

## **Thinking Christianly: Part One – On Loving God with Our Minds**

### **By Pastor Dave Fields**

“Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” – Mark 12:28-31

### **I. On Loving God with Our Minds**

1. The calling to love God with every single part of us is based on the fact that he has already loved us. Every. Single. Part.

“This only makes sense...within [the larger] gospel picture, of Jesus dying for the sins of the world, and rising again with the message of new life. That’s when these commands begin to come into their own: when they are seen not as orders to be obeyed in our own strength, but as invitations and promises to a new way of life in which, bit by bit, hatred and pride can be left behind and love can become a reality.” – N.T. Wright

“God does not save us by fractions, and we are not to offer to God a mere fraction of ourselves.” – David Garland

*Epistemology:* The study of how we know what we know.

2. Love for God requires love for neighbour; and love for neighbour, forms a key part of our love for God.

“Christians...do little to advance the faith if others can easily dismiss them as ignoramus.” – David Garland

3. What Jesus says here is a win-win-win situation.

The peace that Jesus came to bring is to go all the way down – to restore you to God, yes, but also to others, *and* your own self.

### **II. Responsible Christian Thinking**

#### **Three problems for Christian thinking**

- A. *Radical Conservatism:* In this mode of thinking, no new thoughts are allowed, only thoughts that are passed down from our forefathers, which usually means, our grandparents generation.

- B. *Compartmentalization*: This mode of thinking says: “I think about faith as a Christian, but I think about business as a businessman.” In this mode of thinking there is the Lordship of Christ, but only in the “faith” areas.
- C. *Capitulation*: Complete “giving over” or “capitulation” of Christian ideas to contemporary forms. This is trying to fit Christianity into whatever forms of thought, are current. For example, religious pluralism says that no one can claim to have “the truth” about spiritual reality, and everyone should accept that (ironically, as the ‘truth’). I have seen Christians begin to speak of their faith in Christ as though their faith were true for them, but not necessarily for everyone else. But Christianity claims that Jesus is Lord of the whole universe; that there is one God, and one God alone.

In this case there may be some sort of Christian “residue”, but no Lordship of Christ in any areas – only Christian bits, no authentic Christianity.

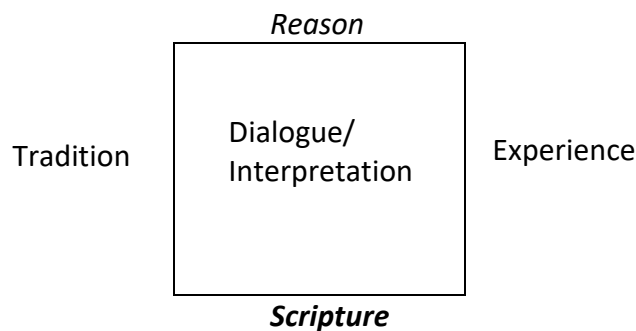
*Responsible Christian Thinking* is about being “responsive” to God and God’s world.

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.”  
– Philippians 1:9-11

The Christian tradition assumes that there is such a thing as ‘reality’, and that we have reliable access to it – even if it is only partial. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

As so, as Stackhouse puts it: “If we are to love God, we must have reliable apprehension of God. If we are to love our neighbours, we must truly know them such that we can care for them aright. And if we are to cultivate the rest of our planet, we must have extensive and reliable knowledge of it.” – John Stackhouse Jr.

### **The Protestant Quadrilateral**



## Life Group Discussion and Reflection:

### Open Up:

1. This week we looked at Jesus' call to love God with our whole being – our *mind* included. What has been your experience of how Christians tend to think about the life of the mind? Has your experience been that people have been excited to develop the life of the mind in love and service to God and others, or something different than that?
2. How have you tended to think about the “life of the mind” and your faith? If you were to put them on a spectrum of connected, somewhat connected, disconnected, where would it be? Why?

### Dig In:

#### Read Mark 12:28-31

3. In what ways do you find this text to be challenging you today?
4. In the message Pastor Dave pointed to a quote from John Stackhouse that said: *“We don’t have a universal ‘guide’ for all circumstances. Not the Bible or the Holy Spirit. Christian do not ‘know it all’ already. So, we are called to think and devote our minds to thinking in a thoroughly Christian way.”*
  - a. What do you think of that statement?
  - b. What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree?

### Take It Home:

5. How might you need to “rethink” your approach to Christian thinking? Do you find yourself stuck in one of the three “problems for Christian thinking” categories?

### Prayer:

Take some time to thank God that he has called us to be ‘responsive’ to Him in our thinking and living. Give thanks for some of the great resources he has given us for engaging our world in love. Pray for the needs of those in your Life Group or in our prayer list from the church.