

How Can We Love God With All of Our Mind?

Lesson #5 Cobwebs of the Mind

I. Where Do We Begin?

Where do we begin to clean out the cobwebs in our mind and prepare to know God to the extent possible by His own revelation to us? Important points are:

A. To Be Grounded in the Word of God!

1. To be humble in your study. You are probably not a scholar yet.
2. To know what you don't yet know, to know where you are weak.
3. To be willing to learn from others.
4. Seriously stay in and feed on the word for the rest of your life. This is not a temporary commitment!
5. To be courageous when it comes to the use of God's word.

Prov 21:22-24 *A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.*

²³*He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.* ²⁴*"Proud," "Haughty," "Scoffer," are his names, who acts with insolent pride.*

6. A prayer to seek God's guidance:

A Prayer for Integrity of Biblical Interpretation and Application:

Dear Lord, Give me diligence to study your Word this day with humbleness and integrity. Help me to derive the correct meaning of the text, that meaning which you intended to convey to Your children for their own good and for Your glory.

Guide me to avoid spurious meanings that represent my own biases and presuppositions rather than what You originally meant to bless me.

Help me work hard at applying a proper hermeneutic to the text and to spend the time necessary seeking the meaning that You intended to communicate to Your people.

Keep my mind and heart humble as I approach Your truth and give me the proper fear of error, which error may be found in my own carelessness of interpretation.

Make me meditate on Your Word. Give me the proper fear to be wise and to obey Your Word in all of its precepts.

Thank You that I have Your Word this day to sustain, encourage, warn, and edify my soul as I study Your holy Word.

I pray that my study may edify me for service to You and for Your glory! Amen RRW

7. To learn "Hermeneutics" (how to interpret that Bible). A few good suggested books:

Basic Bible Interpretation by Roy B. Zuck; Amazon new \$13.97; used \$8.08

Introduction to Biblical Interpretation by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard; Amazon used \$8.53

A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible; by Robert Stein; Amazon new \$16.74; used \$9.25

- B. "Clearing the Cobwebs from Our Mental Attics" Title of Chapter 5 of J. P. Moreland's *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p. 119

Note: This section is not meant to intimidate you or me. We are not all called to be scholars, but we are all called to use whatever talents, intelligence, and gifts that God has given to us, for bringing glory to His name. These following admonitions are meant to cause us think differently about how we worship and glorify God as individuals serving God within those talents, intelligence, and gifts that God has given to each one of us!

1. The Formation of Virtue –

"A mature person has a tightly integrated, well-ordered soul. A mind that is learning to function well is both part of and made possible by an overall life that is skillfully lived. You cannot learn to use your mind well for Christ's sake by just reading a logic book or taking more adult education courses. You must order your general lifestyle in such a way that a maturing intellect emerges as part of that lifestyle. If you want to develop a Christian mind, you must intend to order your overall form of life to make this

How Can We Love God With All of Our Mind?

possible. You cannot just read a book or two and add this to a lifestyle otherwise indifferent to the intellect.”

J. P. Moreland; *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p.120

2. Virtues of the Good Life –

“A life so ordered to facilitate growth is characterized by a certain set of virtues that makes such growth possible. A virtue is a skill, a habit, an ingrained disposition to act, think, or feel in certain ways. Virtues are those good parts of one’s character that make a person excellent at life in general. As with any skill a virtue becomes ingrained in my personality, and thus a part of my very nature, through repetition, practice, and training. If I want to develop the virtue of compassion, I must regularly practice acts of mercy, self-sacrifice, and kindness. Knowing what these virtues are will give you something specific at which to aim in your efforts to cultivate your mind.” J. P. Moreland; *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p. 121

3. Study as a Spiritual Discipline –

“Dallas Willard defines a spiritual discipline as ‘an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His Kingdom.’ In any human endeavor, repetitive exercise and practice bring skill and excellence. Sometimes a particular activity is good because it accomplishes a specific result. - - - We often correctly approach study specifically for some direct end – preparing a lesson or learning a topic covered in book. But study should also be approached as a set of training activities, as spiritual and intellectual exercises. Study is a discipline that strengthens the mind and enriches the soul. Sometimes I study a book for the sheer value of engaging my intellect in a stretching, strenuous activity. Other times, I read to help myself cultivate the intellectual virtues listed above. Seen as a discipline, study becomes a means of building my character, ingraining habits of thought and reflection, and reinforcing in my own soul the value of the life of the mind. We study, then, not simply to gain knowledge about the topic of study, but as a broader spiritual discipline.”

J. P. Moreland; *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p. 127

4. The Importance of English Grammar and Syntax

“Jane M. Healy Ph.D. observes that ‘the way people use language is braided together rightly with the way they think.’ Healy is right. While we do not need to think in language - - - nevertheless, language development is critical for cultivating a careful, precise, attentive mind. Most people today do not use good grammar or syntax in sentence construction. Interestingly, the demise of grammar and syntax reflects a change in the main way language is currently used. Today, we primarily use language to express emotions, create experiences, or get someone to do something, like buy a product. Careful thought is not always relevant to these modern appropriations of language. How many television commercials actually persuade us to buy something on the basis of an articulate defense of a product! The devaluation of grammar correlates closely with a devaluation of the mind, truth, and thought. When a main purpose of language is the careful, precise expression of thought, grammar and syntax become critical because they make such expression of thought possible.”

J. P. Moreland; *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p. 128

5. Learning Principles of Reasoning – Logic

“We Christians must never forget that our God is a God of truth, reason, and logic. He speaks wisdom to His children, invites them to reason and argue with Him logically, and demands that they present in logical fashion the reason why they believe. The image of God within us includes the faculty of abstract reasoning and logical thought. In Romans, the apostle Paul presents in a careful, logical fashion a host of Old Testament texts about the nature of sin, judgment, and justification. In public debate, Jesus Himself regularly used careful logic to refute opponents’ arguments and present them with a carefully reasoned alternative. When John Wesley told a group of ministers to become proficient in logic as part of their calling, he was expressing a deep understanding of the Christian faith as that faith is depicted in the Bible and throughout church history.

J. P. Moreland; *Love Your God With All Your Mind*; p. 130

6. Learning the Common Errors of Argument

In addition of learning formal logic it is also important to learn some set of false arguments, perhaps as few as 20 of the most common ones (>100 total).

Consider *Logically Fallacious* by **Bo Bennett, PHD**; Amazon used – about \$12

How Can We Love God With All of Our Mind?

II. A Proper Fear of Deception

To be deceived is to not know what is true. The “**Postmodernism**” of today is a deceiving philosophy that denies the very nature of “truth”. Today, the average Christian allows their young children to be taught postmodernism as true in our public (secular) schools. These parents often lack discernment in this important matter which is central to the very gospel that we should be standing firm in!

Definition: Postmodernism - “a broad movement that developed in the mid- to late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism, marking a departure from modernism. The term has been more generally applied to the historical era following modernity and the tendencies of this era. While encompassing a wide variety of approaches and disciplines, postmodernism is generally defined by an attitude of skepticism, irony, or rejection of the grand narratives and ideologies of modernism, often calling into question various assumptions of Enlightenment rationality. Consequently, common targets of postmodern critique include universalist notions of objective reality, morality, truth, human nature, reason, science, language, and social progress. Postmodern thinkers frequently call attention to the contingent or socially-conditioned nature of knowledge claims and value systems, situating them as products of particular political, historical, or cultural discourses and hierarchies. Accordingly, postmodern thought is broadly characterized by tendencies to self-referentiality, epistemological and moral relativism, pluralism, and irreverence.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism>

There are many other false theological and philosophical ideas which are a great danger to the soul of children and men and women. How can we protect our families, our loved ones, and ourselves from these deceiving spirits that are rampant within our own culture and this world of fallen, deceived people?

Simply put, it is essential that we know the truth thoroughly (Scripture) and that we can discern error when we see it. We must protect our children. Read the passage below regarding God’s warning to us!

1 Pet 5:6-11 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. ¹¹To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

III. A Sure Confidence in God’s Gift of Faith

I have found that many Christians are afraid to study secular things deeply for fear of losing their faith. Their faith, if any, is based on their own strength of will, not on God’s sovereign grace. Consider what Scripture says:

1 Jn 2:19-22 *They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.*

Eph 2:4-10 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

There is no option in the Christian life to “coast”, to be saved only. We are in a battle for the souls of lost men and women. We are the only hope that a lost and dying world has in regards to the consequences of their sin before a just and holy God. If we do not warn them, who will? We should never commit the sins of omission, of neglecting our calling, of not serving God in the hard things of this life. The indwelling Holy Spirit should energize our souls as to our service to God during this, our short time on this earth.

How Can We Love God With All of Our Mind?

Rom 6:17-23 *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

IV. A Way of Thinking

To love God is to obey God.

To love God with our mind is to obey God with our mind/intellect.

To obey God with our mind/intellect is to serve God with our intellect.

1st We need to come to God prayerfully seeking from God where He would have us as individuals serve Him with our intellect. Remember Eph 2:10 above. God has already planned good works which we should prepare to do for Him in service to reflect His glory. What a privilege!

2nd We need to repent I in humbleness regarding our not serving Him seriously with our minds. We need to know what we don't know and set out in humbleness to study and learn an area where God wants us to serve. He will lay on your heart a desire/interest to serve here. We must seek excellence! We must learn multiple sides of the various issues that to be "salt" and "light" will require you to know. Screen your thoughts and ideas daily by the truthfulness of the word of God.

3rd As you grow in knowledge of the particular area that you believe God has called you to serve Him, keep praying and seeking His specific will as He directs your intellectual and spiritual growth.

4th With discernment to the Word of God, and with a growing knowledge of your selected area of excellence, test yourself by discussing the subject material with other Christians and even with some secular people that work in and/or are trained in that field.

5th Challenge your mind, work hard and long at it, achieve excellence, learn the arguments against the faith that this area of expertise traditionally brings up.

V. Conclusion

2 Cor 10:3-6 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.*

Serving God with our mind, by growing in mental knowledge and strength is, in the end, spiritual warfare. We must remember this. God uses our whole self in His service, but in the end, we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ !!

VI. Quotes

"People go to sleep over good books not because they are unwilling to make the effort, but because they do not know how to make it. Good books are over your head; they would not be good for you if they were not. And books that are over your head weary you unless you can reach up to them and pull yourself up to their level. It is not the stretching that tires you, but the frustration of stretching unsuccessfully because you lack the skill to stretch effectively. To keep on reading actively, you must have not only the will to do so, but also the skill - the art that enables you to elevate yourself by mastering what at first sight seems to be beyond you."

Mortimer Adler & Charles Van Doren; *How to Read a Book;* p. 48