

The Top 8 Things to Think About

Look at your life. Life is hard. Look at the news. In our fallen, sinful world, evil swirls about like a violent dust devil, clouding the air of absolute truth and muddying the waters of pure grace that flow to eternal life through Christ Jesus.

It seems the world has gone mad, and it has. Relativism rules as up is down, black is white and that which God calls evil is called good. All forms of sexual immorality are celebrated and deceptively tagged “human rights,” while God’s design for marriage, family and sexuality, along with true human rights, are systematically trampled to accommodate disorder and sin. Innocent children are slaughtered at will in the safety of their mothers’ wombs, while demonic political systems rooted in the pagan traditions of Islam and secular humanism stack the bodies of tens-of-millions like cordwood.

The enemy is enraged because his time is short.

Yet through it all, and in His infinite mercy and grace, God gives us a taste of things to come.

In biblical terms, the number 8 represents a new beginning with God. It signifies man’s covenantal relationship with his Creator through the physical act of circumcision, which, in the Jewish tradition, is performed on the male child’s eighth day. For the Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, we undergo a “circumcision of the heart” through belief in, communion with and worship of Jesus, the God-man.

That’s why I believe the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, gave mankind eight specific things to “think about” so that “the God of peace will be with you.” There can be peace in the eye of storm—a “new beginning” each day—and that peace

is Christ with us.

Said Paul: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).

1) *Whatever is true*

The opposite of true is the lie. Truth is fixed. Truth is objective. Moral relativism fosters the absurd notion that truth is malleable and subjective. Therefore, relativism is a lie. But, as Pilate asked Christ, "What is truth?" God's created order, His natural law, is truth. The Bible is God's word. The Bible is truth. It is called "the word of truth." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus Himself is truth. He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Immerse yourself in the word of God and you cannot help but "think about" truth.

2) *Whatever is noble*

Merriam Webster defines "noble" as "having, showing, or coming from personal qualities that people admire (such as honesty, generosity, courage, etc.)." We know noble when we see it. We see it in the teenage boy who returns the cash-flush wallet to the lost and found. We see it in the philanthropist who anonymously and generously gives to the widow and the poor—to "the least of these." We see it in the men and women who serve so that we may enjoy freedom. We especially see it in the soldier, in anyone, who lays down his life so that others may live.

3) *Whatever is right*

There is right and wrong. Right is correct. Wrong is incorrect. Love, true love, which derives from love Himself,

is right. Hate is wrong. Right stems from truth and grace. Wrong stems from the lie, enmity and ruthlessness. Right is to forgive others so that we may be forgiven. Wrong is to resent, begrudge and refuse to forgive. Right is the exclusivity of Christ. Wrong is the “inclusivity” of religious pluralism. Right comes from God the Father. Wrong comes from the father of lies.

4) *Whatever is pure*

“Pure” is that which is “free from what vitiates, weakens, or pollutes: containing nothing that does not properly belong.” Chastity is pure. Fornication is impure. Fidelity to one’s spouse and the faithful marriage bed is pure. Adultery is impure. True marriage is pure. Counterfeit same-sex “marriage” is “vitiating, weakened and polluted” by sexual immorality and is, therefore, impure. Contentment is pure. Covetousness is impure. Selflessness, when harmonized with and motivated by God’s moral truths, is pure. Selfishness is impure. Jesus is pure. We are impure. True Christianity is pure. Apostate “Christianity” and other false religions that deny Christ and the truth of His word are impure.

5) *Whatever is lovely*

“Lovely” is defined as “attractive or beautiful, especially in a graceful way.” Outward beauty can be lovely. Inward beauty that derives from the Holy Spirit is always lovely. The creative arts are lovely, especially when motivated by a desire to serve, honor and glorify the Creator. Handel’s “Messiah” is lovely. The Sistine Chapel is lovely. God’s nature, creation and created order is lovely. My beautiful wife and daughters are lovely, inside and out.

6) *Whatever is admirable*

That which is “admirable” is “worthy of admiration; inspiring approval, reverence, or affection.” The whole of God’s creation, save those aspects corrupted by sin, is admirable.

Our Creator God is beyond admirable and worthy of infinite wonder, praise and worship. Unfortunately, in our sinful nature, we often admire things that fall well short of admirable. We “think about” things anathema to those eight given us by Paul.

7) *Whatever is excellent*

Excellence means “of extremely high quality.” We are told to not only think about that which is excellent, but to strive for excellence in all we do. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). We also know excellence when we see it. Michael Jordan was excellent. Legendary jazz drummer Buddy Rich was excellent. The rib-eye at Ruth’s Chris is excellent. President Obama’s leadership and policies—economic, social, and national security-related, both foreign and domestic—are decidedly not excellent.

8) *Whatever is praiseworthy*

Finally, Webster’s defines “praiseworthy” as “laudable: deserving praise: worthy of praise.” The previous seven things Paul gives us to “think about” are also praiseworthy. They are laudable. That which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable and excellent, is also praiseworthy.

Do you see what Paul did here—what the Holy Spirit did through Paul? He gave us eight things to “think about.” Does anything in particular strike you about these eight things?

They are eight in One.

Each of these eight things represents a specific character trait of Christ Himself.

Jesus is true. Jesus is noble. Jesus is right. Jesus is pure. Jesus is lovely. Jesus is admirable. Jesus is excellent and, finally, perhaps most importantly, Jesus is infinitely and eternally praiseworthy.

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