

DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN MIND

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I. I WANT TO DEVELOP A CHRISTIAN MIND, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW?

A. This attitude is both common & understandable —

B. There is no doubt that we are to develop our minds as Christians —

1. We are admonished to love God with our mind — *"Jesus said unto him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, & with all your soul, & with all your mind."*

Matt. 22:37

2. We are admonished to have our minds transformed by its renewal — *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, & acceptable, & perfect will of God."*

Rom. 12:2

3. And, we are instructed to be prepared to give thoughtful answers to questions about the

faith — ***"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: & be ready always to give an answer to every man that ask you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness & fear:"***

1 Peter 3:15

C. A **mature** Christian mind has two aspects to it.

1. **First**, it is a mind that has developed the habit of being focused on **God** throughout the day.
 - a. It is a **mind** that is preoccupied with **God's will** & a **mind** that is directed toward **Him** in prayer & meditation — (see Psa. 16:8; Isa. 26:3; Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; 1Thess.5:16–18).
2. **Second**, a **mature** Christian mind is one that sees all of life through the lens of a Biblical worldview & is growing in intellectual excellence. —
 - a. A worldview is the **sum-total** of all the things we believe, especially about reality, truth, knowledge, integrity, & value.
 - b. A Christian worldview is a **Biblically grounded set of beliefs** about all of life,

from work, recreation, finances to God, discipleship, life after death, & morality.

- c. The person who has a mature Christian mind thinks of "all of life" through the primacy of the Absolute Truth in the teachings of Holy Scripture &, more specifically, of the Lord Jesus.
- d. A mature Christian mind sees no secular/sacred separation in his/her mind.

II. WHEN DOING A WORD STUDY OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF TRUTH,

A. We discover: *alētheia*, —

1. In the **Theological Dictionary of the N. T.**, we find an exhaustive entry about it —

2. We see **Truth** defined as: *that which describes real states of affair.*

a. In the **18th Century** philosophers were very much concerned about the **Science of Epistemology**, (of how we know anything),

- b. they wrestled at length with the question that *Pontius Pilate* asked of *Jesus*.
 - i. During *Jesus*' trial *Pilate* asked him, **“What is truth?”** — **John 18:38**
 - c. When we read the printed Word, we are not privy to the facial expressions, nor can we hear the inflections of tones of voice.
 - d. Was *Pilate* being cynical? Or, was he caught in a pensive moment of meditation after being confronted by *Jesus*?
 - e. We do not know, but it is a question that philosophers through the ages have tried to answer.
 - i. And it was this question that was the intense consideration of the 18th Century.
3. It was during the **18th Century**, that **John Locke** became famous for introducing the **Correspondence Theory of Truth** —
4. The **Correspondence Theory of Truth** states, quite simply, that **truth** is what corresponds to reality.

- a. Sadly, no sooner had **Locke** laid the groundwork for his definition of the **Correspondence of *Truth*** than the next generation of philosophers began to talk about the way in which our individual perceptions determine our understanding of truth —
- b. The question was raised: "*if **truth** is that which corresponds to reality, what if my perception of reality is different from yours?*"
- i. This was the birthing chamber for a world of relativism, revisionism, & the exploitation of opinion, making it equal to ***truth*** —

B. The Christian response is this: ***truth*** is that which corresponds to reality as perceived by **God**.

C. Only **God** has a comprehensive knowledge of all reality, for **He** alone is ***Omniscient***, ***Omnipresent***, & ***Omnipotent*** —

D. **God** knows reality in its absolute fullness.

- E. There is not a nuance, nor a microscopic or subatomic particle of the universe that is unknown to the *mind of God*.
- F. What *God* does, *He* knows — He knows perfectly, eternally, & exhaustively.
1. The *One* who knows all things without error is the Source of all truth.
- G. This is why the battle for *Bible Truth* is so vitally important, & why Christianity was founded upon the conviction that the *Bible* gives to us not the individual existential subjective insights of mortals, but the self-disclosure of truth that comes to us from the very Fountainhead & Source of all truth.
- H. *God* is the standard of all truth, which is what makes truth so sacred.
- I. When we are willing to play with the truth, to allow truth to be slain in the streets in order to maintain relationships, we are striking a blow against the very nature & character of God.

J. There is no possession we will ever have that is more precious, more valuable, & more powerful than *truth*.

1. In Martin Luther's rebuttal to Erasmus' rant against him, he said: “*You prefer not to make claims? You call yourself a Christian? Do you not know that making assertions is at the very heart of the Christian faith? Spiritus sanctus non et skepticus—the Holy Spirit is not a skeptic. The things He has revealed in His Word are more certain than life itself.*”

2. Luther argued that the Source of Truth was more precious than life —

III. NOT ONLY IS GOD THE SOURCE OF TRUTH, BUT HE IS ALSO THE SOURCE OF GOODNESS —

A. So, because God is Truth & God is the Source of all Goodness, then the ultimate norm for our ethics & righteousness is the character of God Himself —

B. Often, we make distinctions between *positive law* & *natural law* or even *Biblical law*.

1. The primary meaning of the term *natural law* is laws that can be extrapolated from a study of nature or science.

2. Theology also speaks of *natural law* as that which proceeds from the nature of God.

a. How can we discern between good & evil?

b. We look to the law of God to reveal to us the source of good & evil.

C. This is a crucial point — God's law is not some arbitrary legislation that God decided to impose on His creatures, but rather, God's law flows from His very being —

D. Theologians make a distinction between the internal & the external righteousness of God.

1. *External righteousness* refers to what God does in His management of the universe.

2. It refers to God's behavior in which there is no shadow of turning —

James 1:17

3. **His** works are altogether righteous.
4. **God's** external righteousness flows from **His eternal being**. **God** does what's right because **He** is the **Source** of **all righteousness**, & when **God** acts, **He** is working out of His own righteous (holy) Being!
5. There is none beside **Him**, **He** alone is the **Source** of **all that is good** —

IV. **ONCE WE KNOW THAT GOD IS TRUTH & HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THAT IS GOOD** —

- A. Then, we should seek to know **His** heart & what really matters to **Him** — for therein lies the discovery of **His character** & **His nature**
- B. My mother **Barbara**, my father **Wendell**, my grandmother **Era**, and my grandfather **James Kenneth**, are all wonderful people of who modeled for our family — **strong values**.

1. My sister & I both knew, without a doubt, what mattered to them —

C. One of the things that mattered most to my grandfather was honesty —

1. I remember his words of wisdom adorning my life like an array of costly pearls

2. My grandfather would teach me — speaking to my spirit so as to inform my life of a conforming **Truth** which was to produce **character** & **integrity** like that of **Jesus** —

D. When my father or grandfather spoke to me, they spoke with a sure & certain expectation.

1. They both expected **to be believed**.

E. In the Scripture, we find that our **Heavenly Father** has given to us **His Word** with an Expectation to be believed — because of **His character & nature** —

F. Because of Who **He** is, & What **He** is, let's look at a few things that are important to **God** — things that really matter to **Him**.

G. In Psalm 44:1-12 we read, "1-3 *We've been hearing about this, God, all our lives. Our fathers told us the stories their fathers told them, How single-handedly You weeded out the godless from the fields & planted us, How You sent those people packing but gave us a fresh start. We didn't fight for this land; we didn't work for it—it was a gift! You gave it, smiling as You gave it, delighting as You gave it.* 4-8 *You're my King, O God— command victories for Jacob! With Your help we'll wipe out our enemies, in Your Name we'll stomp them to dust. I don't trust in weapons; my sword won't save me—But it's You, You who saved us from the enemy; You made those who hate us lose face. All day we parade God's praise — we thank You by Name over & over.* 9-12 *But now You've walked off & left us, You've disgraced us & won't fight for us. You made us turn tail & run; those who hate us have cleaned us out. You delivered us as sheep to the butcher, You scattered us to*

the four winds. You sold your people at a discount — You made nothing on the sale.

Psalm 44:1-12 MSG

H. In Psa. 44, we see **TRUST** —

1. **What do you place your trust in?**
2. It is vital that we put our **trust** in the right place.
3. Our **trust** should never be in our own strength — *‘It was not by their sword that they won... I do not trust in my bow’* (vv.3,6)
4. Rather, we are to **trust** the **Lord**: *‘It’s You, You who saved us.’* (v.7)
5. The **psalmist** looks both backwards & forwards.
6. As he looks back he says, *‘It was Your right hand, Your arm, & the light of Your face, for You loved them’* (v.3b)
7. As he looks forward he says, *‘You are my King & my God... Through You we push back our enemies; through Your Name we*

trample our foes... You give us victory over our enemies.' (vv.4–5,7)

8. Each day, we are to praise **God** for the victories our past & pray for **Him** to secure us in His victories in our future, **for we do not rely on our own strength, but we put our trust in Him.**

I. In Luke 13:31-14:14, we read: "31 *Just then some Pharisees came up & said, "Run for Your life! Herod's got Your number. He's out to kill You!"* 32-35 *Jesus said, "Tell that fox that I've no time for him right now. Today & tomorrow I'm busy clearing out the demons & healing the sick; the third day I'm wrapping things up. Besides, it's not proper for a Prophet to come to a bad end outside Jerusalem.*

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killer of prophets, abuser of the messengers of God!

How often I've longed to gather your children, gather your children like a hen,

Her brood safe under her wings— but you refused & turned away! And now it's too late: You won't see Me again until the day you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of God.'” 14 1-3 *One time when Jesus went for a Sabbath meal with one of the top leaders of the Pharisees, all the guests had their eyes on Him, watching His every move. Right before Him there was a man hugely swollen in his joints. So Jesus asked the religion scholars & Pharisees present, “Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath? Yes or no?”* 4-6 *They were silent. So He took the man, healed him, & sent him on his way. Then He said, “Is there anyone here who, if a child or animal fell down a well, wouldn't rush to pull him out immediately, not asking whether or not it was the Sabbath?”* *They were stumped. There was nothing they could say to that.* 7-9 *He went on to tell a story to the guests around the table. Noticing how each had tried to elbow into the place of honor, He said, “When*

someone invites you to dinner, don't take the place of honor. Somebody more important than you might have been invited by the host. Then he'll come & call out in front of everybody, 'You're in the wrong place. The place of honor belongs to this man.'

Embarrassed, you'll have to make your way to the very last table, the only place left. 10-11

"When you're invited to dinner, go & sit at the last place. Then when the host comes he may say, 'Friend, come up to the front.'

That will give the dinner guests something to talk about! What I'm saying is, If you walk around all high & mighty, you're going to end up flat on your face. But if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself." 12-14

Then He turned to the host. "The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends & family & rich neighbors, the kind of people who will return the favor. Invite some people who never get invited out, the misfits from the wrong side of

the tracks. You'll be—and experience—a blessing. They won't be able to return the favor, but the favor will be returned—oh, how it will be returned! — at the resurrection of God's people.”

Luke 13:31-14:14 MSG

1. In this passage of Script., we see **COURAGE**
2. **Do you find that sometimes, you make decisions based on fear?**
3. It was **Nelson Mandela** who once famously said, *'I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.'*
4. **Jesus** was a Man of **great courage** —
5. When **Jesus** was told *'run for Your life! Herod's on the hunt. He's out to kill You!'* (13:31, MSG) **He** replied, *'Go tell that fox...'* (v.32).
 - a. Here we see **Jesus** exercising the **courage** to take on one of the most powerful & evil men of the day.

6. **Jesus** was not afraid to confront the **Scribes & Pharisees**.

a. **He** did not avoid them.

b. **He** often spent time in their company.

c. It must have been tempting *'to eat'* (14:1) with those who liked **Him** & accepted **Him** rather than with those who were suspicious & critical — those who were watching **His** every move.

7. **Jesus** also demonstrated great courage when **He** healed the man who was *'hugely swollen in his joints'* (v.2, MSG) on the **Sabbath** & then to confront the **Pharisees** about their views on *'healing on the Sabbath'* —

J. We also see in this passage of Scripture, **Jesus** illustrating **His** nature by the character of **His** **COMPASSION** —

1. Let me ask you, *"Is your heart moved by the people you come across?"*

2. **Jesus** not only had **compassion** for individuals (ex: *healing the sick man*, v.4),

- a. **He** also had compassion for the **city** (Jerusalem).
 - b. In this passage, Jesus uses maternal imagery to describe His love for God's city: ***'How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings'*** (13:34).
3. And then, **Jesus** showed His compassion in going to **His** death on the cross for us.

K. The next thing we see about the Character of **God** and what **He** loves is: HUMILITY

1. **Have you ever been concerned about your status, or what others might think of you? You ever compare yourself with others?**
2. **Jesus** speaks about humility. **He** tells us to ***'take the lowest place'*** (14:10). **He** says, ***'do not take the place of honor... For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, & those who humble themselves will be exalted'*** — Luke 14:8,11 NIV

3. As the Message Version puts it, ***‘If you walk around with your nose in the air, you’re going to end up flat on your face. But if you’re content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself’*** Lk 14:11 MSG

L. The next thing we discover in Luke 14, is **Jesus** & **His truth** about: **POVERTY**

1. Ask yourself, ***“I’m I tempted to spend time with people of influence and wealth who will be able to pay me back?”***

2. What matters to **God** is our attitude toward the poor - we see it both in the O. T. & N. T.

3. **Jesus** said, ***‘When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, & you will be blessed’*** (vv.13–14).

4. **Jesus** is encouraging us to **seek out** those who are **poor** in our own community.

a. We are to serve those who ***‘won’t be able to return the favor’*** (v.14, MSG).

5. **Moses** went so far as to say, ***‘There should be no poor among you’*** (Deut. 15:4).

- a. He also said, ***‘There will always be poor people in the land’*** (v.11).
 - b. **Jesus** said something similar: ***‘The poor you will always have with you’*** (Matt. 26:11).
6. Each day, we ought to rise with a prayer on our lips — ***“Jesus, help me be more like You! More Courageous, more Compassionate & more Humble. Give me Your heart for the poor, Your eyes to see them & Your heart to serve them.***

M. In Deut. 15:1-16:20, we discover another character trait that **God** values —

1. " 15 1-3 ***At the end of every seventh year, cancel all debts. This is the procedure: Everyone who has lent money to a neighbor writes it off. You must not press your neighbor or his brother for payment: All-Debts-Are-Canceled—God says so. You may collect payment from foreigners, but whatever you have lent to your fellow Israelite you must write off.*** 4-6 ***There must be no poor people among you because God***

is going to bless you lavishly in this land that God, your God, is giving you as an inheritance, your very own land. But only if you listen obediently to the Voice of God, your God, diligently observing every commandment that I command you today. Oh yes—God, your God, will bless you just as He promised. You will lend to many nations but won't borrow from any; you'll rule over many nations but none will rule over you. 7-9 When you happen on someone whose in trouble or needs help among your people with whom you live in this land that God, your God, is giving you, don't look the other way pretending you don't see him. Don't keep a tight grip on your purse. No. Look at him, open your purse, lend whatever & as much as he needs. Don't count the cost. Don't listen to that selfish voice saying, "It's almost the seventh year, the year of All-Debts-Are-Canceled," & turn aside & leave your needy neighbor in the lurch,

refusing to help him. He'll call God's attention to you & your blatant sin. 10-11 Give freely & spontaneously. Don't have a stingy heart. The way you handle matters like this triggers God, your God's, blessing in everything you do, all your work & ventures. There are always going to be poor & needy people among you. So I command you: Always be generous, open purse & hands, give to your neighbors in trouble, your poor & hurting neighbors. 12-15 If a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman was sold to you & has served you for six years, in the seventh year you must set him or her free, released into a free life. And when you set them free don't send them off empty-handed. Provide them with some animals, plenty of bread & wine & oil. Load them with provisions from all the blessings with which God, your God, has blessed you. Don't for a minute forget that you were once slaves in Egypt & God, your God, redeemed you from

that slave world. For that reason, this day I command you to do this. 16-17 But if your slave, because he loves you & your family & has a good life with you, says, “I don’t want to leave you,” then take an awl & pierce through his earlobe into the doorpost, marking him as your slave forever. Do the same with your women slaves who want to stay with you. 18 Don’t consider this an unreasonable hardship, this setting your slave free. After all, he’s worked six years for you at half the cost of a hired hand. Believe me, God, your God, will bless you in everything you do. 19-23 Set apart to God, your God, all the firstborn males in your herds and flocks. Don’t use the firstborn from your herds as work animals; don’t shear the firstborn from your flocks. These are for you to eat every year, you & your family, in the Presence of God, your God, at the place that God designates for worship. If the animal is defective, lame, say, or blind—anything

wrong with it—don't slaughter it as a sacrifice to God, your God. Stay at home & eat it there. Both the ritually clean & unclean may eat it, the same as with a gazelle or a deer. Only you must not eat its blood. Pour the blood out on the ground like water."

2. In this passage of Script., we see

GENEROSITY

3. Do you ever find yourself being stingy, tight-fisted, or penny-pinching?

4. The principle of **generosity** runs throughout the Bible. In fact, it's **God's Discipleship Pathway** —

a. We are **created in the Image of God**, in large part, to be givers!

b. When it comes to **Generosity**, **God** wired our **Joy Factor** to our **Generosity Meter** —

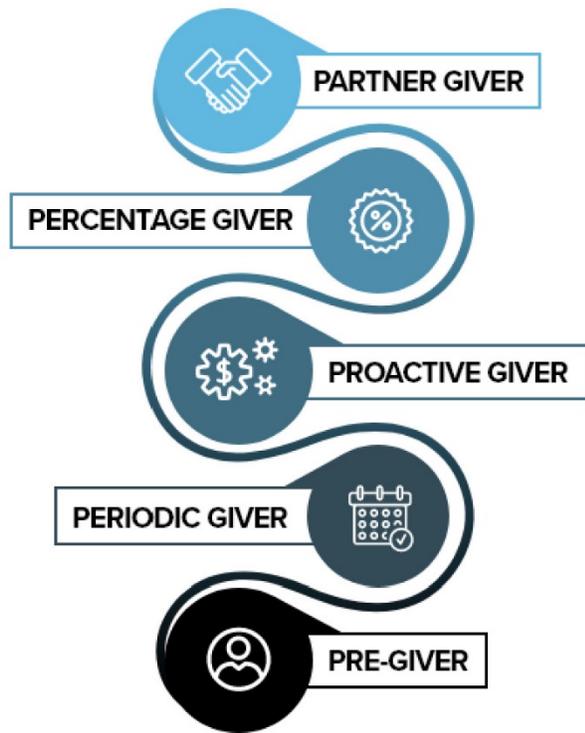
c. **God** intended our lives to be fabulously generous — **He** intends for money & possessions to pass through our hands for **His** purposes!

5. Author & Philosopher **Miroslav Volf** wrote that, "*we are givers because we were made that way, & if we don't give, we are at odds with ourselves.*"
6. **Volf** infers that the condition of our soul is tied to how we manage what **God** has given each of us?
7. **Jesus** teaches us that when our **Giving Attitude** (**Generosity**) is connected with our commitment to **God's Kingdom**, great things happen in our hearts as well as our budgets!
8. This is why **Jesus** was so straightforward in **His** discourse: **'Don't be 'hard-hearted'**(15:7) when you see **poverty and need**.
 - a. **'Don't be 'tight-fisted'** (v.7). Rather be **'open-handed'** (v.8) – **giving to all those who are in need. If people need to borrow from you, you should 'freely lend'** (v.8) **without interest. Always give generously without a grudging heart. We should 'always be generous, open purse & hands'** (v.11, MSG)

9. Our *giving* is a response to **God's** generosity to us: *'Give to them as the Lord your God has blessed you'* (v.14).

N. In this Passage we also see **REMEMBRANCE**

1. Do you easily forget what **God** has done for you?
2. The people of **God** were called to *'Remember that you were slaves in Egypt'* (v.15; 16:12). *'Remember the time of your departure from Egypt'* (v.3).
3. Part of the great festivals of **Passover** (vv.1–8), **Weeks** (vv.9–12) & **Tabernacles** (vv.13–17) was to do with *remembrance* (v.3).
4. One of the aspects of **Holy Communion** is that it is a constant reminder of the *death & resurrection* of **Jesus** – rescuing us from the slavery of sin & death, & setting us free to know **God** & to receive life in all its fullness – indeed, *eternal life*.



GOD'S KINGDOM PATHWAY TO GENEROSITY



- O. In this Passage, we also see **JUSTICE** —
1. **Do you care about Justice?**
 2. **Justice** is of **High Value** to **God** —
 3. In fact, the reason *Honesty* is so important to **God**, because out of it flows true **Justice** —
 - a. The Bible says, *'Appoint judges... to judge the people fairly & honestly. Don't twist the law. Don't play favorites'* (vv.18–19)
 - b. *'Follow justice and justice alone'* (v.20).

4. Around our nation, we're witnessing injustice & needless suffering in those places where judges do not judge the people fairly.

5. There are many parts of the world where the police & judges accept bribes.

6. Hence the importance of this command, ***'Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise & twists the words of the righteous'*** (v.19).

a. Where the rule of law is not strong, the *innocent* can be arrested & imprisoned simply because someone has been dishonest & taken a bribe.

7. We should pray daily, "*Lord, I want my values to be more like Your values. May my thoughts and my ways become more like Your thoughts & Your ways. May what matters to me be what matters to You.*

P. Be like **Jesus**. Be Generous: ***'But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, & you will be blessed.'***

Luke 14:13-14a

NOTES