

Introduction

I'd like to begin with three instructive questions. First, has anyone ever asked you, "**How are you feeling?**" Second, has anyone ever asked you, "**How are you behaving?**" And third, has anyone ever asked you, "**How are you thinking?**" If your experience is the same as mine, people have asked you, "**How are you feeling?**" and, "**How are you behaving?**" many times. But they've asked you, "**How are you thinking?**" never.

For some reason, we're deeply concerned about how others and we feel and behave but unconcerned about how others and we think. That's a huge mistake though because thinking is a basis of feeling and behaving. The Bible teaches that how we think directs how we feel and behave. Thinking well, in other words, is essential to living well.

So I ask you, "**How are you thinking?**" Or to ask it as Paul would in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, "**Are you thinking Christianly or secularly?**" Let's take a look at this text so that all of us can answer that.

The Things that Matter

I begin with verse 15 and the term "**all things.**" That term is all-inclusive. It encompasses every object, activity, process, experience, artifact, institution, philosophy, ritual, habit, and any other reality that makes up the universe and life in it. More personally, it encompasses all the matters or issues that concern us.

A young woman made an appointment to see a pastor friend of mine. She did, it turned out, to learn his opinion about she getting a tattoo. "**Am I defiling my body,**" she asked. That matter was a concern of hers and thus, one of the "**all things**" of verse 15.

There are countless others like appearance, beauty, money, sports, dress, health, illness, aging, dying, work, texting, law suits, computer games, anger, and marriage to name only a few. Those matters count to people and are, therefore, within the purview of verse 15.

Now, you and I have ways of thinking about those matters. And how we think about them directs how we feel and behave regarding them. Which raises the question, "**How do we think about them?**" How do we think about appearance? How do we think about sex? How do we think about money? How do we think about sports? How do we think about work? And so on. According to verses 14-16, it's in one of two ways.

Thinking Secularly

The first way, in verse 14, is secularly.

Paul describes about whom he's writing as "**a natural man.**" He's referring to people whose condition is the one into which they were born. Only physiological and psychological forces direct the mental, emotional, volitional, and bodily processes that run their lives. That's the condition of those who have not decided to follow Jesus. We call them non-Christians and they're the ones about whom Paul is writing.

He writes about them in relation to "**the things of the Spirit of God.**" The previous verses, 6-13, identify to what he is referring. It's the spiritual realities and truths of the universe and life in it. It's the non-material and invisible ones that people can't discover by observing and experiencing. They have to be revealed to them instead and the One who does the revealing is the Holy Spirit. He "reveals" primarily through His written word, the Bible, and secondarily through the five ways He speaks to people, which I've explained before.

Now, notice Paul's assessment in verse 14. Natural people can't "**understand**" the things of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word there is better translated, "**get to know**". Natural people can cognitively grasp the nature and implications of spiritual realities or truths. But they can't "**get to know**" them, that is, be certain they're so. On the contrary, they're "**foolishness**" to them. So, they don't "**accept**" them. They reject them instead as the nonsense they take them to be.

That's verse 14 and what it pictures for us is thinking secularly. People think about matters only in terms of the material and visible.

They fail to take the non-material and invisible into account. They exclude the realities of God's person, works, and kingdom at hand from their intellectual and rational lives.

Take work, for instance. I once told an attorney that collecting garbage is as noble as practicing law. He laughed incredulously and replied, "**That's absurd.**" He did because he thinks secularly about work. He takes the visible into account when assessing the value of a job: the money made and the societal prestige that go along with it. He doesn't take the invisible into account, which is, as Martin Luther said it, "**God milks the cow through the farmer.**" Or in our case, God practices the law through the attorney and collects the garbage through the garbage man. God is ultimately the one doing both jobs, in other words, which makes one as noble and honorable as the other. The attorney, however, doesn't take that into account. He thinks secularly.

Thinking Christianly

There's a second way we can think about matters. The first is secularly. The second is "**Christianly.**" Harry Blamires coined that term and as verses 15 and 16 make clear, it's a good one.

Look at verse 15. Paul mentions "**he who is spiritual**" as opposed to the "**natural man**" of verse 14. He's referring to Christians. They're people whose condition is the one into which they were born again. The Holy Spirit entered into them when they were born again. He then began the continuing work of directing the mental, emotional, volitional, and bodily process that run their lives. That's the condition of every person who has decided to follow Jesus. He or she is spiritual not natural.

Verse 16 reveals one of the consequences of that condition. It creates the "**the mind of Christ**" in us. That means that we think Christianly. Jesus has ways of thinking about things. To have His mind (to think Christianly) means that we think about them in those same ways. We think about matters just as He does.

The word "**accept**" in verse 14 defines that more specifically. The

Greek word translated that means **“to welcome.”** It was the usual word used for receiving a guest. So, to think as Jesus thinks means to welcome **“the things of the Spirit of God.”** We think about things in terms of the non-material and the invisible. We take the realities of God’s person, works, and kingdom at hand into account in our intellectual and rational lives. Jesus does and so do we.

Take hunting, for instance. Grasp that Jesus has a way of thinking about it and if we have His mind, we think about it in that same way He does. God made each animal and each one is a glorious expression of His creativity. He loves each animal and, as Romans 8:20-21 imply, will resurrect each one to live eternally. If we think Christianly, we take those invisible realities and truths into account in the way that we think about hunting. That in turn will direct how we hunt and how we experience it when we do.

Those then are the two ways we have of thinking about the matters that concern us. It’s secularly or Christianly.

Appraise Things

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist of course to figure out which is the better way. It’s to think Christianly and that is our call.

That’s our call and Paul explains how we answer it in the opening line of verse 15. We **“appraise”** things. The Greek word translated that means to **“examine”** or **“scrutinize.”** That’s how we think Christianly. We appraise things. We examine or scrutinize them. Appraising things is a three-step process. I’m going to discuss each step and then illustrate it by applying it to a matter that concerns us all, aging.

First, we learn the material facts about the matter at hand. We analyze it ourselves and read the analyses of others. We do that to know the visible details that comprise it or that are relevant to it. Aging is easy to analyze. The simple material facts are these. Our bodies are in a state of decline. More cells in them are being destroyed than are being created. As time passes, we will look less and less attractive and have

less and less ability to engage and interact with the material world around us. That illustrates the first step we take in appraising a matter. Learn the material facts about it.

The second step is that we learn the spiritual facts about the matter at hand, what Paul calls **“the things of the Spirit of God.”** We analyze it ourselves and read the analyses of others. We do that to know the invisible details that comprise it or that are relevant to it. Doing that requires that we have a working knowledge of the Bible, which is our primary source for knowing spiritual facts.

The spiritual facts of aging are these. Our destiny is to have a full and eternal life with God that is more spectacular than we can imagine. But we cannot experience that in our earthly bodies. They aren't suitable for it. We can experience it only when we've cast those bodies off. Aging is the process by which that casting off occurs. That illustrates the second step we take in appraising a matter. Learn the spiritual facts about it.

The third step is that we draw valid conclusions from the facts we've learned. We use the logical relations of implication and contradiction to do two things: connect up those facts and determine their implications.

Let's draw a valid conclusion from the facts about aging. Aging involves a loss: the diminishment of our appearance and activity in this life. It also involves a gain: the casting off what's holding us back from our full and eternal life to come. As our physical bodies are fading, our resurrection bodies are approaching. Connecting up the facts, we recognize that aging is far more beneficial than it is harmful. It's a process of gaining not losing. It's something to be glad, not sad, about.

So that's how we think Christianly. We appraise all things.

Be Purposeful

Sadly, many of us don't do. We just pick up our ways of thinking about things from here and there instead. Over time, we hear and read pronouncements about a matter from a variety of sources, some secular.

And we thoughtlessly piece those pronouncements together as we go, until we have finally formed a specific way of thinking about it.

That kind of approach leads to several outcomes, one of which Harry Blamires identifies in his book *The Christian Mind*. He writes: **“There is no longer a Christian mind As a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization.”** That is a consequence of not appraising things. It’s the secularization of our thinking.

So, let’s be purposeful in thinking Christianly. Let’s commit ourselves to actually appraising the matters that concern us most.

One of our obsessions, “sports,” is a classic example of what I mean. All of us have a way of thinking about sports. But is our way of thinking about it purposeful? Have you or I actually gone through the three steps of appraising it? If we’re like almost all Christians, the answer is, **“We haven’t.”** But since the **“all things”** of verse 15 encompasses sports, we should.

Shirl Hoffman wrote an outstanding book titled *Good Game*. It’s about Christianity and the culture of sports. In Chapter 6, he addresses an issue that almost no Christians have even considered. Is the competitive spirit or what some call “the killer instinct” Christian? Many of us have the competitive spirit when we play sports and encourage it in our children. But should we? Is giving ourselves wholeheartedly to making another person lose consistent with the desires and teachings of Jesus? The fact is almost all of us have never even considered that issue let alone appraised it. But my point today is that we should.

Conclusion

Do this something this week. Sit down and thoughtfully list the 10 most important matters in your life. Then ask and answer this question with each one, **“Have I purposely appraised it?”** If not, start. Learn the material and spiritual facts about it. Then draw valid conclusions from what you’ve learned. You’ll think Christianly if you do.