

INTRODUCTION

During this series on Surrender2Win, we’ve talked about the importance of surrendering your time and your trust to God. In this lesson, we’ll be considering the importance of surrendering your *thinking* to God—to allow God to take control of your mind.

Critics of Christianity have said we claim to have all the answers, but they are the answers to questions nobody is asking. That reminds me of a story I heard about a man who was totally drunk stumbling down a road, when he saw a preacher baptizing people in the river. He walked down in the water to watch, and the preacher said, “Mister, are you ready to find Jesus?” The drunk man said, “Yes, I am.” So the preacher grabbed him and dunked him under the water. When he came up, the preacher said, “Did you find Jesus?” The man replied, “No, I haven’t found Jesus.” The preacher was shocked, so he dunked him again, a little harder. Once again, he asked, “have you found Jesus, my brother?” The cold water was beginning to sober the guy up a little, but he still replied, “No, I didn’t find Jesus.” By this time, the preacher was getting frustrated, so he dunked him and held him under for almost thirty seconds. When the guy started kicking and waving his arms, the preacher brought him up for air and said, “I’ll ask you for the last time: have you found Jesus?” The man wiped his eyes and caught his breath and said, “Let me ask you a question. ‘Are you sure this is where Jesus fell in?’”

Too many times, we’re asking people if they want to find Jesus, and they wonder if Jesus is lost. If we’re going to present the claims of Christ to this generation, we have to start talking in ways they can understand. We must start asking the right questions and listen to their questions so we’ll know the answers they’re looking for.

Because of the bizarre behavior of some Christians, many people without Christ think we’re all a bunch of idiots. Can you blame them? We live in a time when a lady can make a cheese sandwich and claim it bears the face of the Virgin Mary. Then she turns around and sells it on Ebay for \$28,000—what are these people thinking?

And in case you missed it, over the last couple of weeks someone bought some M&Ms from a dispenser and he or she is certain a melted M&M contained the face of Jesus. It was for sale on Ebay also. The seller wrote: “I believe it was Jesus’ will for me to find him on this very special M&M. It has been a life-changing event for me. I will be donating half of the auction winnings to the Cerebral Palsy Fund. I will start attending my Church services on a regular basis. I have seen the light.” By the way, I read that the bids were up to \$3,100 when Ebay took it off their site, and the seller completed the sale privately.

Whenever I hear about a Mary Sandwich or a Jesus M&M I cringe because there are millions of Americans out there who think all Christians buy into hoaxes like that. Over the past thirty years thousands of Christians have perpetuated a hoax that Madalyn Murray O’Hair and her atheist organization has a bill before the Federal Communications Commission to remove all religious broadcasts. It’s a joke. There is no bill. But the FCC has received 20 million letters about it—that’s \$6.8 million spent by Christians on postage to address a hoax!

Let’s look in Proverbs 3 to see what the Bible says and surrendering our thinking to God:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:5-8)

To see how you’re thinking about God and the Bible I’d like to have you answer eight questions about your beliefs. Don’t give the answer you think I want, instead, give your honest opinion by answering “yes” or “no.” You don’t have to pass this test to go to heaven, and we aren’t going to swap tests and grade them. These questions are for you to admit to yourself what you really believe.

The questions are:

1. Do absolute moral truths exist?
2. Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?
3. Did Jesus Christ live a sinless life?
4. Is God the all-powerful, and all-knowing Creator of the universe, and does He still rule today?
5. Is salvation a gift from God that cannot be earned?
6. Is Satan real?
7. Does a Christian have a responsibility to share his or her faith in Christ with other people?
8. Is the Bible accurate in all its teachings?

If you answered “yes” to all eight questions, it means you have a Biblical world view. If you didn’t answer “yes” to all of them, it doesn’t mean you’re a bad person. If, by the way, you answered “no” to all the questions, then I’m glad you’re here!

As we think about surrendering your thinking to God, let address three questions:

1. WHAT’S A WORLD VIEW, ANYWAY?

A couple of years ago, the Barna research organization interviewed several thousand Americans in the 48 lower states to find out their religious beliefs. They asked them the same eight questions we just answered. The results of this survey can be found in an excellent book by George Barna entitled *Think Like Jesus*.

Whether or not you know it, you have a world view. In fact, everyone has a world view, even though they may not be able to express it clearly. A world view is the way you look at the “big picture” of life. Let me give you two definitions of a world view. George Barna writes that a world view is “A mental and spiritual lens through which you view reality.” In his book, *How Now Should We Live*, Charles Colson writes that a world view is “My personal beliefs about the world that direct my decisions and actions.”

We often make the mistake of dividing all of life into two broad categories—the “spiritual” and

the “unspiritual.” When you do that, you make the mistake of thinking God and the Bible are restricted to that part of life that is “spiritual” and they are excluded from the “unspiritual.” When you have a Biblical world view, you understand that *everything* that happens in this world should be understood from the basis of who God is and how He is relating to His Creation.

When you have a Biblical world view, you filter every news report through it. The tsunami, the war in Iraq, a space probe landing on Titan...everything is viewed through the lens of your Biblical understanding.

2. DO MANY AMERICANS HAVE A BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW?

If you choose to be a thinking Christian, you will find yourself in a minority. The results of George Barna’s study reveal only a tiny percentage of people in America answered “yes” to all eight of the diagnostic questions. Even more alarming is only a small percentage of people who claim to be “born again Christians” hold a Biblical world view! (Biblical world view will be abbreviated as “BWV”)

For instance: Only 4% of Americans interviewed hold a BWV, and only 7% who claim to be born again Christians hold a BWV. If you wonder if education has an impact on this issue, researchers found that of adults who attended college, 6% held a BWV; while among those who never attended college only 2% had a BWV.

If you think all Protestant pastors have a Biblical world view, think again. Only 51% of those interviewed answered “yes” to all eight questions. It’s interesting to see that the group of pastors with the highest percentage was among Southern Baptists (71%); and the lowest was among United Methodist pastors with 27%.

As you would imagine, beliefs vary according to geographical areas. The states with the lowest percent of people holding a BWV are the six New England States and Louisiana; and the two states with the highest percentage of the people embracing a BWV are Texas and North Carolina.

Obviously, what you believe about the Bible determines what you believe about current moral issues. The Barna researchers found there were marked differences among the two groups. For instance when asked if “living together outside of marriage is acceptable?” 62% of those who don’t have a BWV said it was okay, while only 2% of those who have a BWV agreed. When asked if drunkenness is acceptable only 2% of people with a BWV agreed compared with 36% of those who don’t have a BWV.

The next question was “is viewing pornography acceptable behavior?” Almost 4 out of 10 adults without a BWV said “yes” while a fraction of 1% (.3%) with a BWV agreed. When asked if “homosexual behavior is acceptable,” 31% not holding a BWV said yes, while only 2% of those who claim to believe the Bible agreed. Concerning abortion, as a means of birth control, 39% who don’t hold a BWV said it was acceptable while only .4% (four tenths of one percent) of people with a BWV agreed.

You may wonder what other “world views” are prominent among the 96% of Americans who don’t have a BWV. In his book Barna discusses seven alternative world views, but I’ll only mention three. Many Americans embrace “deism,” even if they don’t know what the word means. It’s a belief that there IS a God, but He is uninterested in our daily lives. Like a watchmaker, He created the world, wound it up, and went on to do other important jobs. Some famous deists you might recognize were Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson. Many Americans believe there is some kind of “God up there” but He has chosen not to be bothered by the mundane details in our lives.

Another common world view is humanism (also called naturalism). Most atheists and agnostics are humanists. They believe that this world is all there is, and if anything is wrong, then humans are going to have to fix it since God doesn’t exist. Famous humanists include Bertram Russell and Karl Marx, the father of Communism.

But Barna says the most prevalent world view in America is Postmodernism. In postmodern thought, your god exists if you believe he exists. By its very nature, postmodernism defies a firm definition. Because what postmodern thought is to me, may not be postmodern thought you, but hey, that’s okay. The younger generations of Baby Busters (children of Baby Boomers) and Mosaics embrace postmodernism. It is known by hyper-tolerance to every way of life and thinking. Truth is relative. If it’s true for you, it may not be true for me, but that’s cool.

We need a generation of Christians (of all ages) who start *thinking* about their faith. Sadly, we are often caricatured as people who see Mary in a cheese sandwich, and Jesus in a melted M&M. We need serious Christians who will develop a Biblical world view. Remember, Jesus said we are to love God with all of our minds. It’s tragic that every week thousands of people who claim to be Christians, attend church, and put their minds in neutral. I challenge you to stop checking your mind at the door of church, and start *thinking* about how the truth about God should infuse every area of your life.

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW?

Or to put it another way, “What does it mean to love the Lord with all your mind?” You must understand that your mind is the control center of your life. In the Bible, the word “heart” doesn’t refer to the fist-sized muscle in your chest that pumps blood; it refers to your MIND—the control center of your life. The word heart occurs over 800 times in the Bible. Proverbs says, “As he thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV) You become what you think about the most, so you must be sure that you surrender your thinking to God.

If you use a computer today, you must have virus protection, spam protection, and a firewall. Why? Because there are evil people out there who get a kick out of planting computer viruses just to see how much damage they can create. In the same way, you must guard your mind. You must be careful about what you THINK. The Bible says, “Above all else, guard your heart (mind), for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) Life begins with what you think and how you think: sow a thought; reap an act; sow an act; reap a habit; sow a habit; reap a character; sow a character; reap a destiny.

To have a Biblical world view means you allow God to control your thoughts. To put it another way, you start thinking like Jesus. The Bible says, “Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) Let me share three positive benefits of thinking like Jesus:

(1) Thinking like Jesus liberates from self-centered to God-centered living

We read in Proverbs 3:7, “Don’t assume that you know it all.”

When we begin our lives, we all think we’re the center of our own little universe. If we aren’t fed or our diaper isn’t changed we’re going to raise a racket. “Look at ME! Take care of ME!” And we don’t really care who we bother. As you grow older, if you’re not careful, you can remain at the center of your own little universe, thinking that you know it all. When you surrender your life to God, you replace your selfish ego with your Creator. And it’s a liberating experience. You no longer have to bear the weight of the world on your shoulders. There is Someone who has said to you, “Cast all your cares upon Me!”

One of my all-time favorite lines came from the movie “Rudy.” You may recall Rudy was an undersized football player who dreamed of playing for Notre Dame. In the movie he is befriended by a Catholic priest (played by Robert Prosky). In one of their discussions the priest says, “in 35 years of religious study, I’ve only come up with two hard, incontrovertible facts: There is a God, and I’m not Him.” One of the greatest revelations you’ll ever come to in your life is, “It’s not about me!” It’s about God. When you have a Biblical world view, God becomes the center of your existence.

(2) Thinking like Jesus concentrates on knowing and loving God

Our text in Proverbs also says, “Run to God!” (Proverbs 3:7) Jesus was always aware of the presence of His Father. The Bible says in Mark 1:35 it was His custom to get up before sunrise and go to a solitary place to pray. He carried on a living, loving relationship with His Father. A Biblical world view doesn’t define God as some uncaring, harsh heavenly Tyrant. Instead, the Bible teaches that we can know God and love God. We are taught that we can call Him, “Abba” which means, “Daddy.”

The two most exciting facts you’ll ever discover are: (1) God exists; and (2) God loves you. I realize some people have a hard time accepting God’s love. You might be a person who thinks you have to *earn* God’s love—you *can’t* earn it. Or you may be a macho guy who thinks all this mushy-gushy stuff about God’s love is too sweet for you.

God’s love is a tough love. Don’t mistake it for super-sweet sentimentality. It’s not a sissy love. Have you ever seen those “Precious Moments” dolls and cards? They use these cute little kids with big, brimming eyes—full of compassion and sweetness. Frankly, I don’t like them very much. They don’t remind me of God’s love. Guys, if you want to know what God’s love is like, go see the movie “The Passion of the Christ” again. There’s a man. A real man. A strong man. A man who was willing to endure unthinkable torture and death in order to pay the penalty for my sins. Start thinking about that, and you’ll find yourself loving God.

(3) Thinking like Jesus designates healthy moral boundaries

The last part of our passage says, “Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!” (Proverbs 3:7-8) The problem with other world views is they don’t really provide any absolute standards of right and wrong. For instance, postmodernism says since there are no absolutes, all morality is relative. They think, “What’s wrong for you may not be wrong for me.” That’s why there are voices in America today who complain about the injustice of “intolerant Christians” who are trying to “cram their beliefs down everyone’s throat.”

A Biblical world view accepts there is good and evil. After September 11, 2001, our President said that “we have looked into the face of evil.” What allowed him to say that? The Bible says that murdering innocent people is wrong. The only morality that will work is a morality based upon absolute standards.

The postmodern world view says there are many moral standards, based on different cultures. It really wasn’t wrong for those terrorists to fly the jets into the buildings, because in that part of the world they are considered heroes—it’s just their morality. That would be like saying the Nazi morality wasn’t wrong, because that was just their cultural morality. No, we must have another standard for absolute right and wrong, and I believe that is found in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

I’ve quoted C.S. Lewis many times, but you may not know much about his life and his conversion to Christianity. Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1898 and—as he preferred to call death—he was “translated” on November 22, 1963. If that date sounds familiar, it’s because that’s the same day that John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas.

He fought for England in WWI, then attended Oxford University where he graduated first in his class. He taught for many years at Oxford and Cambridge and was regarded as one of the greatest intellects of the 20th century.

Although he was raised in a Christian home, during college he chose to become a vocal atheist. He came to believe that Christianity was nothing more than one of many the ancient mythological systems. As a professor he was actively involved in ongoing conversations with his peers. One of his best friends was J.R.R. Tolkien, who wrote *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Tolkien was a Christian and he and Lewis took long walks and discussed the possibility of the existence of God. Tolkien insisted that even though the Christian story was similar to other ancient mythologies, it was the only story based on historical facts. In other words, it was TRUE.

As Lewis contemplated these long discussions, he began a journey back to God. He passed through several mental steps that ultimately led him to belief in Jesus. First, he came to believe that there was an Absolute, which was a Spirit. Then he came to understand that this Absolute Spirit could rightfully be called God, the Creator. For him, the next logical step was to understand that Jesus Christ was the Incarnation of God.

Lewis wrote, “For the first time I examined myself with a seriously practical purpose. And there I found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion. Of course I could do nothing—I could not last out one hour—without continual conscious recourse to what I called Spirit. But the fine, philosophical distinction between this and what ordinary people call ‘prayer to God’ breaks down as soon as you start doing it in earnest.” Lewis wrote what happened as he prayed, “I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The words *compelle intrare*, ‘compel them to come in,’ have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.”

When he came to believe in God and trust Jesus, he realized that the nature of faith would not allow him to simply make a casual commitment to Christ. He wrote: Doubtless, by definition, God was Reason itself. But would He also be “reasonable” in that other, more comfortable sense? Not the slightest assurance on that score was offered me. Total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded. The demand was not even “All or nothing.” Now, the demand was simply “All.” (*Surprised by Joy: The Shape of my Early Life*, 1955, Chapter XIV)

C.S. Lewis is a shining example that you can possess a brilliant mind and be a committed Christian at the same time. This former atheist went on to become the leading proponent for the intellectual viability of the Christian faith in the 20th century. His books have sold over 20 million copies, and are still best sellers around the world.

Even before the word “world view” was used, C.S. Lewis embraced a Christian world view. He didn’t divorce his faith from his mind. Rather his mind was enlightened by his faith, as he used his mind to love God. His faith became the filter through which he understood the world. In his book, *The Weight of Glory*, he describes his world view. He wrote: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” (*The Weight of Glory*, p. 92)

We don’t need any more “melted M&M Christians” but we need more “C.S. Lewis Christians.” If you’re thinking, “this message is a little over my head,” then it’s time for you to raise your head and start loving God with all your mind. You can’t do that unless you surrender your thinking to God.

Surrender is the only way to win the full favor and blessing of God in your life. The greatest example of the power of surrender was Jesus himself. As He approached his death, He made it clear that He was surrendering his life so we could be pardoned. He said, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” (John 10:17-18) The night before Jesus was crucified, He surrendered His will to His Father. He said, “Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will but what you will.” Then as He hung on the cross after six hours of brutal pain and suffering, He lifted up His head and said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” (Luke 23:46)

Are you willing to surrender to the One who surrendered for you? Will you say, “Today I surrender my doubts, my fears, my failures, my frustrations, my future, to You, Oh Lord.” Will you say, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, my life, my thinking. I surrender to you.”

OUTLINE

1. WHAT’S A WORLD VIEW, ANYWAY?

“A mental and spiritual lens through which you view reality.” (Barna)

“My personal beliefs about the world that direct my decisions and actions.”
(Colson)

2. DO MANY AMERICANS HAVE A BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW?

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW?

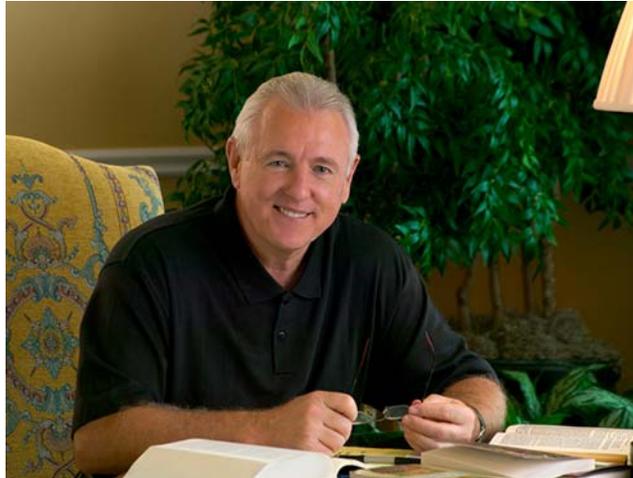
“Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 2:5*

THINKING LIKE JESUS:

(1) From self-centered to God-centered living
“Don’t assume that you know it all.” *Proverbs 3:7*

(2) Concentrates on knowing and loving God
“Run to God!” *Proverbs 3:7*

(3) Designates healthy moral boundaries
“Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!” *Proverbs 3:7-8*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes