



Conversation Starter

Have you ever decided to try something new, or start a project, or go on a trip, only to realize that you hadn't made a good plan? What happened?

Dig In

Failure to plan is a plan to fail. -Benjamin Franklin

The adage, "You are what you eat" is quite applicable to our thought life; what we consume mentally fills our minds and shapes our thoughts. If we are not intentional with what we put into our minds, we have little hope of controlling our thoughts. They will take us where we do not want to go and keep us there longer than we wish.

Do you think about *what* you think about? Before starting on the questions, discuss with

your group the importance of being intentional with what you fill your mind with.

The Bible is filled with passages about our thoughts...and God's thoughts toward us. Before getting started on our thoughts, take a few minutes to read about God's thoughts. Open your time by praying through the following passages.

Read: [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), [Psalm 40:5](#)

Q. What do these passages reveal to you about God?

Q. How might knowing, or being aware of God's thoughts change the way you think about life, relationships, and the world around you?

Read: [Deuteronomy 6:6-9](#), [Isaiah 26:3](#)

Q. Moses, the author of Deuteronomy, instructs the Israelites to fill their days with time in the Scriptures. Why is it so important to fill our mind with God's word? How might consistent time in the Word make an impact in your life?

In Closing

As you close your time, take a few moments to reflect individually on your thought life. We all struggle with bringing our thoughts into submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Thankfully, we serve a God who is faithful and just, who forgives us of our sin when we confess it to Him ([1 John 1:9](#)). Spend a few moments privately asking God to search your heart, reveal your thoughts, and confess to Him where you have allowed your thoughts to stray. As a group, pray that as you pursue Christ, you would be transformed more and more into His image, both inwardly and outwardly.

The Condition of Our Heart/Mind

Read: [Jeremiah 17:9-10](#), [Matthew 15:18-19](#)

Q. What does the Word say about the condition of our hearts (thoughts)? **Follow Up:** What do our thoughts reveal about us?

Our Hope

God knows our thoughts, yet he still loves us. He hasn't left us powerless to the whims of our minds. He has given us His Spirit to empower us and His Word to aid us in the battle that wages in our minds.

Read: [1 Chronicles 28:9](#), [Ezekiel 36:27](#), [Jeremiah 31:33](#), [2 Corinthians 10:5](#), [Hebrews 4:12](#)

Q. God loves us so much that He has given His Spirit to those who put their trust in Him and has provided us with tools to guide us. How does knowing this change the way you see His Word? How might it change your time in the Word?

Q. What does "taking every thought captive to obey Christ" mean? How can you practice this?

Q. When, or with what thoughts do you struggle with bringing under the obedience of Christ the most? (If you are in a co-ed group, you may want to consider giving men and women the opportunity to answer this question separately.)

[2 Corinthians 10](#) tells us that we aren't fighting against flesh and blood, but against spiritual strongholds. That includes the war that Satan wages for our minds. This is why what we fill our minds with matters so much. Spending time in the truth helps you know what is untrue.

Q. How can you use the Word as a weapon against what is untrue?

Conversation Around the Gospel and Racial Reconciliation

“Everyone knows that 11 o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in American life.” Martin Luther King Jr.

Personal Reflection Questions

Prior to meeting, encourage your group to engage with the following questions:

1. What is something you heard in Sunday’s message from Pastor Michael or Pastor Wendell that helped you see something for the first time? Why do you think it struck you or convicted you?
2. What is something that was hard for you to hear? What made (or makes) it troublesome for you?
3. What is a step you want to take based on this week’s conversation?

Dig In

God’s vision for His Kingdom is found within the Bible. It is a place where two things are found: unity amongst His people, and that His people are a diverse gathering of people. We see in John’s vision in [Revelation 7:9](#) that people of every nation, tribe, and tongue are gathered around the throne.

As we approach this week in light of the conversation shared by Pastor Michael and Pastor Wendell, our desire is to continue in our ability to listen, learn, and grow. We’ve provided a few resources for you to further engage with the subject of racial reconciliation and the Gospel. Consider watching one of the Recommended Resources individually or together as a group.


Make it your goal to listen and seek to understand. Try to refrain from arguing against viewpoints that may be different than yours; rather seek to understand their perspective on these issues.

If you choose to watch the recommended videos, consider discussing:

- What stood out to you in the video?
- Is there anything new you learned or grasped?
- What are the implications of this conversation for our church?
- How would diversity impact our group?

If you’re looking to further explore a few Bible texts with some of the new tools we shared with you last week, consider the following:

[Ephesians 2:11-22](#); [Acts 10:44-48](#), [Galatians 2:11-14](#)



How do I engage in difficult topics?

Recommended Resources

Racial Reconciliation by Voddie Baucham

We don’t have to achieve racial reconciliation, it exists. It is a reality that we must walk in, but it has already been accomplished in Christ. In this session, Voddie Baucham unpacks Ephesians 2:10-11 to show the sufficiency of Christ’s death on the cross to bring us near in perfect reconciliation.

Watch on YouTube

Ethnic Gnosticism by Voddie Baucham

Ethnic Gnosticism is a term crafted by Voddie Baucham to explain the phenomenon of people believing that somehow because of ones ethnicity that one is able to know when something or someone is racist. In this sermon, Dr. Baucham sheds light on the way this ideology is undermining the gospel and compromising genuine christian relationships in the church today.

Watch on YouTube

Oneness Embraced by Tony Evans

Tony Evans seeks to promote a biblical understanding of the kingdom foundation of oneness by detailing why we don’t have it, what we need to do to get it, and what it will look like when we live it.

Watch on Right Now Media

Introduction

“Our preoccupation with the will of God is a Western, middle-class phenomenon of the last fifty years... My hunch is that most of our obsession with knowing the will of God is due to the fact that we are overburdened with choice. We think choice makes us happy, but there comes a point (and most of us are well past it) where we would actually be better off with fewer choices.” – Kevin DeYoung – *Just Do Something*

We can often get lost mulling over or feeling stuck by trying to figure out who God wants us to marry, which house would please Him the most, or what job He'd rather us accept. Is figuring out God's will really that difficult?

Get the Conversation Started

Q. Why do we tend to think that God's will is something difficult to discern?

Q. Can you think of a time recently where you felt stuck or overwhelmed by a decision? How did you go about making the decision?

Dig In

R.C. Sproul in *Can I Know God's Will?* writes: “Christians are permitted, in a sense, to attempt to discern the will of God by means of illumination by the Holy Spirit and by confirmation through circumstances that we are doing the right thing. However, as we will discover, the search for providential guidance must always be subordinate to our study of the revealed will of God.”

Q. What argument is Dr. Sproul making in our attempt to find God's Will?

Follow Up: If it is not the Scriptures, where have you mostly turned to for insight into discovering God's will for your life?


Dig In

In his book titled *Just Do Something*, Pastor Kevin DeYoung summarizes our pursuit to live in God's will this way: “Live for God. Obey the Scriptures. Think of others before yourself. Be holy. Love Jesus. And as you do these things, do whatever else you like, with whomever you like, wherever you like, and you'll be walking in the will of God.” Based on what you are facing right now, what decisions does this help free you up to make in your life?

Recommended Resources

Book - *Just Do Something* by Kevin DeYoung

Sermon – How Do I Determine God's Will by Profesor Gerry Breshears - https://youtu.be/oAc1rc_QnfA



How do I know
God's will?

Below we will walk through five lenses in which to understand and discern God's will for us. In each section, read the passage and attempt to summarize what God wants us to understand.

1

Read: Luke 11:28; Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:97-104

Result: Listen to God's Word.

2

Read: Mark 12:30-31; Philippians 2:1-5; Colossians 3:12-15

Result: Pursue Christ-likeness.

3

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:23; Ephesians 5:8-15

Result: Live in a manner that is wise and sensible considering the first two instructions.

4

Read: Genesis 25:22; Acts 18:21; Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 11:14

Result: Seek God and allow Him speak directly or through others.

5

Read: Psalm 37:4; 1 Corinthians 10:31

Result: Do what will bring you joy and bring God glory.



Introduction

Within the last decade or so, “Gospel-centered” has become quite the buzzword within the Christian church. You can read books on “Gospel-centered” discipleship, take classes for “Gospel-centered” parenting, and learn how to use your finances in a “Gospel-centered” way. Yet often these practices and principles are nothing more than what came before just rebranded with the title “Gospel-centered”. This week, it is our desire to dig in, study, and learn what it truly means for our lives to be Gospel-centered, Christocentric, and cross-driven.

“The only people who get better are people who know that, if they never get better, God will love them anyway.” –Steve Brown, A Scandalous Freedom

“The gospel-centered life is a life where a Christian experiences a growing personal reliance on the gospel that protects him from depending on his own religious performance and being seduced and overwhelmed by idols.” –Joe Thorn

Dig In: Colossians 1:9-23

We pick up in the middle of Paul’s prayer on behalf of the Colossians. The first part of his prayer (verses 3-8) is one of thanksgiving, but in the next section (verses 9-14), Paul begins to intercede on their behalf—that is, asking God to do something on their behalf. After his prayer, Paul moves into one of the most memorable passages in all of the New Testament. Church history tells us that many in the early church sang verses 15-20 as an early hymn due to its elevated prose and structure.

Verses 9-14

Q. What are the three or four action verbs found in verses 12-13? What picture does this paint when it comes to salvation?

Follow Up: In what way were we “qualified”? In what way were we “delivered”?

Q. Of all the things Paul prays for the Colossians church, which one do you think we need the most? Why?

Verses 15-19

Q. How does Paul describe Jesus’ authority in verse 16?

Q. What specific things does Jesus have authority over in your life?

Follow Up: What do you think it looks like to live in such a way that reflects Jesus’ authority over all things?

Verses 20-23

Q. What does “reconcile” mean?

Follow Up: How does Paul describe who the Colossians were before they were reconciled?

Q. In what ways are you tempted to “move from the hope held out in the gospel” (verse 23)? What do we find hardest about the “gospel that you [have] heard” (verse 23)?

Conversation Starters

Q. The argument could be made that Gospel-centered living requires one to have a life that is captivated by Christ. In your own words, what exactly does that mean?

Follow Up: What are things that quickly vie for our attention and affections that distract us from Christ?

Connect the Dots

Q. Consider all that this week’s verses (inset) teach us about who Jesus is, what He’s done, and Paul’s prayers for the Colossians. What does this have to do with informing our ability to live a Gospel-Centered Life?

Closing

To best summarize our study, let us borrow the words of Alex Kocman:

*“Gospel-centrality, rightly understood, emphasizes that **the whole of the believer’s life is lived under the shadow of the cross and in the warm glow of the empty grave.** Nevertheless, the risk remains that we become shallow in our own articulation of the gospel, emphasizing Christ’s initial works in regeneration and justification while speaking less and less about sanctification and glorification.”*

In your own estimation, looking at how you’ve approached your spiritual life and growth, what have you paid most attention to? Your **justification** (being made right with God) or **sanctification** (becoming more like Christ)? What would it look like to have a healthy balance of both?



Why Should I Study?

Before we talk about *how* to study, let's quickly go over *why* we should study God's Word. We believe all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, and equipped for every good work ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). Knowing the Word of God is vital for life in Him!

Conversation Starters

Have you ever gotten lost? How did you figure out where you were and where you needed to go? How important is having a strong cell phone signal or access to good instructions?

Dig In

In the Old Testament, God tells Moses to give the Israelites instructions about His Word. Read [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#).

1. What is Moses telling the people to do? Why?
2. Moses is using figurative language to depict something very important: enter your life around the word of God; don't neglect it. Why do you think God wanted to remind them of this before they entered the Promised Land?
3. Based on the passage above ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)), spend a few minutes talking about why studying the Word is important.

Passage to Study: [1 John 2:7-14](#)

Before you start studying, it's always a good idea to begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand. Pray as a group and then take a few moments for each person to read the passage silently to themselves three times.

1. The first time you read through, just read.
2. The second time, underline, circle, highlight repeated words or phrases, or anything that stands out to you. In your journal, write down any questions that come up.
3. The third time, ask yourself:
 - What is this passage about? (Observation)
 - What is the author communicating to the audience about God? What is it communicating about me? (Interpretation)
 - How am I to live in light of this revealed truth? (Application)

Share what you discovered with your group. Keep in mind, each book of the Bible was written to an intended audience for a purpose. We must always be careful to not make the text say what it was never intended to say.

Are there any cross-references? If so, check them out! What clarity do they bring to the text?

In closing, pray through the Scripture you just spent time unpacking. Ask God to help you see like He does and bring His Word to mind throughout the week. Pray for your group or family members that the eyes of their hearts will be enlightened that they may know what is the hope to which they have been called, and the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints ([Ephesians 1:18](#)).

Putting Study Into Practice

There are lots of great ways to study God's Word! Today, we're going to practice studying in a way that will hopefully lead to some great conversation and will be duplicable at home on your own time.

It's incredibly useful to have a journal for taking notes and a study Bible with cross-references. If you've never used cross-references before, don't be frightened! They're the tiny letters next to the words in your Bible. They correspond to the verses in the margin that will lead you to the other places in the Bible where similar concepts are written about or referenced. They will open your eyes to the connections throughout the Bible and help give you understanding.

Recommended Resources

- [Seven Arrows: The Basics of Bible Study by The Gospel Coalition](#)
- [Blue Letter Bible](#)
- [The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah by Alfred Edersheim](#)
- [The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times by Ralph Gower](#)
- [How to Study the Bible by John MacArthur](#)
- [Reading the Bible Supernaturally by John Piper](#)
- [ESV Study Bible](#)