

Biblical Thinking

Scripture Focus

Primary Text: Ephesians 4:11-16

Secondary Text: 1 Cor. 6:12 – 11:1; 13:1-13

Key Verse

“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Eph. 4:14

Overview

Biblical Thinking requires believers to think in a manner that honors Christ. To think biblically is to decide, analyze, place value on and determine truth from the Bible. Biblical thinkers ask, “What does the Bible say?” about every decision, encounter, idea, choice, etc., in life.

Theme

In the continual attack of deviant ideas, believers must be equipped to filter all of life through the Bible.

Outline:

- I. **Biblical Thinkers Are Characterized by Ministry (12-14)**
- II. **Biblical Thinkers Are Characterized by Maturity (14-16)**

Getting Started – Introduction

Ask your class to help you make a list of ways in which God gifts believers. After you have made the list at the front of the class, encourage the students to acknowledge that they and all other believers are gifted by God for usefulness in His kingdom.

Acknowledge gifted saints. 4:11

- a) Spiritual gifts are mentioned in four texts of Scripture:
Romans 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4 and 1 Peter 4
- b) Verse 7 affirms that everyone has at least one. Spiritual gifts are not natural talents. Natural talents are abilities you have by natural birth. Spiritual gifts are what you receive by Spiritual birth. Often the two have nothing in common!
- c) Verse 11 gives attention to four that are essential for the health of the church. “He Himself” is emphatic. He, and no one else, gave us these gifted saints.
- d) Apostles and prophets are foundational. Apostle in a technical sense refers to the twelve; in a general sense to any “sent one.” It would fit our missionaries. Prophets were forth-tellers even more than future-tellers. Prophets were bold proclaimers of God’s revelation.
- e) Evangelists are spiritual obstetricians gifted in bringing forth new births. Some, like Billy Graham, Luis Palau and Jay Strack do it before large crowds. Others are gifted in sharing their faith one on one.

f) Pastors and teachers is best translated pastor-teacher. They are spiritual pediatricians who lead and feed, provide for and protect. They minister to us and with us but not for us.

Why would I say this? Because Biblical Thinkers are:

I. **Characterized by ministry. 4:12-14**

“Every member a minister” is a worthy motto for any church. It is also the biblical model. Note five things God wills for every one of His children.

A. Be equipped. 4:12

The church is not a bus where the pastor does all the driving and does his best to coax and cajole as many as he can to get aboard. The church is a body, and every one has a function to perform, a part to play.

Equipping – to put in place, to reset dislocated bones, to be made complete. Why? For the work of the ministry. You have, I have, we all have a work of ministry grounded in the spiritual gifts given to us by God. Your pastor has been gifted by God to do some things you can’t do. But, you have been gifted by God to do some things he can’t do! The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody was once confronted by a person and criticized for the way he preached (his grammar) and conducted evangelistic rallies (too emotional and unsophisticated). Moody responded by saying, “I’m doing the best I can with what I’ve got. What are you doing with what God has given you?” On another occasion he was again criticized for his evangelistic methods. He simply responded by saying, “I like the way I do it better than the way you don’t.” We are all to be equipped for our work of ministry.

B. Be edified. 4:12

Edify means to build up, to mature, to develop. When all of us are doing our part, the church, the body of Christ, grows. It grows up (worship). It grows out (evangelism). It grows within (discipleship). It is edified, made strong, vibrant, alive! Ernest Hemingway said, “Never confuse movement with action” (in *Papa Hemingway*). Just because we are moving doesn’t mean we are going anywhere. We want to go and grow to be the church God saved us to be.

C. Be educated. 4:13

God has a destiny, a goal at which His church is to aim. It consists of three parts: 1) Unity in the faith, 2) Knowledge (*epignoseos*), full and experiential knowledge of the Son, and, 3) a perfect (*teleion*), complete, mature person. God wants us to know Him and know Him truthfully! Unfortunately, most don’t!

Illustration: *World* 8-19-2000; p. 15

--A survey by pollster George Barna on American religious beliefs revealed that 75 percent of Americans – including more than 40 percent of born-again Christians – agreed with the unbiblical statement, “**The Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves.**” Mr. Barna said this exposes Americans’ belief “that God is merely our assistant, not our foundation.” More than 40 percent of born-again Christians also said that the Holy Spirit and Satan do not exist.

Illustration: *What in the World* (1998), p. 2

A survey of born-again Christians revealed that **45 percent believed Jesus committed sins!**

We must be educated, we must love God with all our hearts and with all our minds. C. S. Lewis said it well, “God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than any other slackers.”

D. Be enlarged. 4:13

“till we come ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” God did not save us simply to take us to heaven. He saved us to make us like Jesus (Rom. 8:29). That goal will never change. Some day that goal will be perfectly completed. Be enlarged after the model of our Savior.

E. Be established. 4:14

1. Children – (spiritually) an immature baby or child (set in contrast to the man of verse 13). The immature are never settled; they are fickle, shifting, not dependable. They have no roots, no convictions, no commitments. When tough times come they run. When a slick presentation is made they are deceived. They are blown about, tricked with loaded dice, fooled by clever schemes and deceived by the plots of the evil one.

2. They are more likely to trust their own reason, experience, feelings and advice of men than they are the counsel of God. Be established. Know the Word and obey the Word. What will be the result for the church?

II. Characterized by maturity. 4:15-16

Albert Yu was speaking of high-performance companies. He could just as easily been speaking about the church. In the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Discipline of Market Leaders*, Yu said, “The trick is to pull together as a total ... entity. Compare it to an orchestra made up of different instruments but all performing one symphony together. Every player has a major role. If we are out of sync, we are in trouble” (p. 113). When we are pulling together, playing our role, “in sync”: What will we be? What must we do?

A. Be mature in your speech. 4:15

We continually speak with / in *agape* and we “grow up” in Christ who is our head, our Lord. Speak the truth but do it in love. If you can’t say it in love then just shut up!

B. Be mature in your service. 4:16

1) Together: every part doing its share.

2) God makes some of us 1000-gallon vessels and others His half-pint vessels! However, He is far more pleased with a half-pint running over than a 1000-gallon vessel only half full!

C. Be mature in your sensitivity. 4:16

1) We began with love (v. 2), we end with love.

2) When we all do our part:

a) the body grows and

b) the body is built up in love. What does that look like, say, on an individual basis? When each is doing his/her part? It looks like:

- D. Language therapist **Lucy Smith** and her faith-based literacy program for Texas prisoners. She spends eight hours a day in Dallas and Fort Worth jails. A 61-year-old grandmother of seven, she oversees 44 tutors who teach roughly 60 inmates per week. "If a person can't read the Word of God for himself, he cannot ascertain truths for his life," she told *WORLD* magazine. Her efforts have caught the attention of state prison officials who are now encouraging the development of faith-based programs across the state.
- E. The 93-year-old **Karl Mix**, who after a life of ministry to shut-ins in hospitals, sanitariums and prisons, now volunteers his services at a geriatric psychiatry center in Canton, Ohio, where he visits patients once a week and leads Sunday morning services.
- F. **Lt. Jeff Francis**, who, as the founder of the Chattanooga, Tenn., police department's first gang division, spends his days working with troubled youth. Then he goes home and works with troubled adults. For the past 16 years, he and his wife, Gail, have cared for mentally handicapped adults as house parents for the Orange Grove Center. They also homeschool their four children and interpret for the deaf at their local church. *World*, 8-14-2000, p. 14.

Illustration: What does it look like? It looks like this letter written by Columbine martyr, Cassie Bernall, to a teenage friend:

I am just so thankful for everything He's done for me, as well as for others. Even when things are bad, He's stood next to me and things are a little less prone to becoming blown out of proportion by my emotions ... You know, I wonder what God is going to do with my life? Like my purpose. Some people become missionaries and things, but what about me? What does God have in store for me? Where do my talents and gifts lie? For now, I'll just take it day by day. I'm confident that I'll know someday. Maybe I'll look back at my life and think "Oh, so that was it!" Isn't it amazing, this plan we're a part of? -- Cassie Bernall letter to a friend, June 28, 1998, printed in (She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall)

Application:

Below are 10 questions every believer must ask in decision making. The questions are valuable to a believer's pursuit of Biblical Thinking.

I Corinthians 6:12 – 11:1; 13:1-13

- 1) Will this action be helpful to me? 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23
- 2) Will this action potentially enslave me? 1 Cor. 6:12
- 3) Will this action encourage my brother or sister in Christ? 1 Cor. 8:13; 10:24, 32
- 4) Will this action help or hinder my gospel witness? 1 Cor. 9:12, 19-23; 10:32-33
- 5) Is this action consistent with my new life in Christ? 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 19
- 6) Will this action violate my conscience? 1 Cor. 10:25-29
- 7) Will this action follow the pattern of the life of Jesus? 1 Cor. 11:1
- 8) Will this action show love to others? 1 Cor. 13:1-13
- 9) Will this action honor my body which belongs to God? 1 Cor. 6:19-20
- 10) Will this action glorify God? 1 Cor. 10:31

*The content of this Theology Driven Ministry lesson was graciously provided by Dr. Daniel Akin. We thank him for the gift of this lesson to the TDM Curriculum series.