a cold day. Things are comfortable or they're not comfortable. The mother is near or she isn't.

The data is about the same. The senses tell the newborn cat about what they tell the newborn baby. So that we begin just about where the beast begins.

And the Bible doesn't hesitate to say that man and beast are very much alike. It also says that there is a gulf fixed between them, a difference that's so vast that it can never be explained. But it also says that there is a certain likeness there.

But the chief difference will begin to manifest itself very early. For the man reflects and the beast does not. The calf born on the range or in the barn lives by its instinct.

And it can grow to be old and die of old age if they're permitted to do it. And still it will be living by its instinct, will have learned very little. And what it learns will be very low grade and require practically no projection.

But a child of three years old is already a walking question mark. You know that. The child reflects and the beast does not.

The man can reflect and the beast apparently cannot. Both are hurried into the world, as the poet has said, hurried hither without asking. Nobody asks to be born.

No animal asks to be born. But after they are born, the man begins to ask questions and the animal never does. This is the difference.

The farmer and the horse, there aren't many left, but we'll, for the sake of the argument, invent a hypothetical horse, put him out the head of a plow and start him through the field. And as you go by, you'll find that they're a good deal alike, the tired, dusty man and the tired, dusty horse. But there is a difference that is as vast as the difference that separates heaven from hell and the earth from the stars above.

It is the difference in ability to consider our way. No horse ever stops to consider his way. The man often does.

But even though we almost always, at some time in our lives, do consider, it is the tragic fact that after a while we stop it and most people do not reflect on their own way. They may reflect, but they do not reflect on their own way. You know what I wish, and now wishing is a word I don't use much.

It's only a carelessly used word, and to me it simply means that it's a wild imagination that I can give no body to. But do you know what I wish? I wish that I could get the men of the city of Chicago and Environ, or of St. Louis, or of Milwaukee, or of New York, or Brooklyn, or Pittsburgh, or Cleveland, or Detroit, or Cincinnati. I wish that I could get the males above the age of eight and under the age of a hundred, one week, just one week, to give as much consideration to their own soul as they give to the standings of their particular teams, and I have named the cities that have the teams, to their own ball clubs.

Now I just wish it. I wish that as many people today, as many men today, in the city of Chicago, had spent, say there was a doubleheader today, that would take about how many hours, about four hours. I wish, and I could pray, that we could get as many, I would, I don't know how many were there, I know they were there, but I suppose maybe there were 35,000, I would guess that.

And if we could get 35,000 people to spend four hours considering their soul, and their lives, and their future, with the concentrated attention that they considered the strikeouts, and the stolen bases, and the

rest. Now I don't mean there's anything wrong with strikeouts and stolen bases. This isn't an attack on Billy Pierce, or whoever pitched today.

This is merely saying that a three-year-old asks basic questions, but a 30-year-old is long past that. A three-year-old says, Mother, where did I come from? It came from God. How did I get here? Well, Jesus sent you.

Is there a God, Mama? And can God see me? And if I'm in a room with no doors or windows, one little chap actually asks, could God see through and see me? Well, those are basic questions. But who is going to win the pennant? That's not a basic question. And yet people for four, at least four hours today, listen, they're watched and listened to men playing a game of arbitrary.

That is, the thing was arbitrary. Did you ever stop to think of the foolish, arbitrary quality of the game? Now this doesn't mean I'm attacking it. It's relaxing, I suppose.

But did you ever stop to think that a fellow throws a ball that has been made for him to throw, with great pain, made for him to throw, and he has neglected his soul, and neglected God, and neglected heaven, in order that he might get skill enough to throw that thing in the strike zone at least three times before he threw it out of the strike zone four times? Now, who said three and four? Somebody, Ebner Doubleday, they say, invented that gadget. But did you ever stop to think it's arbitrary and whimsical? You could say a man is out on four strikes just as easy, where's there any law in the universe that says three strikes and you're out? That's invented. And furthermore, what's the difference? What happens to that ball? There's a little artificial spheroid that is flying through space, and oh, we'll guess 60 miles an hour, that's a guess, rough guess, somebody said it, and 35,000 people are spinning themselves horse about that.

Now, what's the difference where it goes? It could fall down a gopher hole, it could get lost under a board or plank someplace, it could go over onto the street and fall into the sewer, or Mickey Mantle could catch it. What's the difference, my brethren? You see, don't you? Now, this isn't, I repeat for the third time, to say that there's anything wrong with it, but the point is, it's arbitrary, and it's nothing, nothing is settled when they've settled it, nothing's settled. You say, well, you got him out, but got him out, what does that settle? That's an arbitrary expression that doesn't have any root in nature anywhere, and so have all games, and so is most of man's activity.

I saw today in a restaurant, a rather intelligent looking woman, yesterday, for the magazine I ate after the broadcast, and I saw a rather intelligent looking woman sitting there, and she was the very essence of concentration, serious face, sober, with a pencil in her hand, neglecting her friends around her, conversation had died, what a fool she was doing. I'll give you three guesses. Yes, sir, you've got it, she was working a crossword puzzle.

Now, what is she accomplishing, I'd ask you? Nothing, nothing at all, it's the same with card games, and the same with almost everything we do. I heard old Gus, Gus, is it Gus Johnson, a great Swedish teacher from Pennsylvania? Gus Johnson, I heard years ago, with a sort of a dry, wry sense of humor, saying that he was out on the golf course with his son. He never played, but he was out there that day, and his son was a bug on it, and he said, he started to talk, and his son said, he said, what did he care about putting? He said, he wanted to talk, he didn't care about putting.

Well, brother, all this is arbitrary, and I suppose it's relaxing, and you don't die of a nervous breakdown as soon, and your ulcer may not be quite as large and all-embracing as it would have been if you hadn't put it.

I don't know, though, whether they increase them, or make them smaller, but we'll ignore that. But man spends this magnificent intellect that God's given him, that it's this brilliant thing that can flash out like silver streams of light, and can reach back and take hold of history and pull it up, too.

He can reach out into the future and pull it back, and can examine stars and moons and satellites and the depths of the earth and the deeps of the sea and hold them before him. He's got all that, and you've got all that. How long since you've used it? And think now of this imagination, this ability to consider that we have.

God says, consider your ways. Come now, let us reason together. God is calling us to this, my brethren, and he's saying to men who won't have long to live, they won't be here very long, they won't be around very long.

I won't, you won't. You say it's all right to say you won't, but I'll be. You may be a little longer, maybe not as long, but what is a few years against the solemn space we call eternity? What does it amount to anyway? What's the difference? Look, back in the days of Caesar or in the days of Hothep, the educator of Egypt before Caesar's day, one man died at twenty, one died at thirty, one died at seventy, and one died at ninety.

There they were separated by a spread of seventy years. Yet I ask you, if it really matters now, who died at twenty and who died at fifty and who died at seventy and who died at ninety? No. What's the matter of fifty years set against five thousand years and set against eternity? And so, with that backdrop, against that backdrop of eternal years, God says to us, consider.

Here, I've given you, I've given you something. Consider. Consider.

Make no difference who won this day. No difference whether he sunk that pot or not. Makes no difference.

Think on something eternal. Think about something that matters. Give a little time to something that matters.

And I believe that the great God of justice and wisdom and logic and common sense in the heavens, giving to man as he does give to man, such an amazing power to reflect, I believe that that God expects that man to reflect, and if he will not do it, and if he will spend hours and hours, day after day and week after week, thinking about things that don't matter and neglect the one thing that does, I see no place where God is under any obligation to take that man to heaven. God puts a door there and doesn't hide it. God puts a door there and the very stars in their courses tell where it is.

God puts a door there leading into the kingdom, and God calls and he wakes early and he stretches his hands out and he says, come, come, come, and he calls and he invites and he exhorts and he urges in a thousand ways and keeps it up for a lifetime. And yet if a man chooses to ignore that call and refuses to see that door, I want to ask you, by what moral logic is God required to pick the man up by his neck and take him to heaven when he spent a lifetime fooling with things that don't matter and refused to consider the one thing that does? God says, consider your ways and come now and let us reason together. And it's a deep wrong a man commits, a deep wrong you will commit tonight against your own soul if you sit there and taste the sermon and judge about whether it was as good as the one you heard this morning or the one I preached sometime before somebody else preached.

What a terrible thought, with the judgment coming and your life having a way that we should taste and compare instead of do something about it. It's a deep wrong we do our own souls to vegetate like irrational creatures or to spend our God-given faculties that were made to engage not stars and planets but angels and seraphim and God himself. Say we do a terrible wrong against our own souls when we use such faculties as we have to fool and play and neglect our souls.

For what is your life, James asks, what is your life? You possess the most precious thing in the world. I was out in the country the other day with Brother Ty, Brother Olson, Maxie, and who else? Rex. Yes, he's old.

I ought not to forget him. We were out there and we saw a hundred purplish spears being patented for the market. Great, fine-looking colors they were.

I guess they'd weigh 650 pounds. The man said he thought they would average 800. Well, they had everything apparently, but they lacked one thing.

They lacked that which the poorest man in Chicago has. The skid row bum that lies tonight in a stupor on Madison Street has what the finest-blooded steer doesn't have. He has a soul.

He has a life given from God. He has that which he'll have no termination, but it'll be on and on and on. What is your life? You possess it, and it's the most precious thing in all the world, for it gives meaning to everything else.

It's the loan of God to you. I don't know how God makes souls, but I know God lends them to us. It's a loan of God.

When the little lube baby crawls his protest to the round world, his mother cuddles him warm against her breast, God has lent him a soul. And God says to that little one later, when he can understand it, Consider thy ways. Come now, let us reason together.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. And God does not expect that one to whom he has lent a soul to act like one to whom he has not lent a soul, for you cannot use that personal human pronoun about an animal. God doesn't expect us or expect that animal, however blooded and however fine, to respond, because there's nothing there to respond.

But God has given us a soul. Though I were to suffer and have to suffer the pains of the damned for a thousand years, I wouldn't give up that which I know to be my soul. My soul, that in me that is likest to God of anything in the universe, I wouldn't give it up, I wouldn't give it up.

And though purgatory were so and a man must roast or boil or broil in some purgatory for a thousand years, I say he's fortunate and lucky and ought to thank God in the fire that he still has his soul. I don't believe in purgatory, but I say that even if it were, I would still say a man's lucky to have his soul. What potentialities, what unbounded possibilities God has given to the man with his soul.

You know, young people, you have a soul. Some dear young people, God bless them these days, don't know they have anything but glands. They live on their glands, they run on their glands.

Yes, you have a set of glands, all right, and God gave them to you, and you oughtn't to be ashamed of it. But in addition to having glands, you have a soul. And think how many millions tonight in this great favored

land of ours who don't know they have anything but glands.

They live, they live by their glands and their nerves. And whoever can stir the glands of the greatest number of people can make a million dollars a year. Elvis is doing it.

And Elvis has never stirred anything but the glands of the people, the feeble-minded, the over-sexed, the old and disappointed, and those who've forgotten that they have a brain in their head. Now, this life that God's given us, this soul, is what you make. Come and consider, think a little about it.

Consider your way. Think of that soul of yours. God won't accept the responsibility for making it any more than what it is now, because God gave it to you with potentiality.

It's as though I were to take 20 pounds of the finest clay to a pot and permission him to make me a vase. I wouldn't be responsible for anything that's planned. I would say, I want the vase to be so high, so large, I want it to be decorated this way, and I want it to be painted and varnished and burnt and painted and varnished and burnt again.

I could give him the instructions or what I want. But if I came back and found a cheap pot, all askew, lumpy and hopeless, I wouldn't be responsible, because I had furnished the finest clay and I had laid the plan and I had given the commission. And the potter who couldn't come through deserves no pay.

God has put in your hands that which is finer than the finest clay. God has given you a soul. Think what men have done with their souls.

You're just looking, Chase and I tonight, and I could be looking at a book up in the study, by Bernard of Cervaux. Why, there's music even in the words. Actually, you can sing it.

Bernard of Cervaux. Beautiful, beautiful. He's the man who wrote Jesus, the very thought of thee with sweetness fills my breath.

It's sweeter for thy face to see, and in thy presence all. But Bernard of Cervaux, his soul wasn't of any finer clay than yours or mine. Using an illustration, for certainly the soul is not made of clay, the body's made of the clay.

But the soul that God put in Bernard of Cervaux is no finer than the soul he put in you, or me, or Al Capone. And God isn't responsible if with his life and intelligence and the word of God before us and the pleading of the Holy Ghost, we do nothing about it. You can't blame heredity, blaming heredity when Esau and Jacob were brothers.

You can't blame environment when one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be sleeping in one's bed, two shall be plowing in the field. That's environment.

If environment made the soul, then there would be no distinction. The two shall be sleeping in one bed, one shall be taken and the other left. Maybe they're brothers or sisters who slept together from the time they were born.

Maybe they're two brothers or a father and son plowing there in the field, one shall be taken and the other left. So what happens to your soul, you can't blame on heredity and you can't blame it on environment. And if you're so infinitely choddily cheap as to blame it on your parents and the way you were treated at home, I haven't any sympathy or any message, I'm afraid.

He says, I had to go to school and I didn't have very good clothes and so I felt ashamed and I got an inferiority complex. My parents were very religious and they took me to church and made me go to Sunday school and I had holes in my shoes and that turned me against religion and that's why I'm not a Christian. Oh my brother, what a mousy attitude that is to take, what a cheap attitude, what an excuse and the thinnest thing in the world is an excuse.

And the only thing smaller than an excuse is a man who try to hide behind. So we blame our parents or our heredity or our environment. And Esau and Jacob had the same parents and one was loved of God and the other driven from God's presence when one shall be taken and the other left at the coming of Christ.

So what is your response? Think about it a little think about it young people. You can't live forever on thrills, you can't live on the oppression of your glands, you can't live on parties, you can't live on long protracted telephone conversations and witticisms and funny remarks. Think on your way, consider your way, come let us reason together.

God sent his son with power to save from death and darkness in the grave and he calls you tonight and says consider and think on your way. Now when that soul of yours is wasted it's gone and it's gone for good but I just want to close by saying three or four things here. One is I want you to consider very carefully that your powers of moral reflection are getting weaker and weaker.

Do you know what has happened in this generation? You know what has happened? We have quenched the powers of moral reflection in even in church circles so that we have our demanding of religious writers that they give us something condensed, brief, colorful, dramatic and full of illustrations geared into the events and the time that requires no thinking at all. Anybody that wants to do it can start today and in a short time he can read completely through Dickens because Dickens tells stories and nothing but stories and we're demanding stories in this day in which we live and we're demanding it to be brief and succinct and to the point so that we can get at something else. Moody Publishers brought out under the editorship of Wilbur Smith what they call the Wickliffe series or Wycliffe if you like series.

They were the great books of the purist and divine but they tell me they stand on the shelves and gathered. People are not buying them. The reason they're not buying them is we have developed a mentality that simply cannot bring itself to attack a serious book.

It's got to be fed to them with an eyedropper like a baby robin that's been pushed out of the nest in a storm. And because we feed Christians with an eyedropper we have weaklings instead of great souls and great saints. Consider your power of reflection will be getting weaker.

The little three-year-old asks more questions than the thirty-year-old and the thirty-year-old asks more questions than the fifty-year-old. So I recommend most earnestly that you consider that your powers of reflection, moral reflection, will be getting weaker as you get older and your habits are getting set and it'll be harder to break them later on. And your prejudices are getting stronger and I ask you to note that.

And the danger that your stubbornness will be accepted by God as your response. You see everybody responds some way or other. And God waits, patiently waits and waits and sometimes it seems endlessly waits and then one day God says, I accept that.

That's his response. I accept it. She or he's heard the gospel.

Maybe still in their teens, maybe in their twenties or thirties. But they've heard the gospel and heard the gospel and they have finally made their choice. They've settled it or they don't know it, but they've said not tonight, not now.

I've got too many things to do. And God says, well, that's his response and settled it. There's nothing anybody can do after that.

If today you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. And in the face of the four last things, consider your ways. You know what those four last things are? You well know them.

Death and judgment and heaven and hell. And here we are. We with intelligence and ability to think and consider and reflect the beasts that perish everywhere and all their beauty know nothing about this.

But God has lent you a soul for a while and says, reflect now and think and come unto me and believe on me and put away your sins and trust me. What are you going to do? And some of you young people, I'm just a little bit worried, just a little bit worried. I wonder how much is of God and how much is merely social.

I wonder if they can be put together or if they can be interlaced or they can't be torn apart. And I wonder if the social were suddenly removed, how much of the spiritual would be left. I wonder about that.

It seems we have always been doing something to keep happy. I don't know, maybe I was different, but I got converted so thoroughly, so thoroughly that I never had to do anything, only hold street meetings and testify and distribute tracts and study the scriptures and go to another meeting and pray and do some more praying and more meetings. Never had to have a lot of stuff to hold me together.

But now as they say we do, we have to have all these things to hold our people. I wonder if you took them suddenly away, how many Christians we'd have left of the whole bunch. My God, it's something to consider.

It's something to consider you, my young folks. You're not mad at me, kid, because you know I like it. And you know, even while I'm not in my teens, I love teenagers.

And they know I do. And God by his good grace still enables me to preach to young people anywhere and have them accept it. So I love young people, but I'm worried for you.

Have you thought about your soul lately? Or are you just in the swim, kind of a semi-socio-religious or religio-social stream of things? Stop a bit, think, look up, hear God speak and say to yourself, now wait a minute here, Junior or Shirley or whatever it is, just a minute. Am I really a Christian? Do I really know God? Am I really right with God? How long has it been since I've had a prayer that was anything but mumbling? How long has it been, young people, since you've thought God alone is your Bible and nobody knows? How long since there's been a tear of repentance or joy in your eyes? Are you just living on meetings and social fellowships and pizza? Or is there something profounder than that? Have you met God? Think, young people, on your way. And I'd be an evil false prophet if I didn't say these things to you.

And I know you won't be offended. Think, consider your ways and let's read them together. So the dear Lord waits to do something for you and to you that will be so real and wonderful and transforming and revolutionary that nobody, nobody can cheat you.

At 17 years old I met God. One year and a half later I met him in a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost and fullness of the Spirit. Then I began my education.

For years I read atheism and philosophical unbelief to the point that my head would ache and I would turn away and get on my knees and with joy say to God, O God, I know I can't answer this man, but I thank thee I have thee. And I'd have worship on my knees after having been knocked flat by a book. And if I hadn't met God, that book would have ruined me forever.

But I read them and continue to read them. I don't recommend you do it, but I did it. Atheism and unbelief and philosophy and psychology and the books that were then current, all the debunking books and the rest, but they never dared me.

For I knew Jesus Christ, for myself I had seen him, I had known him and he deigns to walk with me. And the glory of his presence shall be mine eternally. You can know God like that, young people.

And then you don't have to be afraid of what you learn. You don't have to be afraid of an unbelieving professor. You can stand up there and face him out and say, I can't answer your questions, but I can tell you my testimony.

I know Jesus from the past. Come, think, reason. What about it now? Let's pray.

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