

'How to Think as a Christian'

by A.W. Tozer

To think like God, we must escape the world's influences and cultivate the mind of Christ through revelation, inspiration, illumination, and the indwelling Holy Ghost.

Scripture: Matthew 16:21

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Mindset"

Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the necessity for Christians to think like God rather than conforming to worldly thoughts. He outlines four key elements to achieve this: revelation through Scripture, inspiration from the Holy Spirit, illumination of understanding, and the cultivation of a Christ-like mind. Tozer warns against the influences of the world that can corrupt our thinking and stresses the importance of actively engaging with the Word of God to maintain a heavenly mindset. He encourages believers to seek the mind of Christ through prayer, meditation, and fellowship with like-minded individuals.

Transcript

"How to Think as a Christian"

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer

March 17, 1957

Now, in the 16th chapter of the book of Matthew, the second of two talks on that, where Jesus began to show His disciples how He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him saying, be it far from thee Lord. You'll notice the margin says, pity thyself, Lord. This shall not be unto thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, get thee behind me satan. Thou art an offence unto Me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

My almost invariable method is to consult anywhere from five to a dozen or more translations in order that I may be sure I know just what the man said, or what Christ said, or the prophet said, or the apostle. And what Jesus said here was this, you're not thinking like God, you're thinking like a man. Last week, I talked about that and showed that human sympathies and affections can get in and make us think like human beings down on the earth instead of spiritual beings born from another world. And I closed with the question, how shall we escape the world's influences, and think the thoughts of God, we Christians?

For you see, the world has all of the techniques of brainwashing. The world has all the techniques. They have literature, schools, the general-accepted mores of society; they have history and tradition. They have every kind of sort of communication now, the two new methods of communication, radio and television. And they have all this.

And so, the world creates a mentality, but it is not the mentality of heaven. It is the mentality of earth. And the work of the Holy Ghost is to create on earth a mentality of heaven in the hearts of people who are on earth, but whose interests are in heaven.

Now, how shall we escape the debauchery of our minds by the world? And how shall we gain the mind of Christ so that we shall think like God? Well, briefly, there are I said, three, I said four last week, but I want to give you a fourth one. The first is revelation, the Scriptures of truth. You see, there are two kinds of theology abroad. There are three kinds. There's a theology of the world, which is simply paganism. That's all, nothing else, just paganism. They may name the name Jesus or God or the Bible or have some Biblical words, but their theology is that of the world. It's been influenced by Christianity, but not controlled by it. So that while it is not Greek or oriental, it's pagan. Nevertheless, it's American paganism and we must, then there's a second, we must correct that, there's a second. We'll never be able to correct the world's theology, but there is a second, and that is, the church's theology.

And the church's theology is a compound of badly, infrequently read and badly understood Scriptures, along with what has been called, chimney corner Scripture, and what Paul called old wives tales. And when you shake this all up together, you have a strange and corrupt mixture which is neither one nor the other. It is neither Christian nor totally heathen, but it's a mixture in between.

Well, how are we going to get to the truth, the Word of God? This book that I hold in my hand is the Word of God. And we correct misconceptions and cleanse our minds and deliver ourselves from wrong thoughts about God and ourselves and the world and sin and the future by reading the Scriptures themselves. There never was a time when so many Bibles were printed. It's the world's best seller, everybody knows it. And I read just this week, this last week, that the librarian down at the main library down in the city said that the Bible was the most asked for and the most read book that they have down there. That is true and that's good. But it's not good enough. In going to the Scriptures, we are not to go to them to criticize them nor to bring anything to them, but to find out what they teach about all these things, and what they teach about God and Christ and creation and man's relation to Himself, and man's relation to God and man's relation to the future. And all of these things that we must know, we'll have to go to the Bible to find it out.

There is a sentence used by, I think the Baptists, which ought to be true of everybody, that it is the, what do they call it, the source book of faith and practice, the only alone source of faith and practice. What we are to believe and how we are to live is given to us by revelation. And the Spirit breathes upon the Word and brings the Truth to sight. And we must go to the Scriptures themselves, the Word of God and read the Word of God.

How much Bible reading do we do? That's an important question. Because I well know how much newspaper reading we do. I well know how much reading is done of other things. And remember, whether you know it or not, if you do not constantly correct your thinking and purify your mentality by the Word of God, you will be thinking like a man and not like God just as sure as you live, and nothing will change it but that. There's revelation. That's first.

Then there's inspiration. And what do we mean by inspiration? We mean the Spirit's impulses within the mind to correct any wild notions that we might have. Job talked about the wild ass' colt, the untamed wild creature given over to its impulses and whimsies, that puts its nostrils in the air and snorts and bays and races across the fields untamed and uncorrected. And so with the impulses of the human heart, even Christian impulses, unless we have what the old men used to say, the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, you know, when we came under the domination of the imagination-less, inspiration-less, beauty-less culture, we got afraid to talk about the influences of Spirit because they said while the Spirit is not a thing, the Spirit is a person.

Well, of course we know it's a person. We can quote the creed's. We know what the Bible says about it. We know the Holy Spirit is a person and not an it, though even the King James version uses it once or twice. But the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. But, shall we say, that because He's a person, He can't have influence? They talked about the influences of the Spirit. And they believed that there was a divine inspiration that came on men, and came through the Scriptures and by means of the Scriptures. But that it put within the hearts of Christian men, impulses to righteousness, the influences of the Spirit, they called it. We will rule that all out. Nobody will talk about that now. But that's one of the things we ought or bring back into the church again, and, and dust it off, and polish it up, and make it mean what it used to mean, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the heart to correct the wild notions that we have; the impulsive, Adamic notions and ideas, and bring them into line with revelation.

Then there is a third word and that is illumination. It's not quite the same as inspiration, for inspiration has to do with impulse and influence, while illumination has to do with Divine Light that falls upon the Scriptures. The Spirit breathes upon the Word and brings the Truth to sight. And it was our father's belief that the word of God could not be understood unless the Spirit breathed upon it. The Methodist believed that. The early Baptists believed that. The Salvation Army believed it, and the Lutherans used to teach it. And it was true taught in the Presbyterians. All Protestantism once believed it, that it took an illumination of the Holy Ghost to make us see Truth. And the German said, the heart is always the best theologian, always better than the head, because it's there the illumination falls.

So, illumination is the third word. And we must have the illumination of the Spirit on the Scriptures. Saw through the Word of God. Saw through it and read it through, and yet never have any illumination on it. It's like walking in the night. But when we have the illumination of the Spirit, breathing on us, then we know we know. And it saves us from the darkness of reason, for reason is dark, don't forget it. In the world they tell us, and this is part of the world error; they say reason is a lamp. And there is a sense in which that is true. Reason is a lamp.

When I was a boy, I went fishing with an old fellow named Billy Q as I recall, an old man. And we fished along a creek, or run, we called them there. It was very dark, very dark. We had no lights of course, of any sort, and it was very dark. But he had a fire going. And I said, Billy, how are we going to get home? How are we going to get out of here. We were really in the bushes. And he smiled in front of the fire there. He was an old woodsmen and an old fisherman and he knew. So, he picked up a firebrand. And you know, a burning firebrand gives off very, very little light. But Billy knew what to do with it, so he just began to swing it. And swinging it around his head, he walked ahead of me. And as he swung it around his head, the flame went out, but the glow came on, and Billy enlightened our pathway. Illumination took us clear up the path and back onto the road so we knew where we were out of the bushes. He did it by swinging around this brand that glowed by the wind, in the wind.

Now, that is one kind of illumination. But there's a better kind, and you know what it is. We have now the electrical lights, various sorts of electric lights. And we have artificial lights which aren't really artificial. They're actually, they go back to the sun, but they're caught and funneled in another way and we call them artificial. And that kind of illumination is infinitely better than swinging a firebrand round your head.

Well, now about all the light that you and I can have by nature is the light of the firebrand we swing around our head. But there is a better light than that, and it is the illumination. Reason is a firebrand, and it's better to have it than not to have it. And if we do have it, it'll help us to walk right and stay out of jail and look after our families and be decent. Reason will do that. And we can by vigorously swinging a little stick we call reason. We can get enough light to walk right, but we can't get enough to save us from the torch itself. We can't get enough to save us from the world itself. It takes revelation plus illumination that our minds might be illuminated by that which is above reason. If you think that Paul ever fell on his knees before reason, and Paul was Greek-taught, don't forget it. Paul knew the Greek and was taught by the Greeks under the Greek philosophers and knew about them and could quote them. And yet, if you think that Paul was on his knees before reason, read 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. That's all you have to do. Just read 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, and you'll know better from that time on. For He said, where's the wise man? Where's the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world and the reasoners, that God made them all foolish, and He has by the Holy Ghost through the gospel given us the real light. And then I mentioned a fourth, and that is the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself to create the mind of Christ in us.

But I want to issue a little warning right here, and it is that no single act of grace will do for us alone, and we with finality, what we want. I picked up a hymnal here, my old 108-year-old hymnal. I go to it sometimes as a source of inspiration. Here was a man of God and they used to sing this in the Methodist Church and other churches. Jesus, plant the root in me; all the mind that was in Thee. Settled peace I then shall find, for Jesus is a quiet mind. Anger no more shall feel, always even, always still. Meekly on my God recline, Jesus is a gentle mind. I shall nothing know besides Jesus and Him crucified. Perfectly to Him be joined, Jesus is a loving mind, I shall triumph evermore, gratefully my God adore. God so good, so true, so kind; Jesus is a thankful mind. Lowly, loving, meek and pure, I shall to the end endure. Be no more to sin inclined, Jesus is a constant mind. I shall fully be restored to the image of my Lord, witnessing to all mankind, Jesus is a perfect mind.

Now they used to long for that, and when a young preacher came to be ordained, they said, have you succeeded in entering into the experience of this perfect mind, perfect love? And he said, no sir, I haven't yet. And they said, are you seeking? And if he could say, yes sir, vigorously; earnestly seeking they would ordain him. They wanted to know that he either had had some kind of an experience or was earnestly seeking.

Well now, I want to warn that no single act of grace, and it's never meant to teach it, no single act of grace will do this alone. The mightiest, overwhelming anointing of the Holy Ghost that ever came on a man, will not do this work finally and alone. We can undo the work of God and do it in our own hearts. God wants to baptize us with a spiritual mind and He will do it, but it requires that we live by the Word, that we study the Word, that we fill our minds with the Word, that we look to Him every moment for illumination.

And then there comes our fifth word, cultivation. There is something for us to do. We must cultivate the Spirit's mind, the mind of Christ. Let this mind be in you, said the man of God. Bent is really what He meant rather than intellect. But let this mind be in you. We've got to cultivate. It's a great mistake to think that we can get converted and then because we have it in Christ, we have everything and from there on

we can give little attention to it. It's a great mistake to think that if we go on and are filled with the Spirit of God, that's the end of it, and that there's nothing nowhere from there.

My brethren, when Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed is the word that was used by Peter, anointed with the Holy Spirit. Do you know the next thing He did? What was it? He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. That was the next thing. So, don't think for a second that the anointing of the Holy Ghost in any degree or measure that God may give or may have given it to you is sufficient. There must be cultivation. And by steeping our minds in the wrong things, we can undo the work of God in making the mind of Christ.

I wonder if I could dig up kind of a grotesque illustration. Suppose that there is a very fine interior decorator. He has consulted the finest, most artistic minds that he can could locate, and he is busy decorating a room. And he has his various colored paints there, and he's doing it slowly. And this room is evidently going to be a beautiful room, beautifully designed and beautifully done. And then quitting time comes and he goes home and in the middle of the night, some scoundrelly little vandal-ish boys come in and to have themselves a good time, and I wouldn't have been above it when I was a kid. They pick up brushes and go to work, and undo everything up to that moment. And it's repeated the next night and the next night. That's exactly what you and I can do my brother. The mighty Holy Ghost can bring a thankful mind, a noble mind, a pure mind, and begin to teach us to think the thoughts of God. And we can walk right out and fall into the hands of influences like bad boys that will paint weird pictures and make our ugly faces all over the walls of our hearts. And instead of the walls of Zion, standing in their beauty, they will be defaced by the mischief of the devil.

So, you and I have to cultivate the mind of Christ. You cannot without the Scriptures have the mind of Christ, and you cannot know the Scriptures without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But even these will not keep your mind heavenly unless you cultivate a heavenly mind, by prayer, by meditation, by dreaming over the Scriptures, by deliberately thinking God's thoughts about things, and by deliberately eliminating the influences that make your mind either impure or worldly.

I sometimes don't care whether I'm with some certain Christians or not. They don't do me any good and I can't do them much good. For everything from the time, you get with them until you leave is the world. It's the world, it's a nice part of the world, but it's the world nevertheless. But there are some thank God that when you talk to them, the conversation swings around as a needle in the compass swings around to the north magnetic pole. And pretty soon, you're talking about wonderful things. They that loved the Lord met and talked often one with another. And the Lord heard it and wrote it down in a book. And they shall be mine, saith God in that day.

We can be too jocular. We can be too worldly. We can know too many things, and we can be interested in too many things, and thus scatter our mind. Jesus talked about a single eye, and Paul said, this one thing I do. So there must be a unifying of the forces of our minds and a settling of our minds on the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we'll think like Jesus. Would you say that narrows our minds, narrows them terribly? Oh, my friends, just what little experience in a small, imperfect way that my own heart has had, I want to tell you that it doesn't narrow them at all, but it releases them into a vast world of freedom, our minds I mean, into a vast world of freedom that we never knew before.

He is not a caged-bird, who looks heavenward and moves toward God. He's released. He's in the cage who thinks as man thinks. Peter was in a cage. His mind was in a prison when he said, Lord, that isn't the

way we do it here. Don't go get yourself killed. You don't need to. Pity yourself, Lord. He was in a cage, and it was the Lord who was free when He turned on him and said, you're thinking like a man instead of like God. That's not good grammar, but that's the way we say it now. We're thinking as a man thinks instead of as God thinks.

Now, my brethren, may we not these days, don't go home from church this morning, or wherever you're going, and by remembering the latest Reader's Digest quip, or the funny thing somebody said, or some worldly thing, dissipate the influences of the Holy Ghost. But, rather go and live in line with them. And then you move upward into freedom. And it's the centered mind that is the free mind. It is the scattered mind that is an imprisoned mind. And the mind of the world is imprisoned, but the mind of the Christian is released upward into God, upward into infinitude, upward into the vast sea of being we call the Godhead.

So, that is how we escape the evil influences of the world and get a mind like Christ: revelation, inspiration, illumination, the indwelling Holy Ghost, and cultivation.

I hope you'll be back tonight. There will be a lot more here. If things go as they have been, I think they will. Some are coming that I know from out of town. And I want to talk tonight and give the 10th in a series which I've been following Sunday nights and we'll have one of those gracious, wonderful song services. I don't ever hear anything like it anyplace to go. And I could come and sit and listen and join in with my cracked baritone and when time comes to preach, I could go home and say, well, I've been to church. So you come tonight. Breathe deep before you get here. Get your lungs ready. We're going to have a great evening by the grace of God. All right.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/how-to-think-as-a-christian/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net