

The Premise of Right Thinking

By Earl Radmacher

Earl Radmacher:

Of us. Let's bow and pray to that end. Father, we bow before you as those who truly desire to honor you as Lord our sovereign God. And we pray that you will catch hold of our minds during the course of these hours and enable us to lay them before you in a servant spirit and to receive from you the good things that you would teach us from your manual of instruction as to how we ought to deal with this body, this mind, this life that you have given to us in order that we may receive the full potential of that which you have made us to be in Jesus Christ. We prayed in his name for his sake. Amen.

The outline for these sessions is rather simple, and for those of you who are long term students at Biola in we did a similar series. So if you've been here for a while, this will be a repeat. But I honestly believe in my own life. That which I was saying then in '72 in this series is just as true, if not more so today as it was then and very, very important.

So I want to give you an outline of where we will move today. This will be the basic thrust. We will be talking about the premise of right thinking, and I have put the delineation of that in an order of starting with Scripture, moving to a doctrine. And from that to experience, it has been my experience that I often don't get to the end of my outline. And therefore, if I have to leave anything off, I would rather leave my experience off and not leave the specific statements of Scripture off.

So I want to develop the thrust from, first of all, the specific statements of Scripture and the subject matter for this hour, then will be the premise of right thinking. Namely, you are what you think about in your heart, or you are what you think about deeply.

Your actions are the blossom of your deep thinking if you want to get to the heart of right living, if you are concerned about your living for Christ, then you really will become concerned about your thinking for Christ.

All the gimmicks that you can pull together to change actions will never have permanent value.

You change actions meaningfully by changing thinking, and that is really where we start. And before I lean into the word of God on that, I want to try to relate it to the society in which we live, because what I have just said to you is not necessarily popular in the society in America in which we live. In the.

[inaudible}

Under the it my turn speaks of the cult of ignorance in America. [inaudible]

He says. It's hard to quarrel with that ancient justification of the free press. America's right to know. It seems almost cruel to ask ingeniously America's right to know what please. [inaudible]

None of those things of course. In fact, one might well suppose that the popular feeling is that Americans are a lot better off without price. [inaudible music]

The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that, quote, My ignorance is just as good as your knowledge. Someone, by the way, has said, if you think education is expensive, try ignorance. And we really need to think that through, for we have a cult of ignorance that bows today at the shrine of the practical.

If it is practical, it is good.

If it works, it is good. They say it is not whether it is based on good, solid presuppositions. But does it work? Is it practical? And that cult is not limited to the secular world.

It is rampant in the Christian world and within the evangelical camp.

What Isaac Asimov was saying in 1980 was said eight years earlier in Time magazine on an almost worn out essay now that I have in my hand entitled The New Cult of Madness, that's a decade ago now the "New Cult of Madness; Thinking as a Bad Habit. In that particular article, he says, reason and logic have in fact become dirty words, death words. They have been replaced by the life words, feeling and impulse. Consciousness, that is, the rational is presumed to be shallow and unconsciousness, the irrational to be always interesting, often profound, and usually true. In fact, I have several books now that take the thesis that your feelings are the truth.

I have here a little paper called Pastoral Renewal put out in September of '79, and the author, bless him, counteracts the thinking that feelings are the truth and entitles this article, if it doesn't feel good, do the right thing anyway.

And he in this article exposes some of the current books that take the thesis that feelings are the truth. Now I want to defend myself a little bit because sometimes I have been criticized as being opposed to feelings. I'm not opposed to feelings. I have all kinds of them. And I like warm fuzzies like anybody else.

But I don't want to rely on warm fuzzies.

I don't want to deny feelings. I just want to say that feelings are not reliable as a basis of truth. That does not say feelings are not real. Feelings are real, but feelings aren't necessarily the truth.

And this article by Bert Ghezzi, G-H-E-Z-Z-I if it doesn't feel good, do the right thing Anyway, in Pastoral Renewal is an excellent one. Or, to take another from Reader's Digest, December, 1980, Think Your Way out of Depression. This really is based upon the investigations of two doctors and one particularly Dr. Aaron T. Beck from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine, who developed the theory of cognitive therapy being able to think my way out of depression.

Dr. David Burns picked up on that in a new book in 1980 called *Feeling Good*, where he argues that most depression arises from erroneous thinking and that we have it within our power to control the furtive thoughts that dupe us into needless gloom. Now, mind you, I am not simply talking about the power of positive thinking. I'm talking about something much deeper than that. Dr. Beck says our moods don't decree our thoughts. It's the other way around. Our thoughts govern our moods. Therefore, if you think right, you'll feel right, Dr. Beck says in his book *Cognitive Therapy and Emotional Disorders*.

So there are those today who are acting in contrast to some of the popular feeling oriented therapy in our midst.

Another demonstration of the feeling oriented therapy was done in *Reader's Digest* by John Sheryl, John Cheryl in a little dialogue with a seminarian. He says as long as Nicodemus was trying to come to an understanding of Christ through his logic, he could never succeed. It isn't logic, he said, but an experience that lets us know who Christ is. You're trying to approach Christianity through your mind, he says. It simply can't be done that way.

It's one of the peculiarities of Christianity that you cannot come to it through intellect. You have to be willing to experience at first to do something you don't understand. And then, oddly enough, understanding often follows. And it's just that which I'm hoping for you today. He says that without understanding, without even knowing why, you say yes to Christ.

And I submit to you that there are millions of people who have said yes to Christ not knowing why, and that's why we've got the mess that we've got in evangelicalism in America today. If I took that kind of philosophy, I'd have to rewrite the Bible. I'd have to take Isaiah chapter one, and I'd have to say, Come now therefore, and let us feel together rather than Come now therefore, and let us reason together. I'd have to go over to Peter and I'd say, hey, come, bring your feelings together. Rather than saying, Come now, let us reason.

Let us set forth a solid apologetic for the hope that is within us. The biblical thesis does not start with feeling. It starts with thinking, and that thinking is to be governed by propositional revelation that Almighty God has given to us. We will say more about the manual, but that's the kind of guidance that has been given to a lot of people today. Just as John Cheryl says in his little article, The Leap, The Leap of Faith, another spokesman for today who has been used Mightily of God is Fran Schaffer, and in his book Beware the New Super Spirituality, he says, neither experience nor emotion is the basis of faith.

The basis for our faith is that certain things are true. The whole man, including the intellect, is to act upon the fact that certain things are true. That, of course, will lead to an experiential relationship with God. But the basis is content, not experience. We must stress, he says, that the basis for our faith is neither experience nor emotion, but truth, as God has given it in verbalized propositional form in Scripture, and which we first of all apprehend with our minds, though of course the whole man must act upon it.

But it starts with the mind. God has not asked us to check our brains out to lunch. God has not asked us to present our ignorance to Him. I remember a Bible study I was in some time ago at a community College up north a little bit, and I looked up from my Bible as I had been talking, and there was a young lady that had begun crying. And I said, what did I do?

What did I say? And she said, oh, I feel so sorry for you. Do you feel sorry for me? Why do you feel sorry for me? She said, oh, I feel sorry for you because of all the rationalism you have to go through in order to understand what God's word means by what it says.

And I said, oh, how do you find out what God's word means by what it says? You see, I had been going through some parsing and declining and mood and tense and voice and person and number and gender, and I had the idea that somehow that's what you find out what a word means.

So she said, Well, I just trust God the Spirit. And he tells me, oh, I said. And I handed her my Greek Testament. And I said, Will you tell me what God the Holy Spirit tells you that says? And she looked at me and said, Well, I don't speak or read Greek.

I said, no problem at all. The Spirit of God does. Now tell me what he tells you that says, because he can read Greek as well as he can read English. But I fear you can't read either one.

We need to think it through. You see, men and women, we're in a battle today. We're not on a playground, and the battle is for the minds of men. By the way, I use that term generically, including all of you dear ladies, along with the male species that is here. Men.

We need men, male and female Genesis one who have bothered to exercise their brains.

I have a tremendous amount of potential locked up in my head. Believe it or not, scientists tell us that the human mind can store as many as 600 memories a second for a lifetime of 75 years without the slightest strain. Have you ever heard anybody say that their brain was tired? Have you ever said that your brain has never been tired. You have never used it enough for it to get tired.

It is estimated that we use about 2% of our brain power.

The support system gets a little tired from time to time. But your brain has never gotten tired. You've got a lot of potential locked up in those 20 billion molecules up in your head.

Don't discount the brain, the mind. God gave it to you to use it. Don't go back to the old Platonic idea in the Corinthian background where they check their brain out to lunch.

And even as great a scholar as Plato said, reflection is the greatest endeavor of the human mind. But greater than reflection, he said, is to be listed out of your mind into eroticism. And he said that's when the poets do their best work, when they are mad. He didn't mean angry, he meant out of their mind. And the Corinthians bought that line.

And we've got a lot of 20th century Corinthians today, people who have separated mind from spirit. And Paul said, God helping me. I won't do that. When I pray, I will pray with a mind and the spirit. When I sing, I will sing with the mind and the spirit.

I don't want spirit without mind and I don't want mine without spirit.

Why? Because mind without spirit will lead you to mechanism, and spirit without mind will lead you to fanaticism.

But mind and spirit conjoined, as Calvin so beautifully put it in the institutes of the Christian religion, will lead to a balanced Christian life. And the order is I am to engage my mind on the revelation that the spirit of God has given through Holy men of God. Think, think, think. I mentioned earlier that that great pastor and teacher from England, John Stott, in his little book *Your Mind Matters*, says anti-intellectualism in the Church is again occurring with growing frequency. The present generation of young people are activists.

Experience has become important as over against truth. Then he goes on to say that experience without truth is the menace and misery of mindless Christianity. That's where we are in America. But I believe we are seeing a turn on the horizon. I really believe that.

And I believe that some people are beginning to see through the fallacy of making feelings and experience the basis for my action. So I encourage you to think through the contemporary scene. It will attack you not only in the secular world, it will attack you in the Christian world, it will

attack you not only in the religious scene, it will attack you in the psychological scene. Let me try one more on for size here just a little bit. This is a lengthy article.

This was from 1971, entitled Skinner's Utopia Panacea or Path to Hell. I think it was appropriately named. Skinner was the Time magazine man on the front cover of this issue. Or this is the article that was under the title Behavior in Time magazine. Listen to Skinner's thinking now skinarianism or that which comes from BF Skinner of Harvard is really the controlling behavioral psychology of today. And by the way, he was a real scientist. And there is a good deal that he discovered that I think we could well profit from. But his basic thesis was Haywire and that skews everything else. Because he was an atheist who had no time for God and no time for the supernatural.

Skinner's reasoning is that freedom and free will are no more than illusions. His book, you recall, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, a man becomes a passive blob bulldozed by his environment. And Christians are following up on that by blaming their environment for everything under the sun that they do and failing to take personal responsibility and personal accountability. Listen to him. Like it or not, he says, man is already controlled by external influences.

Some are haphazard, some are arranged by careless or evil men whose goals are selfish instead of humanitarian. The problem then, he says, is to design a culture that can theoretically survive, to decide how men must behave to ensure its survival in reality, and to plan environmental influences that will guarantee the desired behavior behavioral technology later on. Underlying the method, Skinner's conviction is behavior is determined not from within but from without.

Basic thesis. Not within but without. Unable to understand how or why the person we see behaves as he does, we attribute his behavior to a person inside, Skinner explains. Mistakenly, we believe that man initiates, originates, and creates, and in doing so remains as he was for the Greek's divine. We say he is autonomous.

But Skinner insists that autonomy is a myth and that belief in an inner man is a superstition that originated like belief in God, in man's inability to understand his world. The fact is, Skinner insists that actions are determined by the environment. Behavior is shaped and maintained by its consequences. Am I denying that my environment is influential? Not at all.

I'm denying that I have to be locked into it. I'm denying that I have to give up accountability. I am able to take charge. I am not a passive blob. I have ability to make decisions. I am not the victim of my environment, nor do I have to be.

Voiceover 1:

Please turn the tape to side two for the continuation of this session.

Earl Radmacher:

...passive blob. I have ability to make decisions.

I am not the victim of my environment, nor do I have to be in spite of what Skinner teaches. Now you say, really? Can you demonstrate that? Well, I want to say that I'm not smart enough to write my own thesis on that. But fortunately, the one who created me gave a manual of instruction to go along with the creation.

It's called the Bible. And when all else fails, read the directions. I mean, go back to the manual and find out what the creator said. And so I turned back to the manual and go with me to our outline here as stated in the manual of Scripture, Proverbs 23 seven. Now this will read differently in various translations, and you'll have to figure it out afterwards.

But in my translation, the one I happen to be running through right now is the new King James Version. And in Proverbs 23 seven, it says, for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Now that's a principle that is woven into a discourse dialogue that is going on between a very rich, influential person and a man who would desire to have what the rich man has. However, the man who is desiring those things has something to offer that the rich man wants. And so the rich man, a man of power and influence.

He invites him into his home and he says, Sit here at my table, take this cheap seat. All that I have is yours, et cetera, et cetera. And the man is a beginning to be carried away by what the rich man, the powerful man, the man of influence, is saying. And so the writer, the wise King Solomon, says, when you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you and put a knife to your throat. Rather serious discipline.

If you are a man given to appetite, I'll resist any remarks. Do not desire his delicacies for their deceptive food. Do not overwork to be rich because of your own understanding. Cease. Will you set your eyes on that which is not for riches? Certainly make themselves wings.

They fly away like an Eagle toward heaven. Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies. For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The more so which you have eaten, you will vomit up and waste your pleasant words.

In other words, he says, things are not always what they seem. A man is not necessarily what he says. A man is not necessarily what he gestures. What a man really is is what he thinks deeply. Now, David's, or rather Solomon's father, David, had taught that principle to him.

Well, for if you'll move back a book to the Psalms and look at the 119th Psalm, you'll find a verse there that you probably memorized when you were coming through the junior age in order to go to camp, along with the other 67 verses you needed to memorize to get a free trip to camp or whatever. I remember somewhere back there I did that and I promptly forgot it. I put it in my reservoir along with pray without ceasing and rejoice evermore. That was two. And then somewhere along the line I got this one in the first dozen.

Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you. That has to be one of the most sound pieces of biblical psychology you will ever read. Oh, he says, a mouthful there. Don't flip over it too fast. Thy word.

Cognitive input. This is cognitive therapy. Thy word. Have I programmed deep into my heart in order that I won't act wrong? There's the principle.

As a man thinks deeply, so is he. And that being true. David then says, how may I be sure I will act right by programming right thinking in. Oh, IBM has done a better job than most Christians of believing that IBM has a little acrostic. You know it, don't you?

Anybody GI-GO. You've heard it, haven't you? Garbage in, garbage out. You see those computer people, they are smart people. They know that if you get garbage in the program, you'll get garbage in the product.

It's just dumb Christians who think you can have garbage in the program and not get it in the product.

You see, Christians think they can feed their computer junk and get pearls in the program.

David said, don't be deceived. Thy word have I hidden in my heart, O God, in order that I might not sin against you. You see, the heart in Old Testament thinking was the seat of deepest reflection. The heart was not the seat of emotions like we used it today. If you were going to transfer to their day, you'd have to say, I love you with all my kidneys to use the word heart the way we use it.

I love you with all my bowels. I love you with all my viscera. That was the seat of the emotion, but the heart was the seat of reflection. And that's what you think about deeply. That was the principle.

Move over to the New Testament and see the same thing. Turn over to Matthew, chapter 15. And while you're doing that, somebody helped me out on our timeline. I've forgotten how long they said we could go this morning in the overshoot. 10:15? 10:50. 10:50.

Okay, we've got to move. Matthew, chapter 15.

Now hear Jesus in a dialogue with the Pharisees, puts the same principle into action. It's the same principle that's woven all the way through the Old Testament. You'll find it all the way through the New Testament. Our actions are the results of our deep thinking. And the Pharisees and the scribes, they come along here and they are challenging Jesus's actions and that of his disciples.

And they bring their traditions to bear on this, that they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. Now, if we had a lot of time, we'd go back to the traditions of the elders, and we would bring up all of the rules they had for washing your hands. You get it up under the water a certain way. Only get so much water on it. Then you rub it vicariously to see that water doesn't drip off, and you rub them until they're dry, et cetera, et cetera.

And all of that was religious ritual. We're not talking about hygiene here. They weren't interested in hygiene at this point. They're interested in the traditions of the elders. And Jesus wasn't all that turned on by the traditions of the elders, and thus he challenges them.

And you can read through that and see how he challenges them. Hypocrites that they are. And the lovely Jesus said that, by the way, that they were a pack of hypocrites. And then Peter gets a

bit upset because he says, oh, Lord, I mean, you're offending the Pharisees. And Jesus says, oh, I'm sorry, Peter, I didn't realize that.

No, that isn't quite what he said. Verse 13, he answers and says to them, Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into the ditch.

Now Peter began to scratch his head. What are you talking about, Lord? I don't understand it. Explain it to us. And so Jesus whips out his overhead projector and he says, Are you still without understanding, Peter?

Do I have to draw a picture for you? Oh, well, do you not yet understand that whatever enters into the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated out into the draught? Rather picturesque. But those things which proceed out of the mouth comes from the heart and they defile a man. For out of the heart catch it not out of the environment. David's problem wasn't Bathsheba.

David's problem was David's heart.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man. It might give you a stomachache, but it does not defile a man. What comes out of the heart defiles a man.

How does it get into the heart? Through the eye gate, through the ear gate, through the mind concentrated upon and settled down into the heart? The springboard of our action. What I think about is desperately important. Let me ask you, what do you think about most of the day as a man thinks deeply, so is he.

I've mentioned Romans twelve here. I'm going to leave that because in the next session I want to move into Romans twelve in the general session. So I'm going to leave that now and skip right down to the end of the Bible. In James one, a tremendous passage in James chapter one. Look at it quickly, for here you have the evolution of a thought, a bad thought.

And sometimes people like to blame what happens to them on God. And he said, Let no man say when he is tempted, he's tempted with God. For God doesn't do that. God can't be tempted and God doesn't tempt. But every man is tempted when look at it, James 1:13 and following. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, his lust and enticed. And then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. There you have the evolution of a thought, a bad thought, a bad thought contemplated will conceive.

And the conception is sin, and sin produces death.

You see, a man who hates his brother John says, is doing what abiding in death. I can't live in sin and life at the same time. If I'm hating, I'm living in death. I'm not talking about eternal Salvation

here, I'm talking about the product of my life. I cannot be experiencing life and sin at the same time.

When I am experiencing sin I am experiencing death.

And that's the evolution in James 11:13 to 15. Now why say all of that? I say all of that. To simply say that is the thesis all the way through the word of God. It never changes.

Therefore, if I want to know something about running this body of mine I better go back to the manual of instruction and see what it says not just once but over and over and over again that makes it desperately important for me what I think. Student body President from Arizona State University said to me when I was talking about the problems with regard to heavy doses of television. And he said, You've been talking this week about the television and the problems with that. He said frankly all the way through my College career. He says I probably watched about a half hour of television a week. He said television is not my problem at all.

He said, I'll tell you what my problem is music and the lyrics that I learned. And he said today even when I read my Bible I feel almost helpless at times with the thoughts that insist on coming back in my mind. He said I spent 50% of my time listening to that little transistor radio and to the stereo.

What are you programming in? Good thoughts, God thoughts or trash? Ministerial association came to me and they said when they were bringing the Exorcist into town that's almost ancient

history now, isn't it? They said We've got a free pass for all the ministers that can go and review it ahead of time so we can give a little review to the people what it's like and give them some guidance. My Secretary said I don't think Dr. Radmacher would be interested in that when he gets back and I'll tell him you called and they called back again.

I said, I got a better idea. Out here on the way to the beach there's one of these sewage disposal units, these great round deals out there with that arm that goes around. And I said, I understand they can pour all the sewage from that part of the country into there and somehow that marvelous piece of equipment takes care of that sewage so that that water comes out of their pure. I said that's always piqued my interest and I would suggest the ministerial association go out there and form a circle around that sewage disposal unit and then at the proper moment we will all stick our heads down inside there and we will look around and we will see what is going on and we will discover the mysteries of that sewage disposal unit. And won't we be able to say that we have done what nobody else has ever done.

We have experienced a sewage disposal in your mouth, and they were about to wonder about my sanity. And I said, Gentlemen, gentlemen, don't be dismayed at that, for you can wash all of that off when you get back home. But the sewage you're asking me to put into my brain will never be washed off because what I put in there will stay there. Let me show it to you from Dr. Walter Johnson, quoting Dr. Penfield "as an electronic computer requires a unit for the storage of information to function properly. So in the human central nervous system, there is a biological memory storage unit. Dr. Wilder Penfield of Montreal, the world famous neurosurgeon, has written wildly, yes, widely in the fields of neurology, neurophysiology and neurosurgery, and

has performed much work on temporal lobe epilepsy, including operative removal of diseased areas of the temporal lobes of the brain. In some of these cases, Dr. Penfield has found that stimulation of certain areas of this part of the brain with electrodes has caused the patient to recall vivid memories of childhood days, almost as though the electrical stimulation was like the switching on of a tape recorder. When the electricity was turned off, the memories abruptly disappeared. As far as the physical basis of memory is concerned, it is widely believed that when learning takes place, temporary memory is consolidated into permanent memory which is available for subsequent recall. This Ingram, where physical trace of memory, is encoded in a macromolecule such as ribonuclear nucleic acid, RNA, or protein. In other words, memory appears to be stored in a chemical filing system, RNA being an important component of this system.

It's all there. It's all there. What are you putting into it? What do you program into your mind? Let me give you, in conclusion, a little scenario of all of this to take with you and think about in preparation for our next session.

I want to put this in a picture form here that'll make it more vivid for us. All day long we have input through the eye gate, through the ear gate into the mind, some of which is allowed to settle down into the heart, the boiling pot of our life. Now, if I have a controlled access, then I, as the auditor, captivate every sensation that comes my way. That is, if in David's language, Psalm 119, if the word of God has been programmed into my life as a filtering system, then I will have a controlled access and I can filter out that which is unworthy of God. And Consequently, the fire

in the boiling pot of my life will be reduced, the steam will be lowered and the lid will be maintained, and the result will be the fruit of the spirit.

But if, on the other hand, the devil has, with his world system uncontrolled access to my mind, the filtering system has not been built in. The sensations captivate the auditor, then the fire and the boiling pot of my wife, of my life flames up.

I'm going to utterly destroy myself before I get through here. The fire in the boiling pot of my life grows. The steam rises, the lid blows and the result is thorns and Thistle Hebrew six verses seven and eight. Now let me put that in a written form and we'll see it. The steam of behavior is only the visible proof that the fire of thought is boiling the water of emotion.

A heavy lid may well curb the steam of action. But unless we cool the fire of thinking the heaviest possible lid will blow and high will be the blast. Obviously, therefore, we lose spiritual battles not by failing to restrain our actions with heavier lids. We are defeated because we do not change our flaming thoughts. What is basically required is not external restraint but internal repentance.

A genuine change of attitude. Therefore, any genuinely dynamic Christian life will be the outgrowth of a dynamic Christian attitude. Too often. Too often we work on the externals in an attempt to change behavior. That's too late.

You work internally the transformation. By the renewing of my mind.

You don't put heavier lids on the boiling pot. Why? Because we're all very smart. We know that sooner or later that lid is going to blow. And the greater the resistance, the higher will be the blast.

What do we do? We turn the fire down and we reduce the steam. We maintain the lid. You are what you think about deeply. What do you think about deeply?

Let's pray. Father, thank you for allowing us to think together today. Thank you for the marvelous principles in your word. Lord, it's relatively easy to read them but it's sure hard, Father, to weave them through the tricky society in which we live. We need help and we turn to you for that even now and ask you to help us implement these tremendous instructions from your word.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. I think we better run the Chapel.