

Introduction

In verse 16 of our text, Paul mentions the "**mind**" of Jesus, which reminds me of a website I came across. It's called *Ranker* and is a consumer web platform designed around individual list making and voting. One of the categories on which people can vote is "**The Greatest Minds of All time.**" *Ranker* lists 100 of those according to vote, the top five of whom are Leonardo de Vinci, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Galileo Galilei, and Plato. Going back to the mind of Jesus, He does make the list but He's 39th. *Ranker* voters, in other words, think the minds of 38 people are greater than the mind of Jesus. That's absurd though. He is, by far, the greatest mind of all time. De Vinci is a mental midget compared to Him, which is why Paul commands what he does in verse 16, "**Have the mind of Christ,**" and that's what I'm preaching about today.

Knowledge and Belief Are Different

Let's begin by defining "**mind.**" It's that part of us that enables us to think in various ways, which include remembering, perceiving, imagining, believing, and knowing. Look at the words "**understand**" in verse 14 and "**known**" in verse 16, which are synonyms. They show that Paul's concerned here with one of those ways of thinking, "**knowing.**"

Last week, I preached about what Jesus believes and how that relates to our worldview. Today, I'm preaching about what He knows and how that relates to our worldview. My doing so implies that belief and knowledge aren't the same thing and they aren't. Consider two facts.

One is that knowledge is necessarily tied to truth, but belief isn't. Knowledge always thinks about something as it actually is. Belief, in contrast, can think about something as it actually isn't. What people know, therefore, is always true, like "**The world is round not flat.**" What they believe though may or may not be true. They can believe what is false and sometimes do, like "**If you can dream it, you can do it.**"

Another fact is that knowledge is necessarily tied to investigation,

but belief isn't. With one exception, God revealing something, knowledge always comes from searching out what is so. It can't be acquired in any other way. Its source is always investigation. Belief, in contrast, doesn't always come from searching out what is so. It can be acquired in other ways. Emotions like anger, fear, hatred, or love, for instance, can engender beliefs. So, the love of parents compels them to believe things about their children that aren't so, like how intelligent or talented they are. The source of belief can be something other than investigation.

Those then are two facts. Knowledge is necessarily tied to truth and investigation, but belief isn't. Those two facts make clear that there is a difference between belief and knowledge and the difference is huge.

Belief without the Support of Knowledge

That they're different has several implications. One is that we can have belief that isn't supported by knowledge and often do, especially when it comes to **"the things of the Spirit of God,"** verse 14. That refers to spiritual realities, realities that relate directly to the person and works of God and to His invisible kingdom. Christians often have beliefs about those realities without the support of knowledge.

Examples abound. Her skeptical co-worker challenged a Christian's belief that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant word of God. The co-worker asked her, **"How do you know that?"** The Christian replied, **"I'll ask my pastor and get back to you."** She believed something but didn't know it. Or a Jehovah's Witness challenged a Christian's belief that God is triune. The Jehovah's Witness asked her, **"Why do you believe that?"** The Christian answered, **"I'll ask my pastor and get back to you."** She believed something but didn't know it. In both instances, I was the pastor they asked.

Those anecdotes and countless others illustrate something about Christians. They often adhere to beliefs about spiritual realities without the support of knowledge. God created the universe. The Bible is His written word. Jesus rose from the dead. And to die is gain. Christians

often believe those things but don't know them. Their beliefs aren't based on knowledge. There are at least two reasons for that.

First, many Christians think that believing things about spiritual realities without the support of knowledge is necessary. By their very nature, spiritual realities stand free of knowledge, they think. Beliefs about them, therefore, are either *against* knowledge (we know they're false) or with *no support of* knowledge (we can't know they're true). Spiritual realities can be believed, in other words, but not known.

Second, many Christians think that believing things about spiritual realities without the support of knowledge is commendable. Willpower and faith are virtues. Since it takes heroic willpower and faith to sustain beliefs without the support of knowledge, doing so is a virtuous and admirable thing.

A Christian once told me about her belief that Jesus rose from the dead, "**It's a leap of faith that I choose to take.**" Think about the terms she used, "**leap of faith**" and "**choose.**" It suggests something. She believed that Jesus rose from the dead, but didn't know it because it can't be known. And it was virtuous on her part that she did.

She demonstrates that Christians often have beliefs about spiritual realities without the support of knowledge, which, they think, is a necessary and commendable thing.

Belief with the Support of Knowledge

But it isn't – either of those. We see that in verse 14. Paul writes about "**the natural man,**" the secular person who takes only material realities into account. Notice what he can't do – know "**the things of the Spirit of God,**" what verse 16 calls, "**the mind of the Lord.**" In contrast, Paul writes about "**he who is spiritual**" in verse 15, the person who takes spiritual realities primarily into account. He can do what the natural man can't – know the things of the Spirit of God; know the mind of the Lord. The result when he does, in verse 16, is that he has "**the mind of Christ.**"

Let me simplify what Paul's saying in this text by putting it in the form of a syllogism. Premise #1 – The mind of Jesus is one that knows spiritual realities. Premise #2 – We can know spiritual realities. Conclusion – We have the mind of Jesus when we know spiritual realities. Notice I said "**know**" not "**believe**" in the syllogism because that's the word Paul uses in verses 14 and 16.

His message here is profound. We must have the mind of Jesus, and can. We can by supporting the beliefs in our worldview with knowledge. When Jesus lived on earth, He believed what He believed because He knew what He knew, and so should we. Last week, I preached about incorporating the beliefs of Jesus into our worldview. We should do that. But we should also support those beliefs and all beliefs with knowledge whenever we can. Ideally, knowledge is the basis of belief.

I say "**ideally**" because of what knowledge does. It steadies and strengthens belief and thus behavior. "**Mere**" belief, that is, belief without knowledge (personal opinion), is by its very nature unsteady and weak. Dallas Willard explained it well: "**As Plato noted long ago, it (mere belief) tends to waver, to come and go, especially when concerned with the more abstract and ultimate issues of life. And that in turn makes character and action based on those beliefs hesitant and variable at best, unsuited us for steady engagement with the realities that we have to deal with.**" Willard was right. Mere belief is unsteady and weak in directing what we are and do. But knowledge steadies and strengthens it in directing what we are and do.

Several years ago, the Barna Research Group conducted a survey. It found that 19% of churchgoers read the Bible every day, 25% a few times a week, 14% once a week, 22% once a month, and 20% rarely or never. In light of those findings, recall something I repeatedly say. The Bible gives us the best information about the most important matters in human life. Suppose I don't believe that. I'll be one of the 20% who rarely or never read it. Or suppose I believe that without the support of knowledge. I believe it only because my social environment expects it or

I'd feel guilty or afraid if I didn't. My mere belief will be unsteady and weak in directing what I do. I'll be one of those who read it a few times a week or more likely once a week or month. Now suppose I believe that and do because of what I know about God and the Bible. My belief, with the support of knowledge, will be steady and strong in directing what I do. I'll be one of the 19% who read it every day.

That analysis shows us, by way of example, what it means to have the mind of Jesus. We incorporate His beliefs into our worldview and support them with knowledge. Doing so makes those beliefs steady and strong in directing what we are and do.

How to Support Our Beliefs with Knowledge

Now, verses 14-15 teach us how to do that – how to support our beliefs with knowledge. Paul uses a Greek word that the NASB translates “**appraise.**” It's a legal term that means literally “**to scrutinize,**” “**to examine,**” or “**to investigate.**” That's how we support our beliefs with knowledge. We investigate the matter that concerns us. Investigation involves two activities.

First, we gather information. Information refers to facts, the details of reality. We learn as many facts as we can about the matter that concerns us. We have at least three resources for doing so.

Our first and best resource is the Bible. It's first and best for two reasons. One is that it's infallible. Everything that it asserts or assumes is so is so. Another reason is that it's relevant. The facts it reveals about a matter are the most important facts about that matter. For those two reasons, we begin gathering information with it. We learn everything it reveals about the matter that concerns us.

Our second resource is people in the know. Good masters or teachers aren't infallible as the Bible is, but they can be reservoirs of information. So, we choose them on the basis of their competence and character. We then learn everything we can from them about the matter that concerns us.

A third resource is the activities, experiences, and events of day-to-day life. They're pregnant with facts about spiritual and material realities. So, we carefully observe, interpret, and analyze what's going in them to glean those facts.

Investigation involves a second activity. The first is that we gather information. The second is that we think well about the information we've gathered. We take it into our mind, under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We dwell on it and ponder its meaning. Using the logical relations of implication and contradiction, which we all use every day, we determine what must be true or what cannot be true in light of the information we've gathered.

Thinking well has an invaluable consequence. It extends the information we've gathered so that we see **"the larger picture"** as we say it. That in turn becomes the firm foundation of our beliefs.

We now know how to support our beliefs with knowledge so they're steady and strong. We investigate the matter that concerns us. We gather information and think well, determining what it implies.

Conclusion

I close with two questions in that regard. First, what do you believe about the following matters: the resurrection of Jesus, cell phones for children, the inerrancy of the Bible, sex, life after death, anger, the Second Coming of Jesus, and sports to name a few. Second, and this is a vital question we absolutely must ask and answer, why do you believe what you do about those matters? Ideally, it's because of what you know. Support the beliefs in your worldview with knowledge. You'll have the mind of Jesus, a **"great mind,"** if you do.