

Introduction

Today, I'm preaching about the third essential characteristic of a mind that's like that of Jesus. I begin with a simple exercise. Please fill in the blanks. #1 – Gossip always attacks a person's reputation. I gossiped about A. Therefore, **I attacked A's reputation.** #2 – If I work hard, my co-workers will resent me. If I don't work hard, God will be displeased with me. Therefore, **either my co-workers will resent me or God will be displeased with me.** #3 – If I don't discipline my children, someone else will. I don't want someone else to discipline my children. Therefore, **I should discipline my children.** And #4 – No Cleveland team will ever win another championship (Rocky Colavito curse). The Indians are a Cleveland team. Therefore, **the Indians will never win another championship.** What you just did demonstrates a remarkable ability God gave you. It's to use good logic and that's what I'm going to preach about today. Turn to Luke 20:27-40.

Jesus and the Sadducees

Verses 27-28 give us the setting of this passage. Verse 27 mentions the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a powerful and highly educated party of Levitical priests. They, like the Pharisees, were the sworn enemies of Jesus and devoted themselves to discrediting Him. One of the ways they did that was by asking Him questions, ones they thought would baffle Him or put Him on the spot. That's what they did here

Notice the parenthetical statement in verse 27. The Sadducees believed that God doesn't resurrect His people after they die. But Jesus believed that He does. So they attacked His belief by using a logical device called *reductio ad absurdum*. This device takes a belief and proposes an absurd or ridiculous outcome to show that it's false.

They did that by raising a hypothetical situation in verses 27-32. A woman marries seven brothers, each after the previous one died. They then asked Jesus a question in verse 33, "**In the resurrection,**

therefore, which one's wife will she be?" The proposed absurdity was that she'd be the wife of them all, which everyone knew was impossible.

The Sadducees thought they "had" Jesus but didn't. Their question was based on an assumption – that resurrection must involve the body and its life continuing exactly as they are now. But Jesus undermined that assumption in verses 34-36. He pointed out that the resurrected won't have mortal bodies suited for marriage, sexual relations, and reproduction. They'll have undying bodies instead just as angels do now.

But He didn't stop there. Having dismantled their argument, he then made His own. He took a belief of theirs – that God is the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who died 2000 years before. He then drew an implication from it – they're still alive. His argument, in verses 37-38, was this. #1 - God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. #2 – God is the God only of the living not the dead (meaning He can have relationship with living people but not dead ones). Therefore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive not, as the Sadducees thought, dead.

It was a brilliant response. Verses 39-40 record the result. The Sadducees didn't dare challenge Him again. Remember Atlas and the 98-pound weakling. Intellectually, that's what this exchange between Jesus and the Sadducees was like.

Jesus the Master Logician

Now, that exchange reveals something about Jesus that few people ever even consider. He was a logician, meaning, one who uses logic.

I've said before that He was the smartest person who ever lived. There are at least seven types of intelligence, each with its own kind of genius. Jesus was a genius in all seven types. He was also a master of all fields of endeavor like geology, sociology, psychology, chemistry, and physics. He could have told his disciples about the wave particle duality of quantum physics or the monetarism theory of economics.

But there's one field in particular, His mastery of which we see in Luke 20. It's the field of logic. Logic is a branch of philosophy that

studies the principles of demonstration and inference. More simply put, it's the study of reasoning. Reasoning refers to mentally connecting up premises (assumptions we have) and drawing conclusions from them. That's what logic is and we see that Jesus used it here. In verses 37-38, for instance, He employed what the field of logic calls implication or entailment to blow the Sadducees' belief right out of the water.

My point is that Jesus was the master logician. He had phenomenal powers of logical thinking and constantly used them to preach, teach, and live. Examples of what I mean are Matthew 5:27-30; Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 13:15-16; and Luke 20:41-44. In Mark 11:29-30, for instance, He used a logical device called *dilemma syllogism*. Those passages make it perfectly clear. Jesus was the master logician.

You and I as Good Logicians

He always used good logic and you know what, so should we.

Notice I said "good logic." There are two kinds of logic. One is good logic. Our premises or assumptions are true and we connect them up rightly to draw a true conclusion. That is thinking straight. The other kind is bad logic. Our premises are false and thus lead to a false conclusion. Or they're true but we connect them up wrongly to draw a false conclusion. That is thinking crooked.

Take this example. Dressing suggestively tempts others to lust. Lust is a sin. I dress suggestively but am not tempting others to sin. A young woman I talked to years ago essentially argued just that. Notice that her two assumptions were true. But she connected them up wrongly to draw a false conclusion. That is bad logic, crooked thinking.

Don't do what she did – use bad logic. Always do what Jesus always did instead – use good logic. That is our call.

But why am I preaching about this? That's what some of you are probably wondering about now. Logic is for lectures in college not sermons in church. Right? Wrong! Listen carefully to what I'm about to say. Good logic isn't a luxury in our lives. It's an absolute necessity.

Many of God's best friends down through the centuries understood that. John Wesley, for instance, argued that good logic is essential to understanding Scripture. The great hymn writer Isaac Watts actually wrote a book about it titled *Logic: The Right Use of Reason in the Inquiry After Truth*. He contended in it that logic rescues our reasoning from darkness and enables us to grasp divine revelation.

Wesley, Watts and others, like Charles Spurgeon, Charles Finney, and C.S. Lewis, knew it and so should we. Good logic isn't a luxury in our lives. It's an absolute necessity. And here's why - for three reasons.

First, all of us are logicians, users of logic, whether we like it or not. We use logic hundreds of times everyday without even knowing it. We decide to buy a home with a certain mortgage payment. We're using logic. We decide to marry a person. We're using logic. We vote for John McCain or Barak Obama. We're using logic. The issue isn't "Are we logicians?" because all of us are. It's "Are we good or bad ones?"

Good logic is an absolute necessity for a second reason. It's because good logic favors godliness and gain. But bad logic favors evil and loss. I once used bad logic and poured windshield-washing fluid into my brake lines. It favored loss. I once used good logic and married the woman I did. It favored gain - and you can tell her I said that. Whether things will go poorly or well depends on the kind of logic we use.

There's a third and most important reason that good logic is a necessity. It's because it gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. Let's be clear about something. We should never trust in and rely on logic instead of the Holy Spirit. It isn't a substitute for Him. But because we're moral creatures, it is one of the conditions along which He chooses to work. Good logic, therefore, cooperates with the Holy Spirit's work in us. Bad logic, on the other hand, opposes it.

There's no doubt about it. Good logic is an absolutely necessity in our lives. So, as Jesus did, always use good logic.

How to Be Good Logicians

The problem is some of you think you can't. But you can and here's how. It's by doing five things, each of which I want to briefly explain.

First, value good logic. Review and seriously consider the three reasons I just gave you. Also reflect on the times in your life when you used good and bad logic and what the consequences were. You'll come to value good logic if you do.

Second, intend to use good logic. Listen to what Dallas Willard says in that regard, "**we are not logical by chance but by purpose.**" He's right. So purpose in your mind and heart to use good logic.

Third, don't protect yourself from good logic. I say that because it does threaten some of our pet assumptions and beliefs. It also exposes our wrong actions. But be courageous. Be willing to follow good logic to whatever truths it leads, even the painful ones.

Fourth, know about implication and contradiction. Theoretical logic is quite complicated. But the practical logic we use every day isn't. It usually involves two basic logical relations, both of which Jesus used in Luke 20. Those logical relations are implication and contradiction.

Implication means that one thing is a logical consequence of other things. If those things are so, then this must be so as well. It involves premises (or assumptions) and a conclusion that we draw from them. I once counseled a young woman whose logic was this. Premise #1 - God is like my earthly father. Premise #2 - My earthly father is unforgiving and harsh. Conclusion - God is unforgiving and harsh. That conclusion is a logical consequence of the premises. If they're true, then it is. But one of them isn't true - #1. God isn't like her father. So, her false premise led her to the false conclusion that God is unforgiving and harsh.

Contradiction means that two opposite things can't both be true. Richard DeHaan, of *The Radio Bible Class*, says we should forgive wrongdoers only if they're sorry. I say we should forgive them even if they aren't. Those are opposites. So, both can't be true.

You now know about implication and contradiction, which is the fourth thing you have to do to be good logicians.

The fifth thing is apply implication and contradiction to your everyday thought, talk, and action. You apply it by doing five things. First, identify the conclusion you've drawn. Second, identify the premises from which you've drawn it. Third, determine if the conclusion is the logical consequence of the premises. Fourth, determine if the premises are true or false. And fifth, determine if there are any contradictions in the premises or conclusion. That may seem artificial and difficult to you but practice makes it natural and easy.

Years ago, I counseled a woman who cried out, "**What's wrong with me that my husband left me.**" Let's do what I just explained. First, we identify the conclusion she drew – **there's something wrong with me**. Second, we identify the premises from which she drew that conclusion. Premise #1 is implied - **husbands only leave their wives if there's something wrong with their wives**. Premise #2 is stated - **my husband left me**. Third, we determine if the conclusion is the logical consequence of the premises. It is. If they're true, then it must also be true that there's something wrong with her. And fourth, we determine if the premises are true or false. #2 is true. Her husband did leave her. But #1 is false. Husbands don't *only* leave their wives if something's wrong with their wives. They usually leave them in fact because there's something wrong with them, which was the case here. So, her false premise led to a false conclusion, which I was able to help her correct.

That illustrates how we apply implication and contradiction to our everyday thought, talk, and action. It also shows what applying them does. It favors godliness and gain.

Conclusion

I leave you in closing with the word of the celebrated scientist, Galileo, "**I do not believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forego their use.**" How right he was. God gave you the ability to use good logic. So, do just that! It'll help you have the mind of Jesus if you do.