

R12.2 January 2022 Blog

The Importance of Our Minds – Part 1 of 2

The Greek word νοῦς occurs 24 times in the NT. Most of the occurrences are in Paul's letters. D. J. Moo says, "'Mind' translates a word that Paul uses to connote a person's 'practical reason,' or 'moral consciousness.'"¹

Here are some of the functions of my mind:

- Reasoning—involves discerning, discriminating, evaluating cause/effect relationships, understanding, choosing
- Thinking
- Evaluating right and wrong with my conscience
- Remembering
- Evaluating sensory inputs
- Feeling/emotions
- Interface between my soul and God

For me to have a relationship with God, God must reveal Himself. Once God reveals Himself, a mind is essential to be able to assimilate the revelation. Of God's creation the only beings with a mind, as far as we know, are men and angels.

While a mind is essential to process God's revelation, it is insufficient in and of itself to enter into relationship with God. God is angry/wrathful toward us, His enemies (Rom. 5:9-10; Eph. 2:3). Unless God displays mercy toward us, we are without hope. Our minds/wills cannot bridge the relational distance separating us from God.

God, for reasons all His own, chose to reveal Himself primarily in writing. The prose that comprises His revelation is very difficult to think into your own understanding. Every follower of Jesus is completely dependent on the Holy Spirit in assimilating Scripture. But both effort and obedience are required on my part for successful study and growing in Christlikeness (2 Tim. 2:15; John 14:21; 1 Cor. 9:24). Consider the following observations about the state of cognition amongst believers in the 21st century from J. P. Moreland's Love the Lord your God with All Your Mind²:

...faith is now understood as a blind act of will, a decision to believe something that is either independent of reason or that is a simple choice to believe while ignoring the paltry lack of evidence for what is believed. By contrast with this modern misunderstanding, biblically, faith is a power or skill to act in accordance with the nature of the kingdom of God, a trust in what we have reason to believe is true. Understood in this way, we see that faith is built on reason.

¹ Moo, D. J. (2018). [*The Letter to the Romans*](#). (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Second Edition, p. 775). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Moreland, J. P.. *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* . Navpress. Kindle Edition.

We should have good reasons for thinking that Christianity is true before we dedicate ourselves completely to it. We should have solid evidence that our understanding of a biblical passage is correct before we go on to apply it.²

For many, religion is identified with subjective feelings, sincere motives, personal piety, and blind faith.

...In other words, we test the truth of our religion not by a careful application of our God-given faculties of thought, or even by biblical mandates (see, for example, 2 Corinthians 10:5), but rather by our private experiences. For the most part, theoretical reason is just not part of our local church life any longer.²

Today, we share the gospel primarily as a means of addressing felt needs. We give testimonies of changed lives and say to people that if they want to become better parents or overcome depression or loneliness, then Christ is the answer for them. As true as this may be, such an approach to evangelism is inadequate for two reasons. First, it does not reach people who may be out of touch with their feelings. Consequently, if men in our culture are, in general, less in touch with their feelings than women, this approach will not reach men effectively. Second, it invites the response, "Sorry, but I don't have a need." Have you ever wondered why no one responded to the apostle Paul in this manner? If you look at his evangelistic approach in Acts 17:20, the answer becomes obvious. He based his preaching on the fact that the gospel is true and reasonable to believe. He reasoned with and tried to persuade people intelligently to accept Christ.²

I pray Moreland's observations are not true of you.

One of the most frightening truths in the NT is God's ability to confound my reasoning, darken my thinking (Rom. 1:21-22). God obviously does this to unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4) but there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that He won't confuse my thinking if I ignore the essential role His Word has in my relationship with Him.

Application:

1. Do I believe the Bible is the accurate, truthful Word of God? If not, should I pursue understanding the implications of this position?
2. Do I implement application/change from the Bible into my everyday life? How about other members of my family?
3. Do I routinely study commentaries on the Bible?
4. Is my witness more me talking than engaging the other person? Try talking less and asking more questions about the other person.