

Love Your God with All Your Mind

The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul

(J.P. Moreland)

Summary

<https://gracelead.co>

last update 6 Mar 2018

Why the Mind Matters in Christianity1

Loss of the Christian Mind1

The Value of Reason2

Mind's Role in Spiritual Transformation3

How to Develop a Mature Christian Mind4

Harass the Hobgoblins of the Christian Mind 4

Clearing the Cobwebs4

What a Mature Christian Mind Looks Like5

Evangelism and the Christian Mind5

The Question of God5

Evidence for Jesus6

Guaranteeing a Future for the Christian Mind7

Main Point

As Christ stated, He expects you to love the Lord your God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ([Mat 22:37](#)).

Why the Mind Matters in Christianity

Loss of the Christian Mind

European philosophical ideas attacked the rationality of the Christian faith.

- * David Hume stated that since we cannot experience God with our five senses, we cannot rightly claim that He exists.
- * Immanuel Kant asserted that human knowledge is limited to what we can experience with our five senses.
- * Darwinian evolution emerged.

Christians at the time withdrew from the broader intellectual culture and became isolated.

In the 1800s, an intellectually shallow, theologically illiterate form of Christianity emerged. Thousands of people responded to revivalist preaching, but they had no real grasp of Christian teaching. These people were susceptible to cults [Mormonism 1830, Christian Science 1866, Jehovah's Witnesses 1884].

Rather than use the minds God gave them, people viewed faith as a blind act of will.

They forgot that Jesus wants to transform our mind, not simply our feelings (**Rom 12:1-2**). Faith is built on reason.

Faith = a power or skill to act in accordance with the nature of God's kingdom, a trust in what we have reason to believe is true

People were confused in thinking that college is just to get a job. For Christ-followers, college helps identify a field of study through which we can serve Christ. One way to serve Him is to learn how to think in a Christian manner about any major. Expecting your college professors to do that for you is foolish. We each have a responsibility to be thoughtful, confident, and articulate about our reasons for our faith.

Once people stop believing in God, the problem is not that they will believe nothing, rather the problem is that they will believe anything. -G.K. Chesterton

Freedom, Happiness, and Tolerance

Happiness: The Declaration of Independence states that we are endowed by our Creator with the right to pursue happiness. In this context, happiness means virtue and character. It does not mean a life filled with pleasure without struggle.

Freedom: The traditional meaning of freedom was the power to do what we ought to do, not to do whatever we felt like doing.

Tolerance: Tolerance meant you would treat others with respect even when their views were abhorrent to you. It meant you would argue against those viewpoints while defending people's right to argue their own case. Tolerance does not mean that all views are right.

Contemporary Worldview

The contemporary worldview is that there is no non-empirical knowledge, especially no ethical or theological knowledge.

- * **Scientific Naturalism:** view that the spatio-temporal universe of physical objects, properties, events, and processes it all there is, was, or ever will be.
 - ▶ **Scientism:** Strong scientism states that the only thing we can know is what we can test scientifically. Weak scientism allows some minimal rational justification for fields such as ethics.
 - ▶ **Creation Story:** All events that happen are due to the occurrence of earlier events plus the laws of nature.
 - ▶ **What is Real?:** Physical entities are all there are. There is no purpose in the world.

- * Postmodernism: There is no such thing as objective reality, truth, knowledge, value, or reason. These are simply social constructs.

A Christ-follower's Responsibility

- * Rededicate yourself to being a deeply spiritual person [**Gal 4:19**].
- * Be as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove [**Mat 10:16**]. This will require that you study and continue to develop your mind.

The Value of Reason

- * God knows everything [**Job 37:16**, **1John 3:20**].
- * God cannot lie [**Titus 1:2**].
- * God is completely reliable [**Rom 3:4**, **Heb 6:18**].
- * God's Word is true [**John 17:17**].
- * God calls us to reason together [**Isa 1:18**, **Jer 12:1**].
- * God requires us to study His Word [**2Tim 2:15**, **1Tim 4:15-16**].
- * God requires us to provide rational justification for our beliefs [**1Pet 3:15**].
- * We must do the hard work of understanding what God has said in His Word [**Rom 12:1-2**].
- * God is worthy of our best in all facets of ourselves, including our minds [**Mat 22:37-39**].

Christianity and Knowledge

Knowledge = to represent reality in thought or experience the way it really is on the basis of adequate grounds

Kinds of Knowledge

- * Knowledge by acquaintance: Being directly aware of something.
- * Propositional knowledge: Believing something is true based on adequate grounds.
- * Know-how: The ability to do certain things.

Biblical Emphasis on Knowledge

Exo 18:11	Rom 7:14
Deu 4:39	Rom 8:22
Psa 4:3	Rom 8:28
Pro 10:32	1Cor 15:58
Isa 49:26	2Cor 5:1
Mat 22:29	1Tim 1:8
John 7:17	1John 2:3
John 21:24	

Value of Extra-biblical Knowledge

- * for a life of wisdom [**Pro 6**, **Mat 5:44-45**]
- * for moral law [**Acts 17:16-31**]
- * for influence [**Dan 1:3-4**]

Misunderstanding that Leads to Resistance

- * thinking that **1Cor 1-2** suggests that human reason is futile: The passage criticizes prideful use of reason, not reason itself. It also condemns speaking ability not backed up with substance.
- * thinking that **Col 2:8** condemns philosophy in general: The passage criticizes hollow and deceptive philosophy. The best way to avoid hollow and deceptive philosophy is to use Scripture and right reason as a guide as you study philosophy.
- * thinking that **Mat 18:1-4** tells us that faith is separate from reason: The passage condemns us being arrogant and self-sufficient.
- * thinking that **1Cor 8:1** warns that knowledge causes arrogance: This passage promotes humility, not ignorance.

Aspects of Faith

- * Knowledge (notitia): data or doctrinal content [**Jude 3**]
- * Assent (assensus): the assent of the intellect to the truth
- * Trust (fiducia): personal application

Mind's Role in Spiritual Transformation

The mind is the soul's primary vehicle for making contact with God. God desires a life of intellectual growth and study for His children.

Terminology

Soul = immaterial, invisible thing that makes you a conscious, living being

- * total person (**Gen 2:7, Psa 63:1**)
- * immaterial self (**Mat 10:28, John 2:25**)
- * contains desires and emotions (**2Sam 3:21, Psa 119:28**)
- * exercises volition (**Psa 119:129, Psa 130:6**)

Spirit = that aspect of human beings through which they relate to God (**Psa 51:10, Rom 8:16, Eph 4:23**); sometimes used as a synonym for soul

Heart = center of human personality (**Pro 4:23**); equivalent to soul; other times:

- * seat of volition and desire (**Exo 35:5, Deu 8:2, Rom 2:5, Pro 14:30, Pro 23:17**)
- * seat of thought and reason (**Deu 29:2-4, Psa 90:12, Isa 65:17**); mind (**Php 4:8, Col 3:2**)

States of the Soul

- * Sensation: state of awareness; your soul uses your body as a set of instruments to experience the external world; emotions are a subclass of sensations
- * Thought: mental content
- * Belief: person's view accepted to varying degrees of strengths
- * Desire: felt inclination to do, have, or experience certain things (not always conscious)
- * Act of will: a volition or choice, an exercise of power, an endeavoring to do a certain thing

Faculties / Capacities of the Soul

We develop higher-order capacities by developing lower-order capacities.

Faculty = a compartment of the soul that contains a family of related capacities

- * Emotional faculty: capacity to experience emotions such as fear or love
- * Mental faculty (mind): contains thoughts, beliefs, and related capacities
- * Spiritual faculty (spirit): means through which a person relates to God; Before accepting Christ, the spirit has limited awareness of God. At new birth, God plants new capacities in the spirit which we must nourish. As the spirit develops, it begins to influence other faculties of the soul.

Mind's Role in Transformation

Beliefs

- * Content: We are each responsible for what we believe.
- * Strength: degree to which you are convinced a belief is true
- * Centrality: degree of importance the belief plays in your entire set of beliefs (worldview)
- * How to change beliefs: Embark on a course of study to put yourself in a position to undergo a change in the content, strength, or centrality of your beliefs.
- * Plausibility structure: set of ideas the person either is or is not willing to entertain as possibly true; By planting seeds in someone's mind, it creates a space for them to entertain the possibility of your idea being true.

Behavior

- * Seeing: Seeing begins by noticing. Next, we classify what we notice based on what we already know. Then, we consider what we see and judge whether our perceptual beliefs are true. The more you know, the more you see. This means, general intellectual development will contribute to Bible study.
- * Willing: What we study determines the kind of thought habits we form. That is why Paul urged us to center on things that are true, honorable, just, and pure (**Php 4:8-9**).

How to Develop a Mature Christian Mind

Harass the Hobgoblins of the Christian Mind

The purpose of life is to bring honor to God, to know, love, and obey Him. I should seek to use my vocation for the good of others as He directs.

The mind is like a muscle. If you don't exercise it regularly, it weakens.

Danger of the Empty Self

- * Focused purely on self-interest which leads to lack of meaning in life.
- * Seek instant gratification which prevents maturity.
- * Passive, letting others do the thinking and doing for them which makes them incapable of caring for themselves.
- * Attached to sensation which destroys their capacity for abstract reasoning.
- * Filled with distraction and noise which destroy intellectual and spiritual life.

Cast Out the Empty Self

- * Admit the problem. Work with others to develop your intellectual abilities for the service of Christ.
- * Reject the empty self culture.
- * Change your routine. Get out of passive ruts.
- * Practice spiritual disciplines.
- * Develop a good vocabulary.
- * Set some intellectual goals. (reading list, group studies)
- * Reject the idea that you can't learn.
- * Strive for a life built on truth.

Clearing the Cobwebs

Habits of the Mind

- * You must order your general lifestyle in such a way that a maturing intellect emerges as part of that lifestyle.
- * To skillfully develop a Christian mind, you must be willing to pay the price of ordering your lifestyle appropriately.

Virtue Groups

- * Seek to know and do the truth. Be honest with yourself and with others about the strength of your beliefs. Practice living what you know.
- * Trust and hope in God. Reflect and meditate on what you study.
- * Be willing to learn from others. Work to express your points in an emotionally calm way.
- * Be vigilant in study. Stand up for the truth even when it is unpopular.
- * Care most about what God thinks.

Speaking and Writing

The way people use language is linked to the way they think. The devaluation of grammar correlates closely with a devaluation of the mind, truth, and thought.

Principles of Reasoning

Argument = a group of statements that contain premises and a conclusion

Deductive argument: In a valid deductive argument, IF the premises are true, THEN the conclusion **must** be true. In an invalid deductive argument, the premises could be true even though the conclusion is false.

- * God want us to argue, not be argumentative [**1Pet 3:15**].

Ad hominem	an argument that attacks the other arguer rather than the argument itself
Appeal to pity	a statement that is not sound logically but is psychologically moving
Appeal to the people	fallacious reasoning that argues if you want to be included in the group, you must accept the conclusion as true
Begging the question	using your conclusion as one of the premises you use to establish the conclusion
Genetic fallacy	finding fault with an idea because of its origin rather than the idea itself
Inductive argument	IF the premises are true, THEN the conclusion is probably true.
Necessary condition	a condition that must prevail before a second condition can occur (only if, implies that)

Red herring	changing the subject to an irrelevant issue
Self-refutation	a statement that refers to itself and falsifies itself (ex. I do not exist. There are no truths.)
Sound argument	a deductive argument with true premises which result in a true conclusion
Strawman	distorting an opponent's position to make it easier to attack
Sufficient condition	a condition that is adequate for another condition to succeed (if, given that)
Syllogism	a deductive argument that consists of two premises and one conclusion

What a Mature Christian Mind Looks Like

Evangelism and the Christian Mind

Rhetoric without reason, persuasion without argument are manipulation.

Apologetics seeks to provide rational grounds for believing the gospel. The intent is to help:

- * Unbelievers overcome intellectual obstacles to accepting Christ.
- * Believers remove doubts that hinder their spiritual growth.

Paul used arguments, reasoning, and evidence to persuade others to accept Christ

[Acts 14:15-17, Acts 17:2-4, Acts 17:16-31, Acts 18:4, Acts 19:8-9].

The emphasis on reasoning makes the truthfulness of the gospel the main issue, not the "fulfillment" of the seeker.

Our aim should be to learn to become attractive, non-defensive ambassadors for Christ.

The Question of God

The more important the issue, the greater the damage in holding to a false belief.

A Cumulative Case Inference

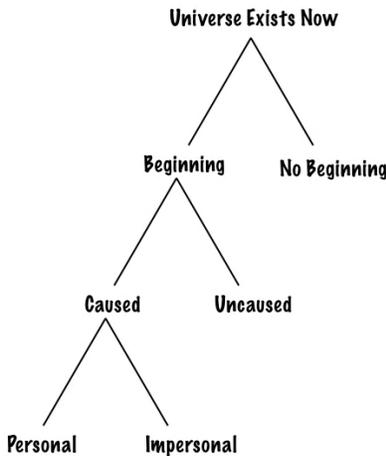
Formulate a pool of possible explanations. Judge which is best. Consider the combined weight of all the evidence taken together.

Example: Existence of the Universe

- * Premise 1: The universe had a **beginning**. The second law of thermodynamics states that the universe is running out of energy. If the universe had an infinite past, it would have already run out of energy.
- * Premise 2: The beginning of the universe had a **cause**. (the kalam cosmological argument)

Coming into existence from nothing cannot be governed by the laws of nature. God does not need a cause because God is not an event. He is a necessary being existing in Himself without having to borrow existence from anything else.

The Existence of the Universe



- * Premise 3: The cause of the beginning of the universe was **personal**. Whatever created the first event existed in an immaterial, timeless, changeless, immutable, spaceless state of affairs.

What caused the universe?

- * Event-event causation: One event can cause another, but an event must exist for that to happen. Science cannot explain things without there already being objects, space, and time. This could not be the cause of the universe.
- * Agent causation: A conscious being can choose to act. The most reasonable explanation for the beginning of the universe is that it was a free act of will by an immaterial, conscious agent who can exist outside of space and time.

Design Argument

Impersonal causes and laws of nature cannot explain certain facts about the world. Some of these facts have characteristics that support intelligent design.

- * The ubiquitous presence of beauty
- * Irreducible complexity: a system containing interacting parts that contribute to its

function, where the loss of any single part causes the system to cease functioning

- * Specified complexity: (1) no law of nature required the event to happen, (2) the event had a small probability of happening, (3) the event can be identified as a special occurrence

Moral Life Argument

Evil provides evidence for God. You can't have real evil without there being a real way things are and are not supposed to be. God made us to function best when we live a life of virtue (by His definition).

Evidence for Jesus

3 Criteria for Choosing a Religion

1. Does the depiction of the supreme being in the religion harmonize with what we already know about God from creation? [monotheism]
2. Does the religion provide the most profound diagnosis of the human condition and the most adequate solution to that diagnosis?
3. Is the best explanation of both the origin and history of the religion one that employs supernatural activity on God's part?

Historical Evidence

- * Reliability of New Testament (confirmed by numerous scholars)
- * Evidence Outside New Testament (Roman, Greek, and Jewish historians)
- * Oral Tradition in First Century Jewish Culture: The recollections were collective ones, not individual memories. They memorized, preserved, and circulated the material among many eyewitnesses who served as guardians. It was customary for disciples to take notes.
- * Features of the Gospels That Underscore Accuracy: They include embarrassing details. They note personal names. Archeology has confirmed many of the details in the Gospel stories.

Resurrection Evidence

- * Most scholars agree that the disciples saw the resurrected Christ. Even imprisonment and torture did not cause them to change their testimony.
- * Jesus' resurrection came as a surprise.
- * Hundreds of people saw the resurrected Christ in a variety of settings.

Guaranteeing a Future for the Christian Mind

Some of Moreland's suggestions include:

- * Vary the intellectual level of sermons to encourage people to think and study for themselves.
- * Refrain from only providing sermons that entertain or fill a felt need.
- * For messages, provide detailed notes (2-3 pages) with a bibliography.
- * Recommend books that strengthen people's intellectual development.
- * Provide an apologetics class each summer (primary audience = those who will be attending college)
- * Identify congregants doing graduate work and assist them in finding prayer partners who work in their chosen field of study.