

# How to Avoid Intellectual Idolatry

## by Chaplain Frank Wm Nagy

### **Logic and Intellectualism is More of a Problem among Christians than Most Think**

Have you ever heard the term *Bible-idolatry*? This is where study of Scripture becomes a god in itself. Scholars who are most skilled become the priests of a skewed legalistic religion. Scholarship becomes so important that the Spirit of the Word is often lost. Scholars, in this situation, forget that “the letter of the Law kills only the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).” Bible principles get elevated above the Living Word, Who daily speaks to all Christians and identifies how to apply his word to our specific situations.

### **Logic Often is an Intellectual’s god**

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall [the prophet] teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? those weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. :10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**

:11 With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. :12 To whom He said, This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

Yet, they would not hear. :13 Instead, the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;

This was so they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The strident voices we hear in Isaiah 28:9-10 are men dedicated to learning. The only problem is they wish to dictate the method they will use to absorb teachings. These mockers reject the message of God’s prophet, as “*too simple and child-like.*” They prefer their own logical approach over what God had spoken. Yet, God was not about to bend to satisfy their prideful, worldly wisdom. God adds insult to their injured feelings in verses 11-12. He will not stop at speaking truths simply, but use additional foolish means to speak to this people. He will continue to call them to rest, yet they will not hear. They have so preferred their own way of doing things they will keep their own way of wisdom. The results? They will miss the things of God so badly, that they will be destroyed.

### **Jesus had a Couple of Words for Idolatrous Intellectuals of His Day**

Matthew 15:8 This people draws near me with their mouth. It honors me with their lips; but *their heart is far from Me.* 9 ***They worship Me in vain, teaching commandments of men, as doctrines.***

John 5:39 Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life. These testify of me, :40 yet you will not come to me, that you might have life.

### **Man's Limited Intellect Cannot, in Itself, Grasp the Things of God**

Psalms 62:9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and *men of high degree are a lie*: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether *lighter than vanity*.

Proverbs 12:8 A man shall be commended according to his *wisdom* [*"intelligence"* JPS]: but he that is of a perverse heart [*"distorted understanding"* JPS] shall be despised.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has set the world in their heart, so **no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.**

Isaiah 5:21 Woe to those wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

### **In Their Blindness to God, Men Like to Develop Their Own Wrong Answers to Life**

Isaiah 66:3 ...Yes, they have chosen their own ways and *their soul delights in their abominations*.

Romans 10:3 They, being *ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness* and have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 4:17 ...Other Gentiles walk, in *the vanity of their mind*, 18 Having their *understanding darkened*, being alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them, because of *the blindness of their heart*....

2 Timothy 3:7 [Some are] *ever learning*, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the **truth**.

### **Men Readily Go By Appearances Rather Than Following What is Right and True**

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which *seems right* to a man, but the end of it is the way of death.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with *vain words* for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience.

### **Even When Intellectuals Deign to Learn and Teach What God's Word Says...**

#### **Look How Some of Them Do It**

Matthew 15:8 [God was quoted in Isaiah as saying,] "This people draws near Me with their mouth. It honors Me with their lips; but *their heart is far from Me*. 9 **They worship Me in vain, teaching commandments of men, as doctrines.**"

### **Some Small-Minded Intellectuals Exalt Their Own Interpretive Powers**

#### **They Impose Their Criticisms on How God Acts and Speaks**

Isaiah 5:19 [Woe to those] that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it. Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near. Let him come, so we may know it!

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall [the prophet] teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? those weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. :10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**

:11 With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. :12 To whom He said, This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing.

Yet, they would not hear. :13 Instead, the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;

This was so they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken....

Some scholars seem to treat the Bible like some theoretical hobby, or dabble in an archeological study of ancient history rather than earnestly seek out the truth to find God as He really is. God is not pleased with this as a long-term approach. He wants us to study the word to get to know him and then apply ourselves to that relationship. To do else is to treat Holy Scriptures like any other book instead of fully respecting it as God's word and fully respecting him as the King of the Universe.

#### **How to Fix This Wrong Attitude:**

Isaiah 28:14 So hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men, that rule this people in Jerusalem.... 22 Now do not be mockers, lest your bands be made strong...

#### **Contrast Man's Ways of Gaining Wisdom and God's Way of Granting It**

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean unto your own understanding. :6 In all your ways acknowledge him and He shall direct your paths. :7 Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the LORD and depart from evil.

Those not practicing the words of Proverbs 3 will find themselves going their own way. If we remain in charge how can God be first?

#### **How to Get This Right Kind of Knowledge to Act in Ways God Calls Wise**

Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; :2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding;

:3 Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding;

:4 If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures;

:5 **Then shall you understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.**

:6 **For the LORD gives wisdom. Out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.**

:7 He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous. He is a buckler to those that walk uprightly.

:8 He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints.

:9 Then you shall understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity. Yes, every good path.

:10 When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul;  
:11 Discretion shall preserve you, understanding shall keep you.

### Seek God's Mind

We saw how the mockers of Isaiah's day thought wisdom was to be received:

Isaiah 28:10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**

Yes, God's Word does say study to show yourself approved... (2 Timothy 2:15). But even here in 2 Timothy the concept of "rightly dividing the word of truth" refers to a spiritual *discerning, comparing spiritual truths with other spiritual truths*, not comparing the things and ways of God to the things and ways of the world.

God says his thoughts and ways to receive them are thoroughly different from the ways of the world:

Isaiah 55:8 "For *my thoughts* are not your thoughts, neither are your ways *my ways*," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are *my ways* higher than your ways, and *my thoughts* than your thoughts."

Bob Mumford once gave a prophecy that started with the quotation of the above passage, but went on further:

"*My thoughts* are not your thoughts, neither are your ways *my ways*," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are *my ways* higher than your ways, and *my thoughts* than your thoughts..."  
"But this ought not be my people for I have given you *the mind of Christ!*"

This prophecy tests out as a word of truth, for 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 bears the same basic idea:

1 Corinthians 2:9 As it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things God has prepared for those who **love** him." <sup>10</sup> God has revealed them to us by his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things. Yes, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> What man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man in him? even so the things of God no one knows, but the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, so we might **know** the things freely given to us by God. <sup>13</sup> These are the things we speak about, not in the words man's wisdom teaches, but what the Holy Ghost teaches, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. <sup>14</sup> The natural man does not receive things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, for they are *spiritually discerned*. <sup>15</sup> But he, who is spiritual, judges all things, while he himself is judged by no man. <sup>16</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" Yet, we have *the mind of Christ*.

### **Apply the Wisdom Revealed in the Message of Jesus Christ**

1 Corinthians 2:16 “Who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?”  
Yet, we have *the mind of Christ*.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. :19 For it is written, I will destroy *the wisdom of the wise*, and will bring to nothing *the understanding of the prudent*. :20 Where is the *wise*? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has God not made *the wisdom of this world* foolish? :21 In **God’s wisdom** He saw to it that the world not know God by *the world’s own wisdom*. **It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**

### **Ways to Get God’s Mind**

1 Corinthians 2:11 ...The things of God no one knows, but the Spirit of God.

If the things and wisdom of God are only known by the Spirit of God, we need to submit more to being filled with the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 5:18 ...Be [continually] being filled with the Spirit.

When we are more full of the Spirit, we will naturally be filled with more of God’s mind!

One can only share what one has received, yet Paul says Christians all have received the Mind of Christ. We have received the Spirit and so should have the expectation that, as we flow in the Spirit, we will have access to God’s thinking to apply to the situations in which we find ourselves.

This flow of wisdom is limited only by the application of our faith. We are told to ask God for wisdom believing He will richly supply it (James 1:5).

Expect that wisdom to overflow, as we are being continually filled with the Spirit, like Jesus foretold in John 7:38-39:

John 7:38 Jesus said of those who would live in the Spirit: “He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” :39 (But this he spoke of the Spirit, which those that believe on him should receive: for the [anointing of the] Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

All Christians believe Jesus has ascended, returning to his rightful place of glory. So need we remind you the anointing he spoke of is now available to all Christians?

### **Do What Jesus Did: Church Show Some Back-Bone**

Philippians 2:5 Let this *mind* be in you, which was in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, 7 yet made himself of no

reputation. He took on the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in the form of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

### **Let God Tell You When You Do Not Have His Mind, Then Turn To Get His Help**

Matthew 16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and scribes, be killed and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "Let that be far from you, Lord. This shall not happen to you."

23 But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan. You are an offense to me, for you do not savor the things of God, but those of men."

#### **Alternate Translation:**

23 But Jesus answered, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me, because *you do not think as God*, but as man (Literal meaning of the Greek text)."

Luke 9:52 Jesus sent messengers before his face. They went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53 Yet, they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, will you have us command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?"

55 But he turned and rebuked them, saying, "*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.* 56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them..."

### **Be Merciful and Truthful**

Proverbs 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you. Bind them about your neck, write them upon the table of your heart, 4 So shall you find favor and *good understanding* in the sight of God and man.

### **Listen to Reason**

Proverbs 1: 5 A *wise* man will hear, and will increase learning. A man of *understanding* shall attain unto wise counsels.

Isaiah 1:18 "Come let us *reason* together," says the LORD.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near: 7 *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:* and let him return to the LORD. He will have mercy upon him. Our God, will abundantly pardon.

John 14:26 The Comforter, who is *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my Name, shall teach you all things,* and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you.

Hebrews 10:16 This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, *I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.*

### **Call Out to God for Him to Show You His Mind**

Jeremiah 33:3 Call unto me. *I will answer you, to show you great and mighty things you do not know.*

James 1:5 If any of you *lack wisdom*, let him ask God. He gives to all men liberally, and does not look for ways to find fault with them. It shall be given him.

### **Study God's Law**

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the LORD is sure, making *wise* the simple.

### **Submit to God: Let Him Reform Your Thinking**

Isaiah 50:4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to [sustain] him that is weary. He wakens [me] morning by morning. *He wakens my ear to hear as the learned.* 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither did I turn back.

Chuck D. Pierce offers his advice on how to cooperate with God to receive his mind:

At this critical juncture in history, the Church is in transition. We must evaluate the present "appointed time" and act appropriately. To do that, I believe God is causing our minds to shift in a new way.

***Our thought processes can deceive us***, but they cannot escape the reality of God. This is how critical thinking works: It causes us to become responsive to a purpose or goal. *If we align our thoughts with God's thoughts, we are assured success in the future.*

### **It's Time to Align!**

Just how do we align our thoughts with God's? *To think differently we must realign our desires and allow the Holy Spirit to rule our emotions.* If we don't allow the Holy Spirit to overtake our desires, our minds will not function right. And if we lose our expectation for God to move in our lives, which is a function of desire, we begin to think with a mindset contrary to the way God thinks.

In critical, stressful times, our emotions can often become bruised and our desires tainted, causing us to lose the strength necessary to resist the enemy's plan. However, God is always in the process of restoring and strengthening. When we rely on His strength and not our own—on *His thoughts and strategies*, not ours—then we can persevere.

-- Chuck D. Pierce, **God's Unfolding Battle Plan**, p. 57 f.