

# OpenTheo

## The Mind - Part 1

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### The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier

John Stott explains that the mind is the central citadel of the human personality that directs our human operations. He sets God's purpose for us to think before we act against the current trend of emptying our minds in order to meditate.

### Transcript

[Music] It is a rather delicious idea that the way to become more philosophical is to do less thinking. But there are many people who have fallen for that in our world today and the modern world has given birth to the ugly twins of mindlessness and meaninglessness.

[Music] Welcome to The Bible for Today with John Stott.

There are few evangelicals who have ever influenced the global church in the 20th century as much as John Stott. Whilst John Stot impacted the church across the world, his home church was always all souls, laying in place in the heart of London's West End. And it's from 600 sermons he preached there that were marking his centenary with some of his most powerful messages.

[Music] It was usual for John Stot to give a series of messages on a particular subject. But during this his centenary year, we've only had time to bring you one message from a series. However, one particular series has been so highly sought after over the years that we are bringing you two different messages from this series over the next four weeks.

What we believe and how we behave is what John Stott sees as the integrated Christian encompassing our mind, our will and our conscience. I myself am convinced that there is an urgent need for men and women of integrity in the church and in the nation and throughout the world today. Now, integrity is the quality of integrated men and women who are all of a peace, men and women who are whole.

In whom there is no dichotomy between what they believe and how they behave,

between what they are in private and what they are in public or between the different spheres and aspects of their human life. To be an integrated person is to be somebody who is at harmony with himself or herself instead of being a discord. And I venture to say that integrity or integration is a major theme of the whole Bible.

For example, by creation, human beings were integrated. If you look back to the idyllic situation in the Garden of Eden, mind emotions, conscience and will, functioned naturally and each contributed to the created humanness of our first parents. But by the fall, human beings became disintegrated.

Our minds became darkened, our conscience skewed, our emotions warped and our will enslaved. And instead of being whole persons, we fall in a pot and become disintegrated. But you know, redemption through Christ Jesus means that we are becoming reintegrated again.

Until that glorious day, when Christ returns, our bodies will be redeemed and will become the ideal vehicle for our perfectly reintegrated personalities. So you see the sequence, integration, disintegration, reintegration, really sums up the purpose of God, historical and eternal, to make us integrated human beings in Jesus Christ. So that's my theme these Sundays, the integrated Christian or integrity.

We begin with the mind. I bring you my text in a moment if you're a little impatient in waiting for it. But we begin with the mind because the mind is the central citadel of the human personality.

Our brain, which is the physical basis for the mind, the physical mechanism that lies at the foundation of our thinking, is like the control tower that directs our human operations. That does not mean that we are robots. On the contrary, it is an essential part of our dignity as human beings that we are responsible people, responsible for our actions, and that we think before we act.

Or at least that is God's purpose for us. There are a lot of us who don't fulfill it, I know. I wonder if you know some of you may, the story about the two ladies who are having a chat in the supermarket.

When one said to the other, "What's the matter with you?" you look so worried. "I am," said her friend, "I keep thinking about the world's situation." "Well," said the other, "you want to take things more philosophically and stop thinking." It is a rather delicious idea that the way to become more philosophical is to do less thinking. But there are many people who have fallen for that in our world today, and the modern world has given birth to the ugly twins of mindlessness and meaninglessness.

And over against their secular trends, although they infiltrate here and there into the church, we want today to set the Holy Scriptures. And in particular, the verse that I take

is my text, and I ask you to turn to 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 20. 1 Corinthians 14 and 20, where Paul says or writes, "Sisters and brothers, do not be children in your thinking." Bebabys, that's a correct translation, the Greek word changes there from a child to a baby.

Bebabys in evil, but in your thinking, the mature. It's a very significant verse. We all remember that Jesus told us to become like little children, but we're not to be like little children in everything.

In evil, you can be as baby-ish as you like, as ignorant and as innocent in the matter of evil as a little child. But in your thinking, he says, "The heaven's sake grow up and become mature." It's a particularly significant verse because it's embedded in the context of 1 Corinthians 14, in which Paul demonstrates the superiority of prophecy to tongue-speaking. And very evidently, Paul cannot contemplate the possibility of speaking in an under, in a tongue, or in a language in which the mind is not fruitful.

He says, "If you do it in public, you can only do it when there is an interpreter to explain what you're talking about. And if you think it is proper to do it in private, then it is important for you to pray that you may be able to interpret." Thus, 13, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret, so that he or she can understand what they're talking about. We are not to contemplate a situation of prayer or worship or praise in which the mind is unproductive, Paul says, in your thinking, be mature.

Now, why is this? Why is it that Paul lays this great emphasis on growing up in the intellectual sphere in our thinking? Well, I want to suggest you the answer is that what lies behind Paul's exhortation, his emphasis on using our minds and becoming adult in our thinking, is the whole biblical revelation, as I have now to show. Firstly, a proper use of our minds glorifies our Creator. Because our Creator is a rational God who made us in his own image and likeness, rational men and women, and to end the garden of Eden, address to Adam and Eve commands, questions, a permission and a prohibition, presupposing that they would be able to understand what he was saying to them and that they could respond to his communication.

More than that, God has given us in nature and in scripture a double rational revelation of himself. All scientific research, I wonder if you thought about this, all scientific research is based on the conviction that the universe is intelligible and even meaningful, and that there is a fundamental correspondence between the mind of the investigator and the data that he or she is investigating. And that correspondence between the subjective and the objective and the universe is precisely rationality.

It is no accident that all the pioneers of the scientific enterprise were Christian men and women. They believed that the rational God had stamped his rationality both upon the world and upon themselves as they were investigating the phenomena of the natural world. In consequence, every scientist, whether they know it or not, in the language of

that early 17th century astronomer Johann Kepler, every scientist is thinking God's thoughts after him.

For God has expressed his thoughts in the created universe as we investigate the universe with thinking his thoughts after him. And if the scientific research worker is doing that, so is the Bible student. God has given us in scripture an even fuller revelation than he has given us in the natural order.

For God has spoken in Christ and in the biblical witness to Christ, communicating his thoughts in words. And in particular, he has revealed in scripture his love for sinners like us. And his plan conceived in a past eternity to save us and make us like his only begotten son.

So you see, if God has created us rational beings, are we going to neglect his revelation? And are we going to deny our created rationality? If God has revealed himself in nature and scripture, are we going to neglect that double revelation? No, the proper use of the mind is neither to abdicate its responsibility and go to sleep, nor to stand in judgment upon the data of revelation, but to sit humbly under them. To study what God has revealed, to seek, to understand it, to synthesize it, to apply it to every part of our lives. And as we use our minds in this way, we are glorifying our Creator in using the mind that he has given us.

Secondly, a proper use of the mind enriches our Christian life. I'm not not thinking about education and culture and art, which enhance the quality of our human life. That is an important topic, and thinking rather and in particular of our Christian discipleship.

No part of which is possible if we don't use our God-given minds. Let me quote from Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones in one of his many books. Looking back, he read towards the end of his life, looking back over my experience as a pastor for some 34 years.

I can testify without the slightest hesitation that the people I've found most frequently in trouble in their spiritual experience have been those who lacked understanding. You cannot divorce these things. You will go wrong in the realms of practical living and spiritual experience if you don't have a true understanding.

He said, "I think he's right." And the Bible says it again and again. Let me give you one or two examples. My first example is worship.

We have met together to worship God. The worship of God is our preeminent Christian duty. It takes precedence even over evangelism.

For long after the church's evangelistic task is done, we shall continue to worship God throughout eternity. But we cannot worship God if we don't use our minds. Christians are not like those Athenians who's altar pool discovered being inscribed to an unknown God.

It isn't possible to worship an unknown God. If you don't know the God you're worshipping, you cannot know what kind of worship will be pleasing to him or appropriate. Worship is a response to revelation.

And without the revelation of the name of God, the worship of the name of God is impossible. That's why the reading and the preaching of the Word of God are not an intrusion into public worship. On the contrary, they are an integral part of it.

It is the Word of God that evokes the worship of God. I wonder how you would define worship. This definition in the Bible that I know is in Psalm 105 verse 3. It goes like this, "The to worship is to glory in God's holy name." To glory in His holy name.

To revel in the unique being that He has revealed Himself to be. But you cannot revel in God. If you don't know the kind of God He is, and don't meditate upon the greatness and the glory of the God that we are to worship.

So we need to descend from that worshipper who said he complained to the preacher about having been made to think in the sermon. He said, "When I go to a worship service, I feel like unscrewing my head and putting it under the seat." Because he said, "In a worship service, I have no use for anything above my collar button." In other words, all he wanted when he came to worship was a gooey feeling in the pit of his stomach. He didn't want to be made to think in order to glorify God with his mind.

Not only misunderstand me, to be sure immersion is involved in worship. And sometimes in public or private worship, we are transported out of ourselves and beyond ourselves in the contemplation of the glory and the beauty of God. But even then our minds are active.

All worship that is pleasing to God is worship in which we love the Lord our God with all our being. Our mind and heart and soul and strength. So you must use your mind in worship.

Otherwise our worship is not pleasing to God. My next example is faith. It's extraordinary how many people imagine that faith and the mind or reason are incompatible with one another.

Do you know that they are never set over against one another in scripture? Never. Faith and sight are set over against each other. We walk by faith, not by sight, but not faith and reason on the contrary.

But what is faith? Faith is not a synonym for credulity. Faith is not a synonym for superstition. Faith is not an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable.

As Rachel Menken, the American journalist between the wars, once defined it, "No faith is a reasoning trust." That is very clear from the Bible. You think of Psalm 9 verse 10.

Those who know your name put their trust in you.

And they trust because they know that your name is trustworthy. But without that knowledge of God and of the character of God and the covenant of God and the promises of God, faith is impossible. Faith is a reasoning trust and the more we meditate upon God, the more reasonable our faith becomes.

There is no body that it is more reasonable to trust than God because he is absolutely trust worthy. So if you want to grow in faith, you've got to use your mind in meditating upon the God you are invited to put your trust in. And my third example is guidance.

There are too many Christian people who think that divine guidance is a convenient alternative to human thought. They imagine that divine guidance is a device, a rather convenient device for saving us the bother of thinking. So they expect God to flash answers to their questions onto the screen of their mind.

Or they expect him to flash solutions to their problems without their needing to think about it. Now I don't doubt of course that God is free and sovereign and sometimes condescends to our weakness and sometimes guides in irrational ways. But God's normal guidance, I have no hesitation in affirming from Scripture is through the mental processes that he has established.

One of the main biblical warrants for this is another Psalm, Psalm 32 verses 8 and 9. Psalm 32 of verses 8 is a marvelous promise of divine guidance. Three times repeated, I will instruct you the way you shall go, I will teach you, and I will guide you with my eye upon you. I will instruct you, I will teach you, I will guide you.

Three times he promises to guide us. But then in the beautiful balance of the Bible he goes on with the warning of verse 9, "Don't spill like a horse or mule that has no understanding whose mouth needs to be held with bitter bridle or it will not stand near you." In other words, putting those two verses together, I will guide you. I promise that I will guide you.

But don't expect me to guide you as you guide horses and mules for the simple reason that you're not a horse or a mule. They lack understanding in their rudimentary brain. But you have understanding, you've been created in the image of God.

So, although you have to pray and to surrender and search the scriptures and look to the Holy Spirit and so on, ultimately you have to make up your own mind by weighing up the present cons in every situation, and God will guide you through your mental processes. So you see worship, faith, and guidance are three spheres in which it is essential to you as our minds and a proper use of the mind in these spheres enriches our Christian discipleship. You've been listening to the first part of a message by John Stott on The Mind, which will be concluded at the same time next week.

This is part of a series that shows us what it means to be an integrated Christian, where what we believe and how we behave must be the same. Each week we suggest a book that ties in with the message, and the title of today's recommendation is Your Mind Matters. The details are on our Centenary website, which also has biographies of John Stott by well-known Christian leaders along with videos of John Stott preaching around the world.

All this and more can be found at [premierchristenradio.com/JohnStott](http://premierchristenradio.com/JohnStott). The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing, touching every level of society across the world. Today Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastoral training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stott, who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Langham Partnership. To find out about this and other ministries John Stott founded, go to [premier.org.uk/JohnStott](http://premier.org.uk/JohnStott). Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for Today with John Stott.

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(buzzing)