

Think About Such Things.

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[0 : 00] Good morning. I know I'm a new face and a new place. I feel really privileged to be able to come and to share God's Word with you.

My name is Darren Froese. I am one of the elders at Countryside Community Church in La Crete. I am also the church administrator dealing with lots of communication pieces of making sure that people know what's going on and who people are.

And also, I have the privilege of being able to share God's Word there as well. I am married to my wife, Desiree. We've been married for 11 years. We have four children.

Our oldest is 10. Our second oldest is 8. Then our girl, our one lonely girl, is 6. And our baby boy is 2. So we have a busy household and we are entrusting that we will allow the Lord to lead our family as well.

Well, this morning, my thoughts have been going to the book of Philippians lately. And so, thank you for reading that passage. And the main focus of this entire letter in Philippians that Paul is writing, he's trying to encourage the church in Philippi to continue to live in love, to have discernment, and to know what is true.

[1 : 23] Before we go into the passage, let's once again pray that the Lord would lead. Father God, we thank you for your Word that is true. Thank you that you give us instructions in your Word of how to live.

Lord, we thank you for this passage that was shared, that we can learn more about who you are and how you desire for us to live amongst each other and live for you. Lord, I pray you give me calmness of heart that I could share your Word boldly this morning.

Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. So let's go back to the beginning of chapter 4, to verse 1, just to give some context to what is happening in this church and what Paul is addressing.

In verse 1 of chapter 4 in the book of Philippians, it says, Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there are any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things, the things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me.

These do, and the God of peace will be with you. So in this final part of Paul's letter, he's giving words of encouragement to the church of how they are to live. The first part of this chapter, we hear of two sisters that are in the church, and they're having a dispute, and Paul desired for that quarrel to be over and to be rectified, to have a reconciliation.

[3 : 42] This must have been a church that, you know, must have been a really rough church because no churches ever have quarrels, right? We can see some commonality today. We often have things that rub us the wrong way with someone else, and even it might be a brother, sister in the Lord, and sometimes the flesh will take over and make you say things or do things or make choices that go against what the Lord will have us do in the church.

But Paul desired to be reconciled. He then gave instructions as to how they should handle anxiety, namely by taking it to the Lord. In verse 4 it says, Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men in the Lord. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.

Taking all our cares upon God does not guarantee we'll get what we desire necessarily. What he promises us is his peace that passes all understanding.

If we give it to the Lord, it means that we are saying, Okay, Lord, I'm giving this to you. I'm not going to have my hands on it. I trust you with it. And that means that he can do what he wants with it, which is sometimes very difficult for us to accept.

[5 : 00] Paul continues in verse 8 where he writes, Finally, my brethren. So from there we can see who he's writing to. He says, My brethren, that's the church. He's writing to believers. And as followers of Christ, he's giving instructions.

So in this section, in verse 8 and 9, focuses on our thought life and what we are to think about. Mark Twain writes, This is a true statement.

Here Paul is talking about six virtues that we are to think about.

And our thought life is a powerful aspect of our life. It can lead us on a path of sin. Nobody wakes up out of the blue one morning and says, Today I'm going to break God's law.

It starts in our thoughts, through our battle with the flesh. What Paul is teaching is that we need to continually meditate on things that are true, things that are pure, things that are just, things that are lovely, things that are of good report, and all these are found in his word and scripture.

[6 : 36] We're going to take some time to talk about these different aspects that we are to meditate on. So first looking at true. And in today's society, truth is seen as a bit of a spectrum.

What's right and true for you may not be right and true for me. Society doesn't have an absolute. I might say the Saskatchewan Rough Riders are the best team in the CFL. Many people here would probably disagree with me.

Another example is in science, in the world of science, truth is often changed by what science claims could be new evidence. An example of 18 years ago, the planet Pluto lost its status as a planet.

This caused massive change in textbooks and in teachings and science classes. I had just graduated high school. Well, in my entire school career, I was taught that there were nine planets.

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Well, in August of 2006, that truth changed.

[7 : 37] In the world, it has a changing truth. It's not an absolute. Throughout scripture, we see a different view of truth. Truth is a standard of all that is right and is only found in God.

In the word of God, we read multiple times that God and his word are true. In John 14, 6, we read Jesus saying to his disciples, I am the way, the truth, and the life. He is truth.

In John 17, 17, in his prayer to the Father, he prays, sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. We know that God's word is truth and he himself is truth.

We can also read about what truth can do. Let's go to John chapter 8. John chapter 8, starting in verse 31.

John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, John chapter 9, Again, Jesus is teaching here. And it says, Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed him, If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed.

[8 : 44] And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say you will be made free?

Jesus answered them, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore, if the son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with my father, and you do not, and you do what you have seen with your father.

Through abiding in God's word, we can know truth. And what's the response of knowing truth? We are set free. Free from the power of sin.

When we know truth, we can discern the thoughts that come to our minds as true and as false. Without the Lord, without the Holy Spirit guiding us, without the truth of God's word, we don't know what true is.

[9 : 56] Paul talks about the value of the law. The value of the law is it shows us what is right and what is not right. Ephesians 6, 10-12 also speaks about why we need to have truth in our life.

A very familiar passage. Ephesians 6, verse 10, the armor of God says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the walls of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness in this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.

We need to gird our waist with truth and the truth is not of this world, it is of his word. One commentary from a man named Alfred Jefferson, a former professor of the Old Testament put it this way, truth is that which is constant and unchanging, something on which someone can rely, which will prove to be true in the future.

[11 : 23] Truth doesn't change, no matter if there's new discoveries, because God's word is complete. What he says is true is true. Just as truth is unchanging, one attribute of God is also that he is unchanging.

Hebrews 13, 8 says, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We need to be thinking about the truth of scriptures. Psalm 119, 11 says, Your word I've hid in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Later in verse 105, the psalmist writes, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The truth of God's word is to be the only source of truth that we have in our life.

So we need to be thinking of things that are true. The next one there is things that are noble. And nobility is one of those words that we hear the word of being noble, of being nobility, but really it's one of those words we don't really have an understanding of what that word means as much.

In nobility, you think of royalty, you think of coming in the presence of someone who is well protected. And so I just been digging what that word noble means and a word that is similar to nobility is another word that I have no idea what meant at first.

[12 : 40] It was a word called venerable. And venerable means grave, serious, or solemn. And further findings found that whatsoever things are honest or as the word more properly means whatever things are reverent or venerable, let grave, serious, solemn thought be familiar in your minds, not frivolous, not meaningless things.

There's an old story of a Roman history about barbarians breaking into the capital and the fury being awed to silence and struck into immobility as they saw round and round in the hall the August senators each in his seat full of power and position.

Let your mind be like that with reverent thoughts clustering on every side and when wild passions and animal desires and low mean contemplations dare to cross the threshold they will be awed into silence and stillness.

Whatsoever things are venerable. And that's an amazing image so I'm not sure how much familiar you are with old Roman culture but back in Roman culture there was a senate back then that was where the people who would make all the most powerful decisions in the empire they would gather in this large room, it's a round room and it was grave silence there because if you were in there and you disturbed them you could be facing death.

And so the story of a barbarian who was coming in to strike came in there and they were going wild and all of a sudden they were stopped in their tracks because of how awestruck they were with the power and position of that room.

[14 : 18] And that's who he's comparing our thought life to is having those having the Holy Spirit in our life to be those senators to be guiding or thinking of things that are noble. And when those thoughts come into our mind that are wild and frivolous and meaningless that they are awed into silence because of who God is and have his spirit dwelling in us.

Next is whatever things are just. The word just is also translated as righteous and is the same word used to describe the righteousness of God. What does it look like in our life to think about what is just?

Well we need to know more about our God who is just and righteous. We need to examine the truth of God's word to know what he sees is righteous and to think about such things. Next is whatever things are pure.

Purity can also be seen as clean, undefiled, blameless, and innocent. In today's culture it seems to become more and more acceptable to have media and humor that makes it acceptable to be impure.

One of the most frequent areas of scene is in how the world views the human body. In ad campaigns, billboards, movies, and television shows it's more acceptable to portray an image that allows a person's thoughts to become impure.

[15 : 38] And God is calling us to live a pure life. Ephesians 5 verses 1 to 3 In the NIV it reads, Be imitators of God.

Therefore, as duly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Then it gives a warning. It says, But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or greed because these are improper for God's holy people.

We need to think of those things that are pure. Next, we need to think of things that are lovely. The word for lovely is the only one, in this passage in Philippians 4, this is the only time that word is ever used in Scripture for lovely.

And it means acceptable or pleasing. When thinking about love, the most frequent place we go to is to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. It's often known as the love chapter.

[16 : 46] It's read at weddings. And it talks about what love is. And this is a letter, this portion of Scripture is written to the church in Corinth about how they are to love one another.

So in 1 Corinthians 13 starting in verse 4, it talks about love. It talks about what love does. It says, Love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not parade itself.

It is not puffed up. does not behave rudely. Does not seek its own. It is not provoked. Thinks no evil. Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things, hopes in all things, endures all things. Love never fails. Here love is quite clearly defined.

It tells exactly what love is. And if we think about, we are to think about, if we are to think about what is lovely, we need to think about what love truly means.

[17 : 48] If my thoughts are envious, my thoughts aren't lovely. If my thoughts are proud, my thoughts aren't lovely. If my thoughts are selfish, my thoughts aren't lovely.

The next one is to be of good report in our thoughts. Think of things that are of good report. The term here means that we desire to think of things that have a good reputation.

It has been tested and experienced and is known to be good. How often do we test the ideas that come to our mind? Do they have a reputation for having a good report? Do we allow things to come into our forefront to remind the things that we know are of truth and can be backed up by knowing that they're true?

Do the source they come from have a reputation for being good? Also, having a good report in our thought life has to do with how we view ourselves as well as how we view others. If we're constantly dwelling on sins that have been confessed and forgiven, having a good report is trusting in the blood of Jesus to forgive our sins and having a good report that we are forgiven.

Are we constantly seeing fault or having bitterness towards others around us? We are called to forgive and to see people as Christ sees them, created in His image and in need of a Savior.

[19 : 21] We're called to meditate on these things so that if there's any virtue of anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things and we are, what does that mean to meditate?

In today's culture, meditation is often related to Eastern philosophies of emptying our mind and relaxed breathing. This is not the meditation Paul is talking about. One commentary says it this way, Paul commands the Philippians to deliberate, to evaluate, to compute over and over what is good and pure.

In this way, Christians can renew their minds so they will not conform to the evil habits of this world, as we find in Romans 12, verse 2. Someone else writes, meditation has mixed connotations in our day.

I picture a person repeating a mantra, emptying their mind of all thought. The biblical practice of meditating is not the same as the widespread practice these days of mindfulness.

To meditate in the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament means to mutter and to ruminate. And there's two pictures that come up from that.

[20 : 35] The first one is of a person who's walking around and muttering under their breath as if he cannot stop obsessing over that thought. So when you think of meditating on these things, things that are true, things that are just, things that are noble, things that are of good report, can you imagine going to your job site, being in your truck, and muttering to yourself over and over again, what's lovely, what's true, what's right, over and over and over again without ceasing.

That's meditation. Always having it come to the forefront of your mind, that repeating, not letting anything else come into it. And the other part is that ruminate, the ruminate.

And so that's the idea of having it constantly come up and it's a picture, the best image of that is like a cow chewing the cud. So cows have multiple stomachs and they have it so they can digest the nutrients as best as they possibly can.

And so when you're meditating on something, it's supposed to be digested, then brought back up, and more nutrients absorbed out of it, then brought back down, then brought back up.

It's not just read a verse, okay, I'm good, and walk away. It's continually having that verse come back to your mind and to think about, okay, what does this mean?

[22 : 04] So these two pictures of meditate give a very different approach of the Bible and it's also very different than the, all right, I'm going to read a chapter today and check that box and I'm going to move on in my day. Meditating goes deeper rather than wide.

Even though there is an immense value in gaining a broad view of the Bible and please, if you are in a reading plan where you desire to read the Bible in a year, keep going. We're on March.

We're three months in the year. Keep going. If you've fallen behind, there's still time to catch up. But we're meant to go deeper. We're meant to meditate on God's word and to have the things come to our mind.

One practice I did when I was younger and I don't know why the rationale is I don't do it now anymore. I really need to get back into it but what I would do is I would do a chapter a day and then I'd take that and I would write about it.

Every day I'd read a chapter and write a chapter. Read what it said and write, okay, what was going on in that chapter and what was the key verse in that chapter then what does this chapter tell me about who God is?

[23 : 11] And through that study I learned so much more about who God is. In our Sunday school class we've been going through a series by Howard Hendricks called Living by the Book and it's focusing on how to study the Bible and he has three main parts of studying the Bible.

The first is observation. Well that's simply you just look at the text. What does the text say? Don't read into it. Just what are the words there? What kind of language is being used?

What's being repeated? What's being, what is a lot of time being spent on? What does the word Scripture say? The second part is interpretation where we ask what does it mean?

And then you look at the context. Who's he writing to? What's the historical context? What is, what's the message he's trying to tell us that we can actually learn from? And then there's a third part that I realized through even doing this study is that this is the part where I often lack.

Where it was the application. How does it work? Often we get so caught up of having Bible study as studying a textbook. We're here to gain knowledge. We're going to learn.

[24 : 18] We're going to fill our minds and be so full of learning and knowing things. And it's good to know things. But if it ends with knowing things, we're no further ahead in our Christian walk.

We need to then take these things that we know, say, okay, how does this apply to my life? One quote that he says is, in Scripture, there's always only one interpretation for Scripture, but there can be many applications.

A stay-at-home mom will have a different application than someone in the business world. Same truth, same interpretation, but it will work out differently in their lives. Another quote that Howard Hendricks says is, the task of Bible study is not to fatten geese, but it's to train athletes and equip soldiers.

We're not here just to fill our minds with knowledge. We're here to grow so that we can actually do the work that we're called to do. On meditation, Psalm 1, 1, and 2 says, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly or stands in the path of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night.

And he should be like a tree planted by the rivers of water bringing forth its fruit in season whose leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he does shall prosper.

[25 : 45] When we meditate on the Lord's word day and night, we become steadfast, a tree firmly rooted and planted. When the waves of this world come up, we are not going to be wavering.

We're going to know the truth. And when things come up that try to knock us off, we're going to know where we stand. Back to the passage in Philippians in verse 9.

Paul goes further. So we're supposed to meditate on these things and then in verse 9 it says, Paul is instructing the church that the things that they have learned and received and saw in Paul, they're to do these things.

This is not new things to them. If they were with Paul, they would know these things because they saw it in him. They learned them from Paul because Paul was living them out.

This is discipleship. As believers, we have a responsibility to be Pauls in people's life. To teach younger believers, not necessarily formally, but to study the Scripture and to be that living example that they can see these things in us.

[27 : 10] this past while, I've noticed a mid-observation. This is in our church back at Countryside, but I wouldn't be shocked if it also applies here because I'm sure it's in many churches, that we're starting to have a growing generation gap, that we have those who are in the 60s plus maybe don't know as much about those who are in the 30s, 40s, and younger.

And what I've kind of learned is that with technology and the amount of access of education that many have had who are younger, there's a lot of knowledge of knowing things from the younger that maybe the older generation wouldn't have that same knowledge, but they have wisdom that us younger ones don't.

In the book of Titus, Paul talks about how we are to disciple. It's not a new idea to disciple people.

Jesus commands it in the Great Commission as well. If you read in Titus chapter 2, starting in verse 2, we read, that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, and in patience.

The older women, likewise, should be reverent in behavior, not slanders, not given to much wine, teaches of good things. They are to admonish the younger woman to love their house husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

[28 : 36] Likewise, exhorts the young men to be sober-minded in all things, showing yourself to be pattern of good works and doctrine, showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound in speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

And there's other scriptures as well, that we are, the older are to teach the younger. And I wonder how many of us would be so much further along if we had an older man in our life to build into us.

And guess what, middle-aged men, there's always someone younger than you too. And guess what, young men, there's always someone younger than you too. You go and say, yeah, those older people.

No, there's someone younger. There's someone younger that we can be building into as well. But how does it start?

It starts with how we live. Are we meditating on things that are true, things that are just, things that are lovely, things that are good report? Are we living that out that the young men in our life can see that that's how we're living?

[29 : 52] And as we are, they're asking questions that we can be teaching them what it means to live the Christian life, what it means to be living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. There are many scriptures that speak on the importance of keeping focus on God's Word and the great benefits of doing that.

I'm not saying it's simple or it's easy to do. I'm not saying, okay, now go from here and always have these thoughts that are going to be true, never have a thought that's not impure or things like that. That's much easier said than done.

Is it possible? Absolutely, through God's power. Is it a battle? Absolutely, because we are still living in the flesh. We have a constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit, but we know the truth and the truth sets us free.

It is a continual sanctifying process. And also note, like I shared at the beginning of this message, these instructions are to the church, to those who have faith in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit is dwelling in them.

And having thoughts that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, they are not those that save a believer, an unbeliever. It is only through the finished work of Jesus who paid for our sins on the cross that we can ever have eternal life.

[31 : 13] Romans 10 says that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For the scripture says whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew or Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon him.

For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. It is through Jesus that we are saved. This is a message to the church saying, okay, now that you have salvation, the Spirit's living on you, this is how you are to walk.

So what can we take from this passage in Philippians? First you have to understand of where we live. We live in a world that's full of garbage. We live in a world that is not these things.

It is not true. It is not lovely. It is not just. It is not of good report. It is not noble. It is frivolous and meaningless of things that the world focuses on. But we need to know that we have, if we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we can know what the truth is.

[32 : 26] Years ago, I worked for a children's ministry called Child's Evangelism Fellowship. And what we do, we'd go around from town to town and backyard to backyard, church, reserve, wherever they'd open a door to us and we would sing songs to these children.

We would share the gospel of these children, share missionary stories to these children. And there's one song that we sang with the children quite often called Garbage In, Garbage Out. And this is what the song lyrics say.

It says, What goes in will come out. It's a truth we cannot doubt. With our voices we will shout garbage in, garbage out. There's a power we can receive if we will only just believe.

This is what it's all about. What goes in will come out. We cannot fill our minds with wrong. We gotta have a faith that's strong. And when we stand for what is right, we feel his power, we feel his might.

And as I think of those lyrics as well, it's true that what we put into our minds, what we allow to come into our minds, what we allow to have on our phones, what we allow to have going into our earbuds, what we allow to have going in, that is what's going to fill our minds and that is where, really, that's where everything begins.

[33 : 44] It begins in our minds as it goes and penetrates into what we'll do with it, what the flesh wants to do with it or what we're allowing the spirit to do with it. For those of us who have received the gift of salvation through Christ's death and resurrection, what are we allowing to go into our minds?

We need to continually go to the word of God for what is true, what is right, what is pure, what is just and what is lovely and what is a good report. This is our only source of truth.

For those who do not know Christ as their Savior and Lord, know that he is calling each of us to lay down our lives as a living sacrifice. Once we have that relationship with God through the power of his Holy Spirit, he will enable us to have thoughts that are of this way.

Let's close in prayer. Father God, we thank you for this morning. Thank you that you desire for us to live lives that are pleasing to you, live lives that are making others curious about why we live the way we do, that we can be an example to those around us of the work that you have done in us.

Thank you that it is not through our strength that we do these things but it is through the prompting of your Spirit as we continually to grow in our relationship with you. Lord, we thank you that we have this power to say no to what the enemy wants us to give in to.

[35 : 12] We thank you that we don't have to fill our minds with garbage, that we can fill our mind of things that are true, things that are noble, things that are right, things that are just. Lord, help that to be our heart's desire. Lord, I pray for this church and Lord, I pray that you continue to be with the leadership here and as they grow as a church and as they fellowship together, that they would have a desire to reach into their community that they can understand of the work that you desire to do.

Praise in Jesus' name. Amen.