

Think

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon emphasizes the indispensable role of emotional life and right thinking in glorifying God and pursuing joy in Him.

Duration: 1:06:27

Scripture: Acts 17:2, Acts 20:27

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of using our brains and logical thinking in both natural and spiritual matters. He highlights the significance of reading and understanding the Bible, as it contains the preserved knowledge of God's Son becoming flesh. The speaker also criticizes those who misuse their intelligence to distort the truth and deceive others. He encourages listeners to follow the example of the apostle Paul, who renounced deceitful ways and instead proclaimed the truth openly.

Transcript

Thank you very much. Thank you all for being here. It's really an honor to talk to God's servants.

I would rather talk to pastors than anybody except one group, my home church. I love preaching to Bethlehem and look forward to being there in January. Well, let's review and then launch into the balancing side of such an emphasis on the affections or emotions or feelings.

The main point this morning was that our emotional life or our affectional life, which I believe is a spiritual, not a mainly physical thing, even though our physical bodies are involved, is indispensable in glorifying God because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. I reminded pastors that this implies they should tell their people, you should tell your people, that they should make the pursuit of this joy in God the vocation of their lives, even if it costs them their life or they have to cut off their hand or pluck out their eye to get it and keep it. There isn't anything more costly in the world than to pursue joy in God.

Nothing requires more self-denial than to pursue joy in God. Does that feel contradictory? It isn't. The only reason Jesus would ever commend self-denial is that you're eating something suicidal.

Stop eating that. I don't care how good it tastes. I love you.

He didn't tell us to deny ourselves so that we could go to hell or be miserable. He told us to deny ourselves so that we'd have life. So I hope it doesn't feel contradictory when I say nothing requires more self-denial than the pursuit of joy in God.

And then I said that pastors should realize that their own pursuit of joy is essential to love their people because of Hebrews 13, 17. If you minister in joy and not if you if you minister not with joy, but with groaning, you will be of no advantage to your people. So we have to fight for joy daily, every morning.

George Mueller said his main battle every day was to be happy in Jesus because he had these orphanages to run and 60 decisions to make every hour. And he had nothing to give to anybody if he wasn't rooted in Christ and happy in Jesus. That was his main goal when he knelt over his Bible in the morning.

So we pastors have our our work cut out for us, our lives and our people's lives depend on our staying alive to joy in God. And then I said that we should, in our preaching, according to Second Corinthians 124. Work with them for their joy.

We don't lord it over them. We come alongside and work with them for their joy. I have in my mind that whatever sermon I preach to my people, I don't care how hard it is or how controversial it is or how demanding it may be.

The goal of it is their joy forever in God. Psalm 1611, you have shown me the path of life in your presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. That's all I want for my people.

Fullness forever, fullness forever. So if they're, which they are, out in the world getting addicted to everything but the presence of God, I'm after them with all my might to cut that off. The world offers you 95% proof joy.

And I don't give a rip about 95% proof joy. 100% or I'm not interested. And the world may offer it for 80 years.

And I say not interested, not interested. So all the youth ministers tell your young people that. 80 years goes by just like that.

Then you live forever, forever. Now, what do you want? Come on, be smart here. Don't be stupid.

Do you want 80 years of what the world can give you, which is pretty good? Or do you want 10 billion billion ever increasing ages of joy? You never dreamed. So get them to be rational, get them to think, which is what we're going to talk about here now. So what I want to argue is this right thinking about God exists for the sake of right feelings about God, or I'll give you six more ways to say it.

I like to think up rhyming ways and alliterative ways. And so here goes a whole list. Logic exists for the sake of love.

Reasoning exists for the sake of rejoicing. Reflection about God exists for the sake of affection for God. The head is meant to serve the heart.

Knowing the truth is the basis for admiring the truth. So both thinking and feeling are indispensable. Absolutely indispensable.

But they're not both ultimate. Affections are ultimate. Thinking is penultimate, both essential.

I'll give you one little argument for that statement. The devil is a good thinker. And all of his feelings are wrong.

All of them are wrong. He knows more doctrine than you do. That's true.

He does. He knows more about God that's true than you do. He hates it all.

He hates it. So you want to be like the devil? Make thinking your aim. The devil can't feel anything right.

Isn't that just horrible to think about? And that's where you're going if you don't follow Jesus. You won't ever be able to feel anything right. All of them are wrong.

You'll hate what you shouldn't hate. You'll love what is suicidal and destructive. And everything will go haywire if you don't have God as the sun at the center of your solar system.

And make him the blazing center of your life. So that's where I'm going. I'm going to argue now for this first column of logic and reasoning and reflection.

Thinking. Because I know there's one group of you who love the feelings. And another group of you who love the thinking and the doctrine.

And I'm just pleading with all my heart that you not be an either-or kind of person. But a both-and kind of person. You'll obviously be different.

Some of you are born to be thinkers. And some are born to be feelers. And I just want the feelers to think a little more.

And the thinkers to feel a little more. And everybody to respect those who are called in one emphasis or the other. Let me give you a reason.

I'm going to give you ten Bible arguments for why thinking is so important. But before I do that, maybe a little story or a made-up illustration for why right thinking about God is essential to being satisfied with him in such a way that he gets honor from it. There are feelings for God that don't honor God because they're feelings rooted in falsehood.

Bad theology can produce feelings. And those feelings for a God represented falsely are feelings that don't honor him because they don't correspond to who he really is. I love that phrase from Conrad when he said, if you dim down the light of truth, you don't know who you're holding hands with.

I mean, you get goosebumps. But you might turn it on and find it's a monster. So here's the story.

You're walking down the street and you have a bag with ten thousand dollars in it. So compute. And a man comes up to you and you say to him, would you deposit this for me in my account in the bank? You don't know this guy at all.

Not at all. And he says, what's in it? Ten thousand dollars cash. And I would like you to deposit for me.

And there's the bank. It's Wells Fargo. Here's my account number.

And just here's the deposit slip. Please go go deposit for me. And he looks at you and says, I don't know you.

You're going to give me ten thousand dollars and go down. What if I just walk away with it? Why are you trusting me? And he says, no reason. I just feel trust for you.

Let's feel it. Now, here's my question. Is the man that you have just asked to deposit this honored by that trust? He's not.

If he is, he's stupid. The reason he's not honored is because you're crazy. You have no reason to trust him.

You don't know his character. But your feeling is I can trust him. That is no honor to him at all.

You're just out of the blue picking a person off the street and saying, I trust you. If he feels honored by that, he's just clueless. He he doesn't understand reality.

Now, switch the story. You're walking down the street bag with ten thousand dollars. You stop a man.

He doesn't recognize you. And you say, would you deposit this, Joe? And what's in it? Ten thousand dollars. How do you know me? Why do you why are you trusting me? He says, well, you don't know me, but we work in the same building and I've been there about a year and you've been there longer.

And I watch you every day. I watch your attitudes. I watch your work ethic.

I watch the way you talk about your wife and your kids. I've watched you and I could give you five character traits in you that I admire very much and make me totally confident you will not steal my money. So would you please deposit that? Here's my account number.

I trust you with it. Now, the question is, would that man feel honored by your trust? And of course he would. Why? Because the trust is rooted in knowledge.

That's real simple, isn't it? If you know him. And trust him because of what you know about him, he'll be honored. But if you just leap into the dark and base it on Lucy Goosey feelings, he gets no honor from that.

So that's why this matters a lot to me. The glory of God matters to me. And God gets no glory from irrational trust or feelings that don't root themselves in truth.

So here's where we're going. I'm going to give you in the time we have. I'll try to squeeze him in 10 evidences from the Bible for the indispensable role of thinking and knowing for right affections, right worship and right living.

So I'm arguing that this morning the affections are the ultimate way that God gets glory, but he doesn't get glory from affections. They're not rooted in right thinking about him. And therefore, this afternoon's message is essential to achieve this morning's goal.

OK, you with me and what I'm after anyway? And I don't really care what my opinion is or your opinion is. I care much about the Bible's opinion. You should only care about the Bible's opinion, not mine.

And so you should be testing Berean like everything I say by the word of God. So here we go. Romans chapter 10, verse two is number one.

We'll zip through these. We got 10 of them. We'll see.

We'll see if we can get it done. So Romans chapter 10, first several verses is shocking, frightening, clear brothers. My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

He's somebody's kinsman, his Jewish brothers and sisters. I bear them witness. They have a zeal.

OK, that that's the biblical word for passion. I just use the word passion a lot. The Bible's word is zeal.

They have a zeal for God, but. It is not according to knowledge. Now, did you notice what he said about them in verse one? They are not saved.

This is terrifying. You can have a zeal for God and not be saved. Their theology is wrong.

They have a zeal that does not accord with knowledge. So argument number one from the Bible, Paul says there is a passion and Piper is all about passion. And he may be sending some of you to hell.

If you don't get this second point, namely, that passion that doesn't accord with knowledge may leave you unsaved, not just dishonoring to the Lord. That's number one. Number two, Second Timothy, chapter two, verse seven, Second Timothy to verse seven.

One of the most important verses in my life for understanding the life of the mind. In relationship to the sovereign work of the spirit in illumination. Second Timothy to verse seven, Paul says, Timothy, think over what I say.

So think about my letter to you. So that's what you should do. Think over what I say, because the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Now, there are so many people who love the second half of that verse. And therefore, take it or something like it, close their mind and their book and go out and say. Do that, give me understanding, go ahead, do it.

You said you would do it. Give me understanding. That's really dangerous.

Go out in the woods alone. Open yourself up. You said you would do it.

The Lord gives understanding. Give it. And then there are other people who love the first half of the verse.

Think over what I say. Man, am I a student of this book. And they think they don't need divine help, divine illumination, the sovereign in breaking of the Holy Spirit on this fallen brain and this heart to open it to what's here.

So that they don't get it wrong or twisted or get it all imbalanced. And so they're not over here depending on the Lord's giving their over here self-sufficiently thinking. Just don't make that choice.

Don't make that choice. Notice the little connecting word. For.

The ground of our confidence that our thinking could get anywhere is that in and through thinking, the Lord gives understanding. When you read verses, don't rip them apart, put them together. Think over what I say for the Lord is the giver, but he has ordained to give understanding through thinking.

Isn't that the clear implication of both halves of the verse? So, yes, we need divine illumination. We can't do anything without the Holy Spirit. We will make such a mess of this book if we don't have divine help and illumination.

And if we try to get this book right on our own, we'll hurt a lot of people. But if you try to depend on the Holy Spirit without thinking about the book, don't count on it. That's number two.

Number three, let's go to Acts chapter 17. Act 17, first several verses there, especially two and three. Before I read those verses, just.

The way the Apostle Paul writes, say Romans spent eight years preaching through Romans. Romans is an amazingly thought demanding book. It is densely argued, densely thought through.

It is so compact. You open a piece and it's everything relates to everything. And reading chapter 16 in the light of one and one in the light of 16 to 12 in the light of six.

It just everything relates to everything. It just breaks your brain when you try to think about it. And and we should try to think about it.

That's the way Paul's mind worked. Now, John's not quite like that. The gospel of John, the epistle of John are very different.

John's like a bee buzzing around a light bulb. And you say, you got anything to say besides trust God and love people? He says, no, but I can say it so many ways. And so he's he's just going like this.

And Paul, he's like that. I'm a Paul guy. I'm preaching through John right now.

I've been in John for two years. This is hard work for me. I think John just a little more.

So in Acts 17, look at look at Paul, what he does in the synagogues every Sabbath. Verse three, explaining and proving that it was necessary. No, no.

I left out verse two. Go back. Verse two, Paul went in as his custom.

And on on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ. I think he uses that. I wrote it down here.

How many? Can't find my number. A whole bunch of times he uses that word reasoning lots of times in the book of Acts, Luke does. And so there you have a model for how the apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, under divine inspiration, opened the gospel in the synagogues.

He reasoned with them. And if Paul wrote Romans the way he did and he reasoned with people the way he did. Woe to us if we say I don't need to engage in that to follow him.

Number four, Jesus assumes that we will use logic in natural and spiritual matters. Let's go to Luke 12. The Gospel of Luke, chapter 12, and we'll read verses 54 to 57.

He said to the crowds, when you see a cloud rising in the West, you say at once showers coming. And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say there's going to be a scorching heat and it happens.

You hypocrites, you hypocrites. You know, you know, you're making really good use of your brain. You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky.

You're so great with natural revelation and reading the stock market and reading the weather. You've got good brains. I gave them to you.

But why do you not know how to interpret this present time? Now, the reason I say logic is this. I remember in seminary reading a book and it was kind of in the air back in the 60s that there was Hebraic, oriental kinds of thinking. And then there was Greek, Western kind of thinking and their intention with each other.

And what you find in Jesus and the Bible and the Jewish milieu was Hebraic thinking. And I used to listen and say, what? What? Because, I mean, thinking to me is is this. All men are mortal.

Plato is a man. Therefore, Plato is mortal. That's thinking.

That's Aristotelian logic. I think it's God's logic. Because that's what they were using, that Jesus commended in this Hebraic situation.

Every time the south wind blows, there's a scorching heat. Premise number one. Premise number two.

There's a south wind blowing. Conclusion. It's going to be hot tomorrow.

And Jesus says right on. You've got good Aristotelian logic built in by God. That's the way you use your brain every day of your life.

All you are thinkers. You just either do it consciously or not. And you do it well or not.

And Jesus got really bent out of shape that they could use it so well for natural things, not spiritual things. They should have formed premises about Him and drawn conclusions from Him and said, my Lord and my God. They couldn't do it.

They couldn't get premises right. They couldn't get the reasoning right. So Jesus assumes in this story right here that we use our brains that God has given us and the logical structures that are built in by reality in the image of God, not only in the natural realm, but also in the spiritual.

That's number four. Number five. Let's go over to Matthew 21.

This has had a big effect on me for the last 30 years or so, because in America anyway, I assume this is pretty global anyway in Western influence countries. Well, not just that. You know, the word spin spin politically, you put a spin on an event or spin on a comment that came out of a politician's mouth.

And and spin means you you say it in a way that it has an emotional effect that's negative. That wouldn't have to be negative if you didn't say it that way and shouldn't be negative because they didn't mean it that way. And it's so ugly.

I watch it happen in politics and watch it happen in churches. It happened to me on the phone the other day talking with somebody where I gave them an admonition and they shot back to me a repeat of what I said, which was not what I said. And I could tell the defensiveness was so big at the other end of this telephone.

There was no point in me pointing that out. And I didn't just shut up and said, OK, this is not the time. This is not going to work.

It's not going to work here to be logical with this person because they repeat of what I just said, put two things together that I had separated and the opposite. And so what I'm making a point here is that Jesus doesn't like this. So let's read.

Read this chapter twenty one, verse twenty three. Little story there and you'll see it right away. When they entered the temple, the chief priest, this is Matthew twenty one, twenty three.

The chief priests and the elders of the people came up to Jesus who was teaching and said, by what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority? And Jesus answered them. Now, this is a test to see what he's dealing with, OK? Because there's a certain kind of people he's not going to throw his pearls before Jesus says, I'll ask you a question. And if you tell me the answer to my question, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

The baptism of John, John the Baptist, baptism of John. Where did it come from? From heaven or from man. Now, watch these guys.

Watch what they do. I don't like people like this. And I feel I'm justified because I don't think Jesus did either.

They discussed it among themselves. I'm in the middle of verse twenty five. They discussed it among themselves, saying, if we say from heaven, then he will say to us, why then didn't you believe on him? But if we say from man, then we're afraid of the crowds because they hold John to be a prophet.

So if we give one answer, we're going to get hurt. And if we give another answer, we get trapped by Jesus because we should have believed if that's what we believe. What will you say? So they answered, we don't know.

I think Jesus is steaming. I really do. He said to them, I'm not going to talk to you anymore.

That's my paraphrase. It says, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these. Now, that's Jesus doesn't do that very often.

So here you are. The people ask you a genuine question and you say at the end, I'm not going to tell you why you can't stand that kind of duplicity behind the doors. Just weaseling and being expedient and trying to figure out what pieces of truth we can say and what we can conceal to save our skin.

Well, Jesus loves the open statement of the truth. Come what may. Let the chips fall where they will.

Let's be a people of truth. Use your brain not to weasel. Oh, there's so many smart people today.

People with PhDs who teach in big universities who use their brains to to destroy themselves, to get things all out of whack and hide and conceal. Let me read you from Second Corinthians a sentence and see if it sounds like that. We have renounced disgraceful and underhanded ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or tamper with God's word by an open statement of the truth. We would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. I said that the air that's blowing in the breeze is blowing through that verse is another atmosphere than than these guys.

That's Second Corinthians four to Second Corinthians chapter four. The first to be like that, not like these elders who said, if we say this, he's going to say, why didn't you believe? And if we say this, the crowd might beat us up. And so let's say we don't know which is out now.

Of course, they didn't know, but they thought they knew. And so to say they didn't know was a lie. Jesus doesn't like it.

He wants us to use our brains. In the open, dealing with the truth so that if you're in front of a crowd and somebody asked you a question that manifests, you've just contradicted yourself. You don't change the subject.

How many politicians you ask him, sir, what's your opinion about Afghanistan? Yesterday in Washington, we were a little bit. Did you hear the question? Of course, he heard the question and he's protecting himself. So Christians in politics and in churches and in companies, in committee meetings, we are the people of truth.

Right. We're going to say it like it is. Our our people should be able to say, you know what, Mary never needs to swear by God.

I'm telling the truth because her yes is yes and her no is no. You can trust her word. It's her bond and her law.

That's one thing we know about Mary. So love the truth like that. Number six, 13 times Paul asked the question, do you not know? Remember that little phrase? Do you not know? Most of them are in first Corinthians.

Do you not know? Now, when he asked that question, do you not know? It's always in the context of, well, if this and this and this are true of you, then do you not know? This would also be true of you. You know, aren't you drawing inferences and conclusions for your sexual life that are reasonable from what you know about your position? Let me just read you several of them. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Do you not know that we will one day judge angels? Do you not know that to lie with a prostitute is to be one with her? Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Do you not know that unrighteousness will not inherit the kingdom of heaven? Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? What's the point of talking like that? Knowing things govern your life.

If you know rightly you're going to judge angels, then you won't tell your brother, let's go to a secular court and get this figured out. No, no, you're going to go to a brother somewhere and say, would you listen to these two sides and help us come to terms and reconcile with each other? Because we are so at odds with what we're doing. We can't even reconcile.

We're going to go to you because we know you're going to judge angels someday. And therefore, surely you could judge between us. But revolutionize life, if you knew, if you knew.

So helping our people know, think rightly affects their sex life, this prostitute issue here, this temple of the Holy Spirit. You know, there are three places in Paul where sexual misconduct is directly related to bad knowing. Now, that may sound superficial and inadequate to you because of how non knowledge oriented lusts are.

Well, I'm 64 years old and I'm male, and I can testify that over time to have your mind keep clear certain horrors like hell into which you'll be thrown if you don't cut off your hand and gouge out your eye and certain glories like heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God that knowing these things affects my battle with pornography big time. And gives me great victories.

So don't belittle this. If it feels like it's not part of your arsenal, it wouldn't work. You just haven't seen it yet because the Bible says that's why knowledge is there.

The brain is should have an effect on your groin and it does. And if it isn't, you got brain work to do. Not just wear a chastity belt or something.

Number seven. The Bible tells us that Christ has given pastor teachers to the church. Hebrews 4:11.

He gave to the church some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry. And what are these pastors and teachers supposed to do? Well, in the list of qualifications in First Timothy, he must be apt to teach. Why? Because God has ordained that sheep get help in understanding from shepherds.

I mean. This is so obvious and yet. It doesn't have its full impact on us.

God is not totally democratic or what you say, totally egalitarian. He says most people are sheep, a few are shepherds. The sheep need to be taught by the shepherds.

That's why there are elders. Which means that some of us are called, like Paul says, to labor in word and teaching. I did the Scalia word and teaching usually translated preaching and teaching.

And that's some of the elders. You know, elders are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching. Which means they're the ones who stay up late and get up early and bang their brains against his book so that they can get the meaning that's right out of it and then stand before their people and make it simple enough for children and middle aged and adults to understand so that the church has knowledge and is fed well.

You love me, Peter? Lord, I love you. Feed my sheep. You love me, Peter? Yes, Lord, I love you.

Feed my lambs. Do you love me, Peter? Lord, you know that I love you. Feed my sheep.

What? What's that all about? God has ordained. He loves his bride. He loves his sheep.

Oh, how he loves his church. You better love her well. And that means teach her well, feed her well.

And that means use your brain to understand this book through prayer and reliance upon the Holy Spirit so that week in and week out these people are growing in knowledge. 2 Peter 3, 18. Grow in the knowledge and the grace of God.

Don't just pump them up. Don't just emotionally whip them up. Give them food.

Give them solid arguments. People love to have their brains challenged if you do it with real life. They want problems solved.

They want to know how this work this verse works. That's number number seven, that the Bible ordains that there be teachers and pastors who feed the flock. Number eight.

The Bible tells us in Acts 20, 27 to declare the whole counsel of God. That phrase, I did not shrink back. Paul says he's talking to the elders now on the beach in Miletus, the Ephesian elders.

He's talking to them and telling them what they need to be and do. And he's using himself as a model. And he said, I didn't shrink back from any of you, but I taught the whole counsel of God.

And therefore, your blood is not on my hands. If you make shipwreck of your faith and you wreck this church, it isn't because I didn't teach you the whole counsel of God, which which shows that the whole counsel of God is what deposit. It's called the deposit in other places.

The deposit that Paul left a good deposit, the faithful deposit. He left it and now he's done and he can go now. They are responsible for taking that whole counsel of God and opening it.

Now, if you think about the phrase whole counsel of God, whole plan of God, the word is bullet in the Greek, a plan or purpose or counsel, and it's got a wholeness to it. What does that imply? I think it implies that. This book is coherent, there's a certain wholeness to it.

You can't say everything in your whole life about this book, you just can't. So what should you try to do? You should try to work your way toward what's the whole. What's it? What's the center? What are the what's the gospel? Then what are the truths around the gospel that if they go wrong, the gospel will go wrong.

And then there's there's these less important things out here. There's a certain ranking of truths. And the wholeness is this this circle.

I mean, one of the reasons I'm a Calvinist is that I believe these these truths called the doctrines of grace. And just the sheer massiveness of the sovereignty of God in its totality guards the precious center of the cross. I'll just give you one little example.

When I say to people, God is sovereign over the sin in your lives and it wouldn't happen if he didn't ordain it. And what? You've just turned God into a sinner. No, no, no, no, no, no.

No, I haven't, because I'm operating with part of the part of the council here, which is that God is not sinning when he ordains that sin happen. They shake their heads. That that is double talk, Piper.

That's double talk. That's spin. You said spin was bad.

That's spin. You're just avoiding the problem. God is really a sinner if he ordains the fall or if he ordains sin.

Now, that kind of response to that argument from the sovereignty of God, you know what it's doing? It's endangering the substitutionary atonement. Can you put the dots together? The early church prayed in Acts, chapter four, verses 27 and 28. You, oh, God.

Predestined by your hand and plan that in this city. Your holy servant, Jesus, would be handed over to Herod and Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles and the Jews and be delivered up. God ordained the cross.

He ordained the ugliness of Pilate's expediency. He ordained the horrors of Herod's cloaking and mocking. He ordained the Gentile soldiers hammering the nails and he ordained the Jews crucify him, crucify him and every bit of that is sin.

And we have no savior. If he didn't ordain the sinful crucifixion of his son. And when I say that to people, they say, oh.

Him saying, I'm saying there are truths around the gospel substitution. He died for me. He provides righteousness for me.

My sin goes on him. His perfection goes on me. That glorious central truth is protected, guarded.

If you deny the sovereignty of God over sin, you implicitly deny that God ordained the death of his son. There wasn't a greater sin in all the universe than the killing of Jesus. You see how it works.

So now I'm no expert on where to draw the line around the whole council. I don't know. I don't know.

I'm just working at it all the time, trying to believe and understand and help others understand this wholeness of the Bible. I don't want to push into the center things out here. The reason we can be here is because some of you baptize babies and some of you don't.

And some of you believe in a certain kind of baptism in the Holy Spirit and others don't. And there's all kind of stylistic differences among you. But boy, are we loving the center.

And as we move out from there a little farther, maybe there's lots of reformed people in there loving this, these protective doctrines that surround. And then a little further out, we can start arguing with each other, get mad at each other out here. And those don't need to be pushed into the center to wreck this event.

For example, this event can happen and ought to happen without without punching each other about baptism or or maybe eschatology would be another one. Whether you're pre meal or post meal or meal, I got friends all over the map on this eschatology thing. So I'm saying here is when Paul talks about the whole counsel of God, he implies there is mental work to be done with the Bible to find that.

To discern what that is. That's number eight, number nine. Very simple, the Bible is a book.

Isn't it amazing that everywhere the the Christian gospel has spread, two things have sprung up, schools and hospitals, churches, of course, at the center. But out from the churches, schools get started and hospitals. And and the reason for the schools is because of the book.

My not all of my children wanted to put the work in to learn how to read well. One of my son wondered, why do I have to spell thing like everybody else does? Why can't I be creative in the way I spell? And I wrote him a paper. Why? It's a loving thing to do to spell the way others spell so you can communicate.

But the main reason I would give to my children for why they should learn how to read it, because God almighty, the creator of the universe, has ordained at the center that his son, the word become flesh. And the understanding of that event and all of its implications in history, both directions has been preserved in a book. It didn't have to be that way.

He could have done it with video, just ordained that video happened earlier, you know, could have done with cassettes, could have done with flannel graphs, could have done with drawings. He could have done it other ways. He did it with a book.

Thinking is required to read. Reading is thinking. Reading is thinking.

OK, this is a subject and this is a verb and this is an object. And in English they go like that. And if you put the verb over here, it's a question in English that that requires thought.

Now, children grow up just doing it naturally. But to do it well here, you have to be conscious and work hard and ask, why is that for in Second Timothy to seven? So all I'm saying is that God ordained for his precious self-revelation to be preserved in a book implies he means for us to use our minds. If you try to do an end run around this book because you believe in the Holy Spirit and go like this, it won't be the Holy Spirit talking to you.

I promise it'll be some other spirit. The Holy Spirit illumines his word and communicates Christ through the book. That's number number nine.

When I wrote one of the texts down here, Paul said in Ephesians three, four, when you read this, his letter to Ephesians, when you read this, you are able to perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ. Isn't that amazing? When you read this, you will perceive my insight into the mystery. There's no there's no cut around reading like I want the mystery.

I want to understand Christ. I want to get in him and know his fullness. Let's go around the Bible.

And Paul says, when you read in reading, you will understand this. Just a little preface here. Some of you may come from cultures that are preliterate.

I don't know. But I talked this over with Ajith Fernando, who's from Sri Lanka, because people got on my case one time, said, Piper, you talk like everybody knows how to read in the world. Most of the world doesn't even know how to read.

They can't even have books, no Bibles, no Bible translation. You say people without a Bible, without a Bible translation and no written language can not get access to Jesus. That what you're saying? It sounded like it, didn't it? I'm sympathetic with that.

I don't blow that off. So I went to Ajith because I knew Ajith as part of his ministry of Sri Lanka was to go out into villages where nobody's reading. I said, so do you believe in expository preaching to preliterate people? He said, absolutely.

There's no other way to do it. How does it work? Well, he said, we go out and somebody holds a book. This is a holy book.

This is a holy book. And he said, what's a holy book? Well, it's God's. God revealed himself to us with these markings.

It's a holy book. And I'm going to tell you what God put in here. And that man is going to tell you what this means.

It's something like that, he said. In other words, no, you don't have to be a reader. You don't even have to have a language that's written down to know Jesus.

But if you don't, somebody has to get it to you another way who has to read. Somebody has to say it to you who himself is reading. We've got to be a reader go between for you.

Ultimately, we're dependent on reading, which is why I'm a little bit cautious about the movement in our day. And I don't want to be negative here because I believe in the rightness of it. Orality.

I don't know if you talk about orality in missions where you teach native speakers, say, in Sudan or somewhere. They have no language written down in this particular tribe. And you they memorize one hundred and forty stories from the Bible, memorize them cold.

And they go out and they plant churches and they preach and tell the stories over and over again. It's called orality. And I'm safe because when I talk to these missionaries, they say, you think we're going to wait for Wycliffe to get the Bible into all the languages before we plant the church? No, no, no.

Don't do that. Well, what other way would you do it? That's a good way. I like your way.

Do it. Do it. But here's the here's the caution.

You don't want over decades for that church to be dependent on you. You don't want to create everlastingly dependent ethnic groups of people who are always saying those those missionaries from South Africa or wherever. They they taught us these stories and we're telling you and so they can read the book and we can read the book.

But I want to read the book for myself. So schools grow up and Wycliffe comes in and starts translating. And it's all driven by the fact that God God put it in the book.

OK, last one, number 10 examples of of reading forth and thinking that yield joy and love, because my point here is right. Thinking is the necessary means to right feeling and then right living. So let's just take a couple of examples.

Go with me to Psalm 100. I'm going to model for you what I mean for about five more minutes and then we'll be done. Psalm 100.

I don't know if you've ever noticed the structure in Psalm 100, but it's really remarkable. I'd love to draw it on the board for you, but I'll draw it in the air. There are four pieces to this song.

One, two, three. You can see him in my Bible anyway. There's a line skipped between these four pieces.

Interesting. So make a joyful noise to the Lord. All the earth.

Now that's a command to have a feeling. Noisy feeling, but a feeling make a joyful noise to the Lord. All the earth serve the Lord with gladness.

There's another command for a feeling come into its present with singing. There's another command for feeling because singing shouldn't be hypocritical. Next paragraph.

Notice the shift. I draw it. Here's my margin for the first one.

Come with gladness. Come with singing. Now shift over to the margin here, which supports that.

And it says no, that the Lord, he is God. It is he that made us and we are his. We are his people and the sheep is pasture.

That's theology, right? Theology underneath glad service and joyful singing and service. No, he's God. He made us.

We're his know something underneath. Now in verse three, four, it back out to the margin, enter his gates with thanksgiving. There's another feeling in his courts with praise.

There's another feeling. Give thanks to him and bless his name. There's another feeling.

Now, here we go back to the other margin for the Lord is good. This is theology. His steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

You get it. You've got these two units versus one and two and verse four are feeling commands and verse three and five are theological underpinnings. So there it is.

That's an example of what I mean that to think you have to see that and then it represents what I'm getting at. Namely that I want people to know in my church, but I don't want to mainly to know. I want to mainly to make a joyful noise to the Lord in all the earth.

And I want them mainly to serve the Lord with gladness. And I want them mainly to come into his presence with singing. But I know that they have to know that he is the Lord.

And I want them to enter his gates with thanksgiving, but they have to know that the Lord is good. That's the basic structure of the Bible, it seems to me. Affections are the goal.

Theology is the means. One more example. Matthew chapter seven.

And here for the for the doers among you, and I hope I hope that's a lot of you. I love doers. Doers are are dangerous and doers are glorious.

Because the danger is you tend to be pragmatists and short circuit the truth and affections. And the glory is that the Bible is filled with commands to do things. And if you don't do things for people, you don't love them.

Don't love in word or deed only or word only. OK, here we are in Matthew seven verses seven through twelve. Ask and it will be given you.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. He's telling his disciples.

God will open a door for you. God will answer you. Go ahead.

Knock. Ask for everyone who asks, receives. And the one who knocks, who seeks finds.

And to one who who knocks, it will be opened. This is the way God is. This is your father.

He will do this for you. He will answer your prayers. He'll hear you.

And then he wants to argue for that. He gives an analogy. He says, or which of you, if he has a son who asks him for bread, would give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, we'll give him a serpent.

Of course, the answer is we wouldn't do that. To our children. So he draws out the conclusion from the lesser to the greater.

Well, if you if you then who are evil, Jesus is so blunt. You know, when's the last time you said to your staff, if you all who are evil, if you then being evil, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more? This is logic.

This is there's a there's a name for this in Latin, but I won't bother you with it. This kind of logic. How much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? So.

The whole point of that little unit was you have a father, I came into the world so that if you would believe on me, you would have power to become the children of God. And so I've come to die for you, rise for you and cause you to be born again and adopted into God's family so that God is no longer your dangerous, wrathful creator. He is your father like this, like this.

He won't give you a stone ever, ever. Your father won't give you a serpent ever. Now, I put it that strongly because I know he doesn't answer every prayer you make.

There are prayers that are not according to the will of God. There are prayers whose timing is not right. There are all kinds of reasons why you may not get what you are asking for when you ask for it.

But what you can count on is if he denies your request, it's because he has something better for you. Always. You believe that, I wonder, because if we believe that, we wouldn't be so full of grumbling.

And we would trust him more than we do. My son, Benjamin, came to me one time and he wanted a snack. Can I have a cracker, Daddy? So I reached up and got the Ritz Cracker box, which had been there a long time.

And I pulled it down and I opened it and there was mold all over these crackers. And I pulled one out and I said, No, Benjamin, you can't have a cracker. So I'm God, right? Right? I'm God.

I'm his father. I love my son and he's asking for a cracker. Would I give him a cracker if he asked for a cracker? No, it's got mold on it.

Well, I said he didn't know what mold was. So I said, Benjamin, I'm not going to give it to you. It's got mold on it.

We can we'll find something else. I want the cracker. I'll eat the fuzz.

That's what he said. So I'm not about to be persuaded by that. I'll eat the fuzz.

You cry your eyes out. I'm not going to eat the fuzz. And God has to.

So I can't remember what we got for him. But to me, this text promises two things really clear. Not that I will always get the cake that I asked for, but I know I'll never get a stone.

Not that I always get the job I asked for, but I know I'll never get a serpent from my father. Now, I haven't made my point yet. This is all preparation for my last point.

My last point is only thinking. Will cause you to ask why the next verse begins with, therefore, verse 13. I'm sorry, verse 12.

It may begin with. So in your Bible, that's fine. They both mean the same thing.

The Greek, therefore, why is it there? Do you pause with your brain to ask, why is it there? The verse says so. Therefore, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. The golden rule.

It is the hardest command in the Bible, perhaps. Only do to others what you want done. Make your own desires for happiness and success the measure by which you seek others happiness and success.

What a what a high calling. It's impossible. And since it's impossible, Jesus knows that he has to give a massive foundation for it.

And the massive foundation is in that word. So you have a father who loves his children, never gives them a stone, never gives them a serpent, always provides what they need, even though it may think to them less than what they need. He loves you.

Therefore, you can take every risk in the world in loving other people. God is always there for you. He's always taking care of you.

You can go to the hardest place on the planet in missions and risk your life like the folks did in Afghanistan, who were all of them shot dead a few weeks ago. They had a father who would take care of them. Only thinking sees things like that in the Bible.

Why is the word so at the beginning of verse 12? And this becomes a sermon for your people. How are we going to love like verse 12 says, people, how are we going to love? And you don't you don't make up five points. You go to the argument.

The word therefore says it's because of what came before. We have a father who answers our prayers and takes care of us and never forsakes us. And therefore, we can do unto others what we want them to do unto us.

So my argument is not simply that right thinking produces right feeling, but it also produces love because that's what feelings do. They they spill over onto other people. When you love God and delight in God, your desire is that others be drawn into it.

And you're willing to lay down your life in order to get them included because your joy gets bigger every time they come in. So I think the messages that I have this morning and this afternoon are real simple. God made us thinking people and feeling people.

And thinking is essential to glorify God because God is most glorified in us when we're most satisfied in him. But a satisfaction in a God that is wrongly known is no honor to God at all. And therefore, right thinking serves right feeling and thus the honor and glory of God.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, make us, make us clear, humble, teachable, correctable thinkers over your holy word. Don't let us snap the tether between our hearts and your word and go off thinking in a way that's not tethered to the word of God.

Keep our thinking focused and centered on your word and then unleash, oh God, I pray, affections and emotions and feelings for you that deeply satisfy our soul and sever the root of all suicidal pleasures. And so free us to take the kind of risks in loving others that will make this world stand up and say, God is great. Jesus is wonderful.

In his name I pray. Amen.

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