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BIBLICALLY**

**SOUND REASONING IN A WORLD OF
CONFUSION AND CONTRADICTIONS**

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HOW TO **THINK** BIBLICALLY

**SOUND REASONING IN A WORLD OF
CONFUSION AND CONTRADICTIONS**

JOSHUA SCHWISOW



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PASSING ON THE FAITH

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About the Author:

Joshua Schwisow (M.Div., Whitefield Theological Seminary) serves as one of the pastors of Reformation Church of Elizabeth in the Denver, Colorado, metro area. He is husband to Jessica and father to five children. As Director of Publications at Generations, he has authored or co-edited numerous titles published by Generations, including *American Faith*, *Taking Europe for Jesus*, and *Teach Me the Faith*.

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INTRODUCTION

How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God! ...
For with You *is* the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. (Psalm 36:7a, 9)

We live in a confusing and confused age. There are lies everywhere, and many people believe them. How do we cut through the confusion and gain a right understanding of true and false, right and wrong?

Here is the answer: we need the light of God's truth shining upon us and providing us with the flashlight we need to see in a dark place. The prophetic Word, the Bible, is that "light which shines in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19).

The purpose of *How to Think Biblically* is to introduce the Christian student to a biblical view of the mind and the biblical foundation for logic, and to teach them how to evaluate informal logical fallacies. Part 1 of the book surveys the teaching of Scripture to form a Christian view of

knowledge and the use of the mind. In Part 2, the student is introduced to foundational tools such as syllogisms and definitions to enable them to engage in logical analysis. In Parts 3-7, the book surveys a variety of informal logical fallacies. These chapters will teach students to spot the most common lapses in reasoning, which they are likely to face on a day-to-day basis.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF THIS BOOK

This book contains several unique features.

First, it establishes the basic laws of logic—not on human authorities, but on the infallible truth of the Holy Bible. Our basis for knowledge and for reasoning is the Word of God. Frequent Scripture references in each chapter reinforce this point.

Second, this book contains a variety of examples showing the relevance of sound reasoning in all areas of life. We include examples from worldview and apologetic discussions, cultural debates, and political campaigns. In addition to these areas of life, the book demonstrates the importance of sound reasoning in personal relationships, as well as in family and church life, by including examples from these contexts.

Third, this book emphasizes that the formation of a sound mind is never isolated from our growth in spiritual maturity. It is important that we cultivate humility and love for God, to grow in spiritual-mindedness, and to seek the Lord in prayer. If these applications are missed, then a sharp mind and the ability to discern fallacies will do us no good.

HOW TO COMPLETE THE EXERCISES

The exercises for this book are located at the end of each chapter. They may be completed orally with a parent or teacher, or they can be completed in

writing by using a notebook to write down the answers. The answer key in the back of the book should be consulted once the student has completed all the exercises for that chapter. After the last chapter, there is a final exam and an optional writing project for the student to complete.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This book consists of thirty-six chapters. For a thirty-six-week school year, the student should complete one chapter each week by reading the chapter on one day and completing the exercises either the same day or on another day that week. The final exam should be completed as part of the final week of study.

GLOSSARY

A glossary of key terms and informal logical fallacies is included in the back of the book. The student may consult this glossary when completing the chapter exercises to review terms. The glossary should *not* be consulted when completing the final exam.

GRADING

Parents or teachers may grade the student by assessing their ability to accurately complete the exercises, either through oral recitation or by reviewing their written answers with the answer key. The exercises and the final exam can be graded by dividing the number of correct answers by the total number of items in the exercises. For example, the exercises in Chapter 9 consist of twelve items total (eight matching, four questions). If the student correctly answered ten of the twelve items, the grade would

be assigned in the following manner: $10/12 = 83\%$. The final exam consists of thirty items. If twenty-nine of thirty were answered correctly, the grade would be assigned in the following manner: $29/30 = 96\%$.

Parents or teachers are free to assign grades as they see fit. Below is a recommended grading scale.

90-100% = A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
0-59% = F

Upon successful completion of this book, we recommend that the student receive one credit in Critical Thinking/Logic.

For Christ our King,
Joshua Schwisow
The Generations Curriculum Team
August, AD 2024

PART 1

**A CHRISTIAN VIEW
OF KNOWLEDGE AND
THE MIND**

CHAPTER 1

LOVING GOD WITH YOUR MIND

When our Lord Jesus was on earth, a lawyer approached Him with an important question:

Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law? (Matthew 22:36)

The Pharisees and Sadducees often attempted to test Jesus. They hoped to catch him in some kind of error. This would prove their charge that Jesus was a false teacher and blasphemer. But Jesus is God come in the flesh. He cannot err. He cannot speak untruth. He never did and never will sin. Every word that comes from His mouth is true. Therefore, we should pay close attention to how Jesus answered the lawyer's question. What is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang

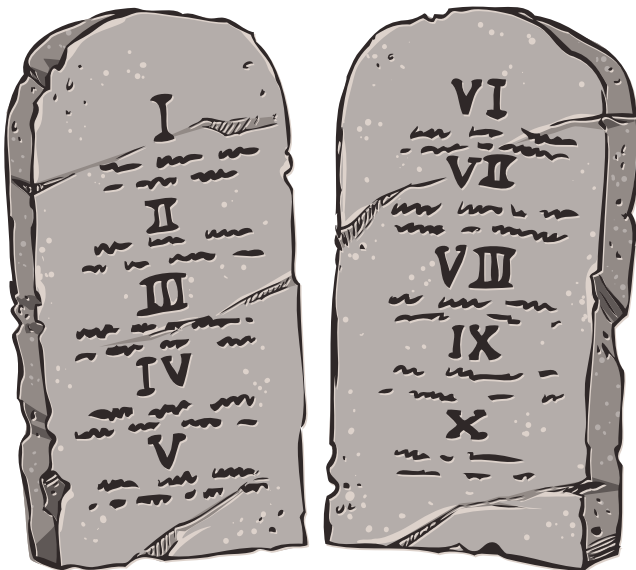
all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Our Lord summarized the entire law of God, including the Ten Commandments, in two great commandments—love God and love your neighbor. The first and great commandment is to love God with *all* our heart, *all* our soul, and *all* our mind. This is another way of saying we’re to love God with our entire being. Every part of us—our body and soul, our heart and mind, our hands and feet—all are to be dedicated to loving God. This love for God is not half-hearted or partial; it has no rivals.

This book is written to help you love God with your mind. It’s written to teach you how to think in a righteous, God-fearing way, rather than an unrighteous way. This is a book about having a “sound mind.” A sound mind is a mind that thinks correctly (2 Tim. 1:7). It’s a mind that

recognizes that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). It’s a mind that’s renewed by the saving grace of God. It’s a mind that’s been taught by Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:20-21).

The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). The fear of God is the foundation, or starting point, for all knowledge. We won’t rightly understand anything without first



learning to fear God. Before we can think correctly about politics, amoebas, marriage, biology, mending fences, abortion, *or* even God's existence, we must first fear God.

Later in this book, we will learn how presupposing God's existence and using His revelation as the starting point for knowledge is essential for knowing anything with certainty.

HOW WE FAIL TO LOVE GOD WITH OUR MINDS

We're called to love God with every fiber of our being, including our minds. But what are some common ways we fail to love God with our minds?

As we learn to rightly use our minds, it's important to apply everything we learn to ourselves. Are we using our minds for God's glory or for self-glory? This book wasn't written to make you feel smarter than others or feel proud about how much you learned. If you feel that way after studying it, you didn't read or apply the material correctly. Rather, I pray this book will encourage you to be humble and love God more.

Any way we fail to love God with our minds is *sin*. We can sin with our minds by thinking wrongly or using our knowledge wrongly. Whenever we see sin in our lives, we need to confess that sin to God.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

So how do we fail to love God with our minds?

First, we fail to love God with our minds when we make them the standard of truth.

God made Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden of Eden. He let them eat from every tree except one. God warned them that they would die if they ate from that forbidden tree. But instead of trusting God's Word as

truth, Adam and Eve listened to Satan’s words—“You shall *not* surely die” (Gen. 3:4)—and chose to determine truth for themselves. Their wrong choice was disastrous. It brought sin and suffering into the world (Rom. 5:12).

Making our minds the standard of truth is putting ourselves in the place of God. How does this sin of the mind show itself? It occurs when you or anyone else says, “that isn’t true unless I say it’s true.”



The Bible, God’s Word, is our standard for truth, not our own minds.

Often, people won't say it that way. But if you carefully analyze what they're saying, you'll discover that's what they mean. For example, an unbeliever might say, "I could never worship a God who sends anyone to hell. That's cruel and unjust."

What do we learn about this person's thinking? He's made himself the measure of truth. If he doesn't like the doctrine of hell, then he rejects it. He sees hell as cruel and unjust. He's made himself the standard of truth and righteousness. He says hell is wrong. Therefore, hell is wrong.

But there's a problem—God says there *is* a place called hell, and those who don't believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will go there.

Christians, of course, would disagree with the unbeliever's perspective about hell. But sometimes Christians can also sin with their minds by making themselves the measure of truth. What about the Christian who's tempted to sin and begins to think (much like Adam and Eve) that God's laws are too restrictive. Why make such a big deal about lying or coveting? Why make such a big deal about sexual purity?

Sometimes, Christians can begin to think that God is harsh or unjust or restrictive, rather than viewing God's commandments as a "law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). When we view God and His Word this way, we're making ourselves the determiner of truth. This is one way we sin with our minds.

Second, we fail to love God with our minds when we use knowledge and reason to exalt ourselves.

We'll learn more about the problem of pride in later chapters. But for now, let's remember how often the Bible warns against thinking too highly of ourselves.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

Notice what Paul says—our pride is a matter of how we think. Paul says, “do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.” To think rightly about ourselves is to be sober-minded. The Greek word for thinking soberly is *sophroneo*. It means to think properly, clearly, and in accord with truth. In other words, to think soberly, or to have a sound mind, is the opposite of thinking too highly of yourself. Learning more about God’s ways and works should make us humbler, not prouder. Why?



As Job suffered, he learned humility. Job recognized how little he knew and how God knows all things.

Because as we learn more about God’s ways and works, we should also realize how little we know compared to the infinite knowledge of God. Job learned this lesson when God questioned him. Job had questioned God’s justice and goodness in his suffering. But when God came to him and began to ask him question after question, Job realized how much he didn’t understand. The Lord said to Job:

Who *is* this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall answer Me. (Job 38:2-3)

At the end of God’s questioning, Job realized how foolish it had been for him to speak about God’s ways with proud confidence.

You asked, “Who *is* this who hides counsel without knowledge?”
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
Listen, please, and let me speak;
You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.”
I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.
Therefore I abhor *myself*,
And repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:3-6)

As you study subjects like math and science, or as you learn practical skills like how to drive a car or how to bake a cake, it’s possible to think more highly of yourself anytime you learn things. There’s a risk you’ll overestimate your knowledge and become prideful.

It's good for you to be honest about what you know and what you don't know. For every new skill you learn, or every new fact you add to your mental data bank, remember how much greater God's knowledge is. Remember God knows all things, and you only know a tiniest sliver of the knowledge that God has. Say with Paul in Romans 11:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

When we become proud, we're not loving God with our minds; we're loving *ourselves*.

Third, we fail to love God with our minds when we allow them to dwell on and cherish sin.

Since we're made in the image of God, the Lord has given us the ability to think, reason, imagine, and meditate. We can love and fill our minds with true and good things. Or we can love sin and evil with our minds. When we use our imaginations to love sinful things, we're not loving God with our minds. The Bible calls this being "carnally-minded."

For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. (Romans 8:6)

Do you spend time coveting things God hasn't given you and being discontent? Do you lust after another man or woman in your heart? Do you nurse bitter thoughts about someone else in your mind, running through their sins against you over and over again? Do you spend most of your time thinking about your own hobbies and interests, rather than thinking about God or thinking about others? We fail to love God with our minds when we dwell on sinful things.

HOW WE USE OUR MINDS TO LOVE GOD

These are three common ways we fail to love God with our minds. But turning now to the positive command Jesus gave us—how can we use our minds to love God?

TREASURING GOD ABOVE ALL

First, we love God with our minds by treasuring God above all things. We obey the First Commandment, “you shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3), by exalting God in our thoughts as our greatest treasure. John Piper puts it this way:

Our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things.¹

Now, here’s a good question to test yourself with—when you have free time and you aren’t required to be using your mind to accomplish a particular task, what do you tend to think about? Do you think about the things God values? Do you think about God’s glory and seeking His kingdom? Do you think about how to please God in all that you do? Or do you mostly think about yourself, and your own selfish desires? John Owen (1616-1683), in his book *Spiritual-Mindedness*, says we can



John Owen (1616-1683)

¹ John Piper, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 83.

learn whether we're "spiritually-minded" by examining the thoughts that naturally come to mind. Here's what he says:

When a person is relaxed and free from all cares and worries, and his mind is free to think as it pleases, then we can see what thoughts are natural to it. If these are useless, foolish, proud, ambitious, lustful, or degrading, then such is the true nature of the heart and the person. But if they [the thoughts] are holy, spiritual, and heavenly, so is the heart and person.²

Even those who are spiritually minded fall short of a perfect thought life. As James writes, "We all stumble in many things" (Jas. 3:2). Nevertheless, if we have God's Spirit within us, our minds will be increasingly renewed. We will think more about God. We will love God in our thoughts more than we did last year. We will detest our sinful thoughts as enemy trespassers in our mind and seek to take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

THINKING ACCORDING TO GOD'S TRUTH

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)

This brings us to a second way to love God with our minds. We love God in our thoughts by thinking *according to God's truth*. God is the source of all things that exist in the universe. And He is the only one who knows *all things*. So if we're to think rightly, we must think about things the way God thinks about them.

² John Owen, *Spiritual-Mindedness*, ed. R. J. K. Law (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), 9.

Here is a basic definition of truth: truth is what corresponds to the mind of God.

To put it another way: truth is what God thinks.

To give a simple example, the Bible says that God created all things in six days by His powerful Word (Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6). In contrast with that truth claim, the modern atheist claims that God does not exist, and that all things came about by chance and evolutionary processes.

If truth is what corresponds to the mind of God, then we know which truth claim is actually true. What the Bible says about the origin of all things is true. The modern atheist is believing a lie and failing to love God with his mind.

Of course, there will always be an infinite gap between God's knowledge and our knowledge. We'll never know all things. But when our thinking is consistent with God's thoughts as they're revealed in His Word, we'll think rightly and love God with our minds. So it's important to earnestly seek wisdom and knowledge from God. As Proverbs 2 exhorts us:

Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,
 If you seek her as silver,
 And search for her as *for* hidden treasures;
 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,
 And find the knowledge of God.
 For the LORD gives wisdom;
 From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.
 (Proverbs 2:3-6)

What we've learned in this chapter is just a starting point in our journey to using our minds for God's glory. To advance in loving God with our whole being, including our minds, we need God's help. We must pray for Him to renew our minds.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879) wrote this beautiful hymn that expresses the heart desire of Christians—to fully consecrate our lives to God. Here’s a portion of that beautiful hymn:

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.³

Let’s also say, “Take my mind, and let it be, Consecrated, Lord, to thee.” Our aim in this study of the mind, logic, reason, and clear-thinking is to love God above all. Let’s keep that aim in mind as we learn more in each chapter.

³ Frances Ridley Havergal, “Take My Life and Let It Be.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the three ways we fail to love God with all our minds?
2. What are the two positive ways we love God with our minds?
3. What is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge? Provide a Scripture reference to support your answer.
4. What is the difference between a carnal mind and a spiritual mind? (see Romans 8:6-7)
5. Provide a biblical definition of the word “truth.”

CHAPTER 2

HOW THE FALL INTO SIN AFFECTED THE MIND

Our goal in this study is to learn how to think clearly, truthfully, and biblically. It's our aim to grow in loving God with our minds by learning from God's Word how to think rightly.

Before we learn more about how to think rightly, we need to learn about sin and how it affects our minds. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. But this raises two questions: What is sin? And why do we need to be saved from it? Let's soberly consider the reality of sin. Let's also learn how sin affects the mind.

We live in a fallen, sinful world. The evidence is all around us. Sorrow, pain, suffering, famine, war, hatred, envy, lust—all these are the result of sin. The Apostle Paul writes:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.
(Romans 5:12)

Sin not only brought death to the entire human race; it also brought corruption and decay to the created universe.

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:22)

No one denies that there's a problem with the world. The evidence is too obvious and painful to ignore. Every worldview or religion defines the problem and its solution in different ways. But the key thing to remember is this; *everyone* knows there's a problem. God's Word, the Bible, both defines the problem and gives the solution. The problem is sin. The solution is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How does what the Bible says about the problem and the solution relate to the mind? In this chapter, we define the problem of sin and how it affects the mind. We need to understand how far-reaching the problem is to soberly estimate sin's effects.

MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

When God made man and woman on the sixth day, He set them apart from the rest of creation by making them in His image. Genesis 1 describes this:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26-28)

Mankind is made in God's "image" and "likeness." This doesn't mean we're a physical reproduction of God's being. God exists spiritually

without a physical body. The image and likeness isn't based upon a physical resemblance. But it does mean there are similarities between us and God.

One similarity between us and God is that we were made to rule and have dominion. God is the ultimate ruler with unlimited dominion. We, as His image-bearers, have limited rule and dominion over the earth. Another way in which we're similar to God is by being created in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. How do we know that these things are part of God's image? We learn this in two important New Testament passages:

And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. (Colossians 3:10)

And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24 ESV)

The Apostle Paul tells us that the “new man” is re-created or renewed in the image of God. This tells us that Jesus' redemption restores the image of God within us. And what does Paul say that image consists of? Notice his three terms:

- Knowledge
- Righteousness
- Holiness

So we learn from the Bible about four aspects of being made in God's image. We were made to reflect God's knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and we were made to have dominion over the earth.

For our purposes in this study, let's especially pay attention to that word “knowledge.” Part of what sets us apart from dogs, cats, zebras, and birds is that we were made with knowledge. We were made with minds that can think, reason, problem-solve, create, and imagine. Animals don't have the same ability.

Animals aren't made in the image of God. Evolutionists suggest that monkeys and humans come from a common ancestor. They observe



Monkeys are not made in God's image, and therefore they do not have the ability to create art.

inventions. This is because they are not made in God's image.

Now that we've learned the four basic aspects of God's image in mankind, let's return to the problem of sin. How has sin affected this image of God within us?

HOW SIN CORRUPTS MANKIND

The Lord warned Adam and Eve that the penalty for breaking God's commandment would be death (Gen. 2:17). Despite the serpent's protest to

that there are some visual similarities between monkeys and humans. While there are some visual similarities, there's a world of difference between us and monkeys. Human beings have discovered laws of mathematics, explored the world, concocted life-saving medications, painted beautiful works of art, and built bridges and skyscrapers. Monkeys have never done any of these things. Monkeys will *never* do any of these things. This is because mankind was made in God's image with knowledge.

Monkeys have yet to produce any real art or

the contrary (Gen. 3:4), Adam and Eve began to die the day they disobeyed. Expelled from the Garden and barred from the Tree of Life, Adam and Eve began to experience the ravages of sin.

Adam and Eve were guilty of breaking God's commandments. The just penalty for such disobedience is death (Rom. 6:23). Not only were they guilty, but sin also brought corruption to their nature. Their body and soul were now affected by sinful thoughts and desires. Man's mind, heart, will, thoughts, and desires were all affected by sin. This doesn't mean God's image was completely eliminated. Mankind is still made in God's image (Gen. 9:6). But that image has been marred and corrupted like a mirror that's been shattered in places. You can still see your reflection in such a mirror, but it's marred and distorted.

Sin's tragic effects were dramatically seen when Cain murdered his brother Abel in envy and malice (Gen. 4). From there, mankind descended further into the destructive death-spiral of sin. Genesis 6 records how corrupt the earth had become due to sin:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

This verse is important for our study. It tells us that sin has affected the mind. Man's thoughts became evil. Man's mind was no longer pure and holy. In fact, mankind was so corrupted by sin that his continual pattern of thought was "only evil continually." But this is not how God made man to think from the beginning.

Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many schemes. (Ecclesiastes 7:29)

Mankind was created holy in body and soul, heart and mind, will and affections. Mankind's thoughts were pure, true, and good. But ever since the fall into sin, the mind has not worked correctly. Sin has corrupted the mind. This is very important for us to understand as Christians. Unless God redeems us—including our minds—we can't and won't use our minds as God intended. Every part of us—including our minds—needs to be saved from sin.

THE DARKENED MIND

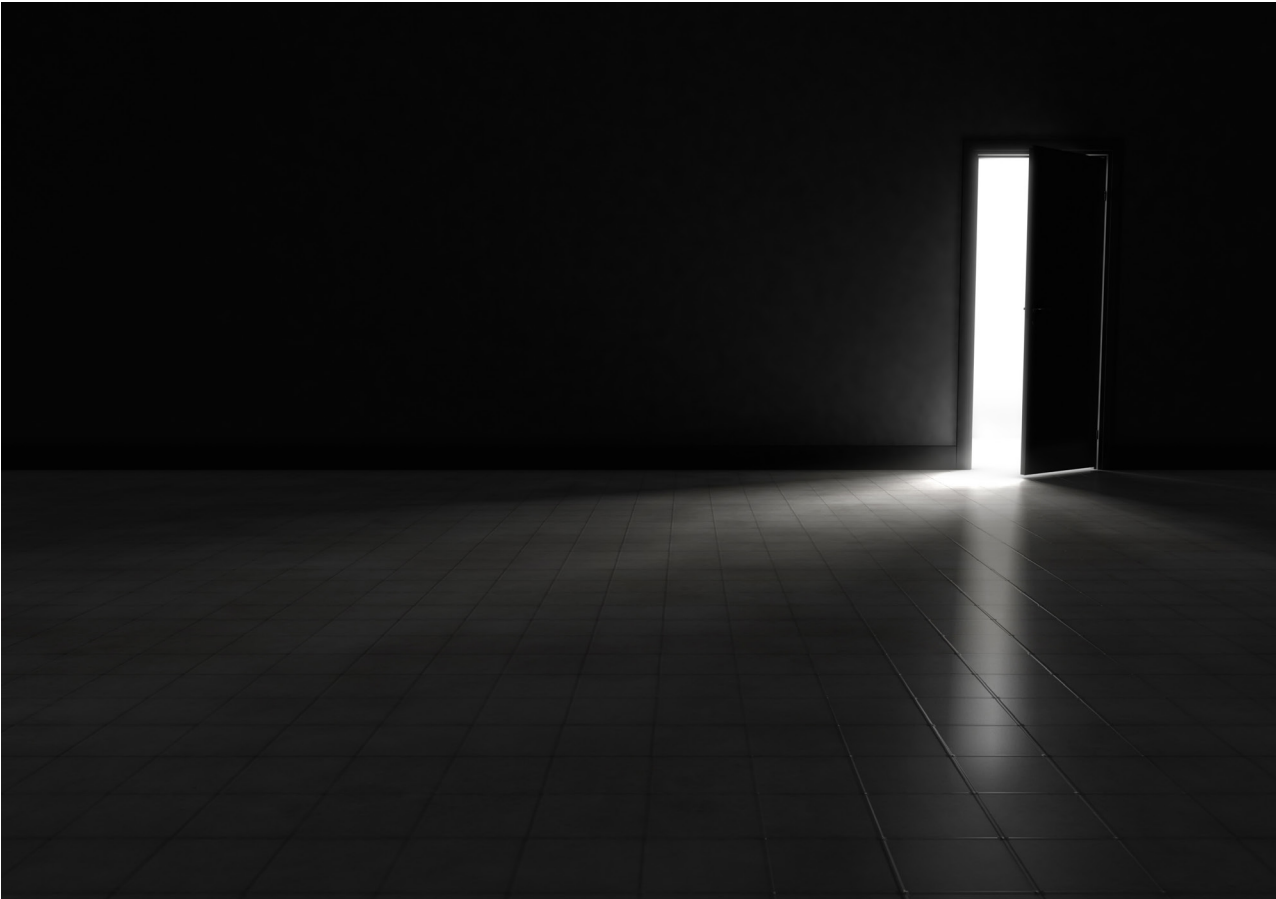
The Bible has much more to say about how sin affects the mind. One of the clearest passages on this topic is in Ephesians 4:

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Paul is writing to the Christians in Ephesus. They're the ones chosen in Christ, saved by grace through faith, and reconciled with God. They're no longer "Gentiles." Their lives have been transformed. Paul then exhorts them to walk in a new way of life. Before he describes that new way of life, he provides a grim picture of unbelieving, sinful mankind.

And what is the first thing he says about fallen mankind's way of life? They walk in *futility of mind*. What does it mean to have a futile mind? We don't have to guess. Paul explains what he means.

Their understanding is darkened. That is, they lack “light” in their understanding. What happens when all the lights go out in a room with no windows? You can’t see anything. You don’t know where to go. You put your arms out in front of you and grasp for the light switch. Without the light, you don’t walk the right way. You stumble into various objects and may hurt yourself. That’s what Paul says about fallen mankind. Their minds are in the dark. They don’t have the light of God’s truth to guide them.



Fallen man has a darkened mind. Without the light of God’s revelation, he stumbles in darkness.

Not only do they have minds engulfed in darkness, but they're alienated from life with God. They're separated from God, the source of life, truth, and blessing. What else does Paul say about their futile minds? He adds, "because of the ignorance that is in them."

A modern dictionary defines *ignorance* as "lacking knowledge, information, or awareness about a particular thing."¹ They lack knowledge of the truth. They're ignorant of God's redemption in Christ. They don't know as they ought to know.

Paul further amplifies the picture of darkness by saying they have "blindness of heart." That's even worse. Not only is their understanding darkened, they are blind. What, then, do we learn about fallen mankind from these verses? Look again at the descriptions Paul has given:

- Futility
- Darkness
- Alienation
- Ignorance
- Blindness

So how does fallen mankind think? One thing's for sure; fallen mankind doesn't think rightly. His mind has been thoroughly corrupted by sin's effects. People's thoughts and opinions aren't coming from a neutral machine like a computer program that simply processes facts and gives answers. When you talk to another person, you're talking to someone whose mind is affected by sin.

When you talk to another person, they're not unbiased. They're not neutral. This is true of Christians as well. If you're a Christian, you're not neutral. As a Christian, you favor God and His truth, and you argue on that basis. A non-Christian will be biased in favor of some other standard.

¹ "Ignorance," Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg, eds., *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

But both Christians and non-Christians are affected by sin to some degree. In the next chapter, we will return to see how Ephesians 4 describes God’s remarkable redemption in Christ, and how it renews and transforms our mind. There is good news ahead!

THE MIND THAT SUPPRESSES TRUTH

Let’s unpack another important passage showing how the mind is corrupted by sin. In Romans 1, Paul gives us another general summary of how sin has affected mankind.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Romans 1:18)

Verse 18 is a universal description of unbelieving mankind, and what they do by nature. They suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They know something of God’s truth. They know God exists (Rom. 1:19-20). But because mankind is in rebellion against God, mankind suppresses what is known and obvious from creation.

Christian apologist Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995) used the illustration of someone trying to keep an inflated beach ball under the water. Someone can press the beach ball under the water and hold it there. But the moment they let off the pressure, the beach ball will immediately rise to the surface. This is similar to what happens as unbelievers attempt to suppress God’s truth. God’s truth keeps rising to the surface as much as they try to



deny it. As ambassadors of the Lord Jesus, we can point out the “beach ball” the unbeliever is trying to hide.

What Paul says here helps us to understand what is happening when we have a conversation with an unbeliever. Imagine you’re on a flight somewhere, and you start talking with your fellow passenger. After some small talk, you find an opportunity to share with them that you’re a Christian, and then you give them a brief summary of what the gospel of Jesus is. Your fellow passenger then shares an objection or two to Christianity, explaining why they’re not a Christian.

Next, you respond and answer that objection with an answer you learned from your pastor. Satisfied that you gave a solid, truthful answer, you’re dismayed to find that this person rejects your response and wants to move on to other topics. What happened? Did your fellow airplane passenger carefully and reasonably consider your answer? Probably not.

What you need to remember about this imaginary exchange is this: your unbelieving fellow passenger doesn’t want to acknowledge the truth. Part of their rebellious sinful nature is to suppress the truth. Your fellow passenger isn’t neutral. They want Christianity to *not* be true. You also have a bias. You want Christianity to be true. People rejecting the truth should not surprise us at all. This is the way fallen mankind operates, Paul says. It takes the renewing, enlightening, resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit to change this problem.

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Having this conversation on the plane is still important. God works through such conversations to bring the gospel to unbelievers. But what’s important to remember about sin’s effect upon the mind is this; *unbelievers*

naturally suppress God's truth. There is much more we could say about Romans 1. But let's look at verse 28 as well:

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting. (Romans 1:28)

Because mankind does not want to know or glorify God, He gives mankind over to a “debased mind.” If we won't use our minds for their created purpose—to glorify God—He gives us over to the destruction of our minds. To debase something is to damage it or reduce it from its original strength.

THE RAVAGES OF TIME AND HUMAN MEMORY

We've seen in Scripture how sin has affected the mind. Before we conclude this chapter, let's look at a few other ways sin has affected man's ability to think and reason rightly.

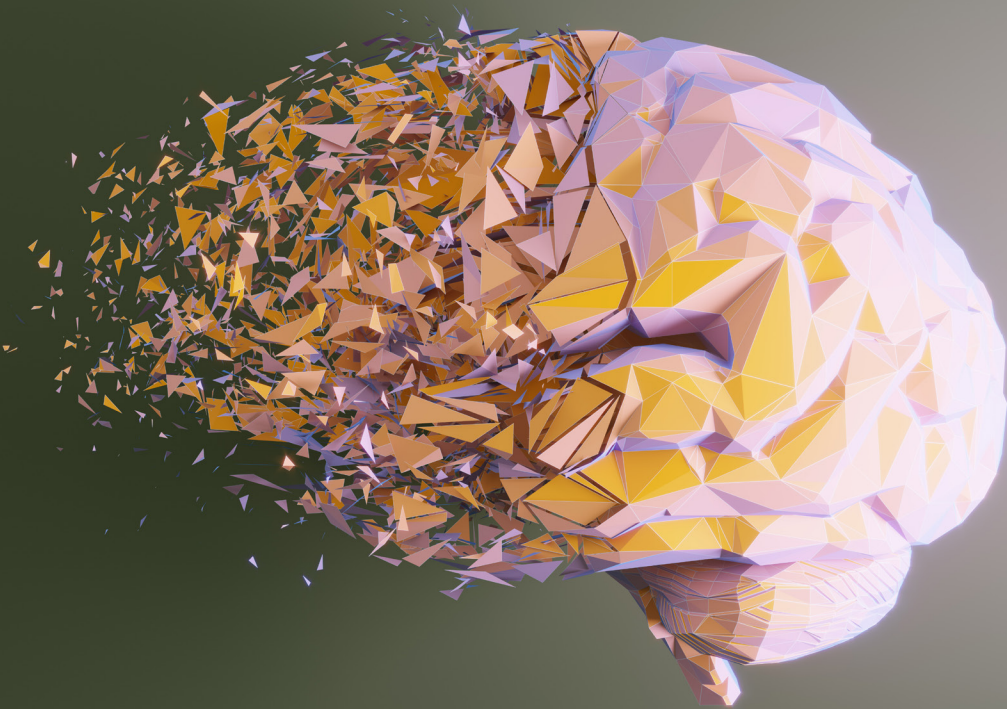
Sin can make a person rebel against truth and love a lie. It can make a man love sinful, evil things, and hate what's good and true. But let's also remember that one of sin's consequences is physical death. Our bodies break down over the years. We decay. As we get older, organs in our body that once worked well start malfunctioning. That includes our minds.

Over time, as our minds decay, we may lose some of our thinking abilities or our memory. After the resurrection and in the new heavens and new earth, this will no longer be a problem.

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease are two examples of how aging and the decay of the body affect the mind. The brain decays and stops working as it should. Someone with Alzheimer's begins to quickly forget recent events. You may be talking to someone with Alzheimer's and they may keep restarting the conversation at the beginning, forgetting you just talked

about that topic in detail. Or someone with Alzheimer's might even forget who their closest relatives were and wake up with no memory of who they are or who their family members are.

These extreme examples of the decay of the mind remind us of a general truth; our minds don't work perfectly. Even young people whose minds are working decently well can still forget things. Did you lose something recently and struggle to remember where you left it? You're confronting the limitation of your finite mind.



As a result of the fall, our minds decay and they do not work as well the older we become.

If you ever have the chance to witness a criminal trial, you'll notice a common phenomenon. A witness may be on the witness stand, while a lawyer questions them. In many cases, the witness will accurately recall past events. But here and there, you'll hear something like, "I can't remember," or, "I think what they said was this, but I can't recall."

If a sizable length of time has passed between the events and the criminal trial, it will be more difficult for the witness to accurately recall the events and conversations. This reminds us that our minds are finite. We cannot remember or know everything. And because our minds decay, they don't work as well as they once did. Sometimes, people refer to this problem as "the ravages of time and human memory." That word "ravages" points back to the problem of sin and its effects.

Our brief survey of what the Bible says about sin brings us to this undeniable conclusion; sin has caused a lot of destruction and death. The human mind has not been exempted from this. Now that we've reviewed the Bible's grim picture of sin, we're ready (and eager) to see what solution God's Word provides for this problem. The solution is found in a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to mend what sin destroyed. He came to redeem us from sin's terrible effects.

This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Genesis 1:26-28, Ephesians 4:24, and Colossians 3:10. Taking all these verses together, what are the characteristics of being made in the image of God?
2. How do mankind and animals differ from one another?
3. After the fall into sin, is mankind still made in God's image? Provide biblical support for your answer.
4. Read Ephesians 4:17-19. How has sin affected the mind, according to this passage?
5. According to Romans 1:18, what does a fallen man do naturally?
6. As finite and mortal creatures, what other weaknesses of the mind do we face?