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**“Your Mind Matters”  
(Philippians 4:8-9)  
Pastor Peter Yi  
January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Introduction:**

For quite some time now, in public circles such as the university and the media, Christianity has taken a bad rap as being logically inconsistent, irrational, and suited for those who need an emotional crutch. It's often seen as fanatical. They state that one cannot truly be an intellectual and a Christian at the same time. To be a Christian means you are biased, you've lost all objectivity, and you have an agenda...so you can't be trusted. Which is funny because no one can be truly objective. In addition in academia, it's assumed one cannot be a respected scientist or scholar and also be a Christian. Why? Because of an assumption that religion falls in the category of the irrational, the unscientific, even the superstitious or mythological.

Unfortunately, partly why people have this negative view of Christianity is because of Christians. There are individual Christians and whole groups of Christians who are essentially anti-intellectual when it comes to their faith. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the first group that really stumbled in terms of this anti-intellectual approach to faith was the fundamentalists. They decided to disengage from the secular universities and assume a fortress mentality. More recently the group that has perpetuated the anti-intellectual movement are the charismatic churches. They are so focused on the physical and spiritual manifestations of the faith such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, or ecstatic spiritual experiences that basically their brand of Christianity is a come and feel or come and experience type of Christianity. It is definitely not telling people to come and think.

So a lot of these things that have occurred in history have an impact on the way we not only view Christianity, but more importantly practice it. And the fact that most of us here are Koreans means that generally speaking, our brand of Christianity has definitely been more emotional than intellectual.

I think you all know where I'm going with this...but let me make something clear. I am not trying to promote an emotionless, stagnant religious expression. That would be the last thing I would desire. Christianity involves our whole person. Like we've spoken about before, Christianity's view of man is that we are fully physical, fully spiritual, and fully emotional beings. To be missing any one of these components would cease being human. So again, I am not trying espouse a dead emotionless spirituality.

What I am trying to get at in this sermon is that I think many Christians are not really sure what role the mind plays in their spirituality. You know, most people engage their minds all week long. We are called to be at our sharpest at work trying to solve a huge problem. We are called to diagnose, analyze, strategize, and execute. All of which requires major mental horsepower.

But for many people, and I don't know how they do this, but for many people, the moment they walk into church, they mentally shut down. They disengage from rational thought as easily as flipping a switch. They may think, I've been using my brain all week at work or as a student, and the last thing I want to do when I come to church is THINK! Many of us have said that. So when we read our bibles, which is a mental/spiritual exercise, we don't want to think, we want to feel.

And when we pray, we don't want to think, we want to feel. And we worship at church we don't want to think, we want to feel.

And that's a dangerous and unstable form of Christianity because emotions are unstable. Sure minds can be unstable too, but if our faith comes and goes with our emotions, then you can begin to see how inconsistent and intermittent our faith will be. And some of you know exactly what I'm talking about because that describes your faith when you were younger or it is still describing your faith now, as a fully grown adult.

### **So, what role does our mind play in our spirituality?**

The whole premise of Christianity assumes the use of our minds and intellect. The whole premise of Christianity is REVELATION. Not the last book of the bible, but Revelation meaning, God speaks, God communicates. And communication assumes that letters and words and sentences and thought, all of which use the mind, carry meaning. Christianity is not a come and feel religion. It really isn't. In actuality it's a come, think, and respond to truth that confronts the center of your being religion. So the beginnings of a person's faith require the engagement of our minds.

You know, if you are a person who's more intellectually wired, who's into proofs and truth statements, and historical data and the like, know that Christianity, better yet, God, welcomes that. He welcomes questions and inquiry and skepticism. He's the one who says in his word, "Come, let us reason together."

Also, the scriptures are littered with verse after verse of the use of the mind in the practice and growth of our faith. And many folks don't recognize that so they disengage their minds, instead of turning up the level of mental involvement.

Listen to this verse spoken by Jesus himself.

**Mark 12:30** <sup>30</sup>*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

I believe in this verse Jesus is teaching a couple of things. First, he is giving a lesson on a biblical view of anthropology. He answers the question what is man? He is heart, soul, mind and strength (physical). He is volitional, he is spiritual, he is mental, he is physical. So that's what makes up us humans.

But he says something else too doesn't he? Remember this is the perfect encapsulation of the whole Old Testament Law that, if you're on schedule, you will finish this week. All those commands of diet and cleanliness and morals. All the thou's and thou shalt not's is summed up in one word. Love. Our incredibly personal, intimate and loving relationship with our Creator involves all the elements of what it means to be human, right? So to engage deeply in a love relationship with God will require the use of our wills, our spirits, our bodies and our **minds!** There it is.

Let me take you to another very well known verse.

**Romans 12:1-2** *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* <sup>2</sup> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Now this passage is amazing. Did you catch what Paul wrote in this first verse? He says, “present your **bodies** (physical) as living sacrifices...this is your **spiritual** act of worship.” So here is the coming together of the physical and spiritual.

And then in the next verse he says, that spiritual transformation happens in our minds. Did you catch that? Where does spiritual transformation happen? In our minds. Listen to the verse. “Do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.**”

So immediately you and I should be asking questions like...

1. Is that why I haven't been growing spiritually these days?
2. How do I do that? How do I renew my mind?
3. Exactly what role does my mind play in my spiritual growth?

So for spiritual transformation to happen and happen again and again, our minds have to be involved.

Even when it comes to the activity of the Devil, where do you suppose he will attack us? Sure he can attack us physically as we saw in the New Testament and with the Old Testament saint, Job, right? But I believe the primary place the Devil attacks us is in the mind. That's how it's recorded in the Garden of Eden. He lied and twisted the truth and manipulated Eve. He got into her mind. And that's how the bible refers to the Devil, as the father of lies. Even with each of us, the Devil's primary attack is for you and me to deny the truth of God's word – about what he says about himself, his world, and us. Listen to this verse.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** <sup>4</sup> *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

That's what the devil does. So if that's where the Devil attacks and that's where transformation occurs, then it makes sense that we learn how to engage our minds.

**You know even in our spiritual expression, our worship, we must engage our minds.**  
Look at the following text.

**1Cor. 14:13** *Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. <sup>14</sup>For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup>What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. <sup>16</sup>Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup>For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. <sup>18</sup>I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

*So when we pray, when we sing, when we worship, we have to use our minds. It goes back to the Mark passage in loving God w/ all our heart soul mind and strength.*

**So now we come upon today's text**, where Paul shows us what we are to do with our minds. In some eastern religions the goal is to empty your mind, to think of nothing and in your thinking of nothing, you will reach a certain spiritual state. But practically speaking, I think that's incredibly

hard to do. When do we ever think of nothing? When do we ever stop thinking? Even when we sleep our minds are doing something.

And that's not the way God prescribes for us to grow in our knowledge and experience of him. If anything, for Christians, it's filling our minds with the things of God. This is what Moses taught us. This has been the standard method for centuries.

So here's what we are to specifically do.

**ESV Philippians 4:8-9**

*<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

In this text, Paul gives us a list of six things that we are to think about. True, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. And then a blanket statement, if there is anything that is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those things.

**Let's briefly go through these six things.**

**True** – a comprehensive word denoting all that is true in thought, disposition, and deed. It's proper to begin with what is true, because, like we said, the Devil wants us to believe lies. And if we cannot begin with truth that everything that follows will be corrupted. So what is true, must be primarily the truth of God's word.

**Honorable** (or noble) – this word was used in Gk to describe what was serious, sublime, dignified, majestic, or august. It was used often of divinities and holy things such as the temple, law, the Sabbath.

It's a word used of older men, deacons and women by Paul. It is used in a verb form to give respect to elders and teachers of the church.

So what is this exactly? I think of a couple of examples. 1) think of those who are honorable that we can imitate. 2) think of God. 3) think of manners in which we can display a life that is honorable (in front of our friends, spouse, children)

**Just** – especially in relation to the divine standard, and thus fulfilling all obligations to God, others and themselves. It's the word from which we speak about the justice and righteousness of God. The opposite would be unjust, wicked.

Example: You read the newspaper and come across an article describing an injustice in the world. And you see that issue from the eyes of God and you get angry because of this.

Or you come across a situation at work where there is injustice, either something done to you or another co-worker, or an opportunity where you could be unjust to someone. And you think through the situation and discern through prayer how you should act.

**Pure** – this has a nuance of integrity. It can mean chaste (2Cor 11:2; Tit. 2:5), innocent (2Cor 7:11), and 'morally pure, upright' (this last sense used in reference to Christ (1Jn 3:3). Wisdom from above is describe as pure (Jam 3:17), leaders within the Christian community (1Tim 5:22), and the behavior of Christian wives (1Pe 3:2). So here it is purity of thought and

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purpose as well as words and actions. There may be a focus in this word to the area of **sexuality**.

**Lovely** – ‘that which calls forth love, love-inspiring’, and here it has the passive sense of ‘lovely, pleasing, agreeable, amiable’. It is those things that commend themselves by their intrinsic attractiveness and agreeableness.

We can think about the love of God. The growing love we see in individuals within our community. Incredible acts of loving care and devotion. About how we could be more loving.

**Commendable** (admirable) – auspicious, well-sounding, praiseworthy, attractive, appealing. Best is “fair-sounding”, “well-speaking” and implies essential worthiness. “What is likely to win people, and avoiding what is likely to give offence.

If anything is...Excellent (morally) or Worthy of praise

THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS.

Continually think. Ponder, let one’s mind dwell on. (cf. 2Co 10:11) The thinking in order to shape their conduct.

**Colossians 3:2** Set your **minds** on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

**1 Corinthians 14:20** Brothers, do not be children in your **thinking**. Be infants in evil, but in your **thinking** be mature.

In this New Year, as we learn to grow in our inner being, in our inner spirituality, let’s engage our minds. Don’t leave your brains at the door, knowing that w/o our minds we cannot fully know or glorify God in the way he wants.