

STUDY & REFLECTION

Our intellectual health is developed and built by the thoughts that we dwell on. A couple of principles may be helpful if you are serious about developing and building your mind in the manner the Lord intended when He gifted you with the ability to think. One is connected to technology and computers. It is G-I-G-O, “garbage in, garbage out”. We should not blame nor be surprised by what our laptop produces. It’s most often the reflection of how it has been programmed. A companion principle is “practice makes perfect.” As you are focused and consistent with a subject, you tend to get better and improved results.

The writer of Philippians encourages the readers regarding *how and what they choose to fill their minds with*. **Notice, you can choose what you put on the plate that feeds your mind!** A continual diet of negative, superficial, frivolous things will program your mind and usually produce the same. Paul encourages the readers of Philippians to fill their thoughts with truth, moral, right, pure, and excellent praiseworthy thoughts. In other words, choose to think about and learn things that have some real weight and purpose. Think about subjects that will challenge and change your life. Our intellectual practices feed our souls, which in turn lead to a healthy intellect.

ACTION ITEMS

Take some time to examine your thought life, inventory the nature, level, and quality of the thoughts you usually allow in your mind. How many of them are of the kind of the intellectually healthy thoughts outlined in Phil.4:8? Be honest with yourself, do you practice an intellectually healthy thought life?

INVOLVING OTHERS

Rate yourself on how intellectually healthy you are as it relates to **subjects you think about**.

Rate yourself: 1...3...5...7...10 Based on the guidelines of Phil.4:8. Now invite people that know you the best and are people of genuine faith, how well you practice the healthy intellectual thoughts outlined in our scriptures. Be open to their transparency with you.

DELIBERATE SELECTIVE PROTECTIVE LEARNING Proverbs 4:23

STUDY & REFLECTION

The direction in Proverbs 4:23 is a key one, and one we don't often appreciate. The (KJV) which we are most familiar with may not be the most clear translation. It says, "keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it comes the issues of life." Let's consider it in The English Translation: **Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.**(GNT)

The Hebrew translation of the word, *keep* here is critical to our understanding. The word is properly translated... **guard, protect, watch over**.. It is used of the duty of a trained soldier or sentry, keeping guard duty at his or her post. Their job was to keep constant surveillance and to protect with their lives the ones living within the house or encampment.

The key to intellectual health, wellness and wholeness learned here, is **the awareness and commitment to deliberately and willfully determine what we allow access to our minds.** i.e. what we allow into our minds. Wisdom teaches us that some things must be rejected on face value.

Satan is no fool. He targets the mind. All he wants is free access to what you are thinking about and therefore learning. No wonder the abundance of time, energy, money, great companies allocate and spend to promote their products. How many millions of dollars does it cost to have a 30 second commercial during the Super Bowl. These companies know that if they can gain access to the minds of the consumers, they will justify their spending and increase their profits!

ACTION ITEMS

Time to be honest! Is there a sentry, a guard posted at the entrance of your mind? Too often there is almost free access to our minds, from an early age. From these often unsuspected experiences we have been programmed and unknowingly embrace the wrong things and therefore make incorrect choices. Take some time and reflect to what degree has this happened and if it presently happens to you. How can you properly 'guard' access to your mind?

INVOLVING OTHERS

As you do the action item, you will most likely realize that involving others is critical to evaluating how well your mind is guarded and how you can develop healthy ways to protect your intellectual health and well-being.

STUDY & REFLECTION

How does one build a healthy, well, intellectual lifestyle? In verse 9 of the 4th chapter of Philippians is the key to a healthy, well, intellectual mind. **First, one must be willing to learn...from someone else.** Paul is the Philippians' teacher. Learning is the process of admitting what we don't know. Next, we must submit to someone who can teach us. The teacher will help us train our minds to receive healthy thoughts in order to build a healthy, well, intellect. We must also be open and be receptive to receive the teaching. Receptive learning is the process of listening, embracing, and practicing what we have learned.

The apostle Paul teaches this emphatically in Phil 4:9, "*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice.*"(NIV)

This Biblical principle is affirmed in Acts 8:31 where the Ethiopian eunuch, a rich man, of high distinction, excellent education, noble rank and authority, says to Philip that he cannot learn and understand "unless some man guides me!"

ACTION ITEMS

YOU CANNOT LEARN IF YOU ALREADY KNOW! To have a 'teachable spirit,' one must possess humility, that creates an openness and receptivity, which is a spiritual sign of genuine maturity. In the past, who have been your best teachers? Who feeds your mind now? Identify them. Are there people that God has placed in your life for you to learn from?

INVOLVING OTHERS

You can learn something from everyone! Discuss with your fellowship partners who you learn and continue to learn from.

- Do you share teachers in common?
- Question and discuss as a group whether you all are preparing yourselves so that you can be useful to God to teach others?

DEVELOPING WISDOM: THE CORNERSTONE TO
INTELLECTUAL HEALTH WELLNESS WHOLENESS

Proverbs 4:7

STUDY &
REFLECTION

Our devotional scripture is foundational and essential if we are serious about the Intellectual development that God desires for us. Let's consider it carefully: Proverbs 4:7

- *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.* (KJV)
- *Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.* (NIV)
- *Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do! And with your wisdom, develop common sense and good judgment.* (INSIGHT)(TLB)

The book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon, one of human history's most brilliant minds. Solomon's wisdom was well known during his reign as King of Israel. He first asked God to grant him wisdom to lead the people of God well, which God granted him. However, most people misunderstand the principle of wisdom.

Wisdom is the mature development and application of knowledge. It is the ability to make the right choice at the opportune time. **A key character of wisdom is its consistency.** This teaches us that it is acquired over time and under tutelage (someone's guidance).

The Lord gives wisdom...knowledge...and understanding Proverbs 2:6

Genuine wisdom must be sought. **The prerequisite is a strong, consistent desire to follow and imitate God.** It is manifested by a reliance on God in all aspects of one's life.

ACTION
ITEMS

Since wisdom is so critical, today's action item is best introduced by a scripture:

Prov 9:9-10 *Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (NIV)

Use this scripture as a filter to examine your life. Do you consciously and deliberately seek to please God daily? Are you driven to honor and obey Him daily? Are you growing in wisdom by being instructed on a regular basis?

INVOLVING
OTHERS

Since true wisdom is so rarely acknowledged or sought after in our culture, to acquire it group involvement and accountability is crucial. Openly and transparently discuss the importance of wisdom in your group and agree on a simple plan to make it a key part of your lives.

STUDY & REFLECTION

Each of our scriptures in Proverbs presents seeking wisdom, developing intelligence, as an ongoing, life-long pursuit.

- 1:5 says *“let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance.”*
- 15:14 can be translated: *“the discerning heart (always) seeks knowledge.”*
- 18:15 in one translation states, *“Intelligent people are always eager to learn;”*

Wisdom is the result of applied knowledge, and knowledge is gained by instruction and study, on an ongoing basis.

The wisdom that we gain enables us to be used by God for his purposes. What we feed our minds builds our intellectual health. Intellectual health is developed as a person engages in research, critical thinking and reflection on subjects that challenge, while enriching their lives. A steady diet of books, music, film, and people we dialog with can strengthen our intellectual health.

What are the books, periodicals and research articles that you read that help develop you intellectually?

ACTION ITEMS

Intellectual development should not be episodic. Neither does it have to be boring or tedious. This week **read something for fun, then read something that challenges you.** This week search for some intellectual development materials such as **literature, science, art, history, current periodical articles** of interest. Think about and journal on how these materials might be helpful in your spiritual walk with Christ and others.

INVOLVING OTHERS

After reading thought provoking material, engage a family member, co-worker, small group, or friend in dialog about what you have learned.

REVIEW

Philippians 4:8

Philippians 4:9; Acts 8:31

Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 15:14; Proverbs 18:15

Proverbs 4:7

Proverbs 4:23

STUDY &
REFLECTION

Knowing that the scope and depth of this week's scripture will challenge you, review, re-read your notes and refresh your memory regarding the scope of your study.

ACTION
ITEMS

Challenge yourself to actually be accountable for what you have learned these last two weeks about Intellectual Health Wellness Wholeness. **Can you identify at least one important habit that you have discovered or recovered and am willing to embrace?**

INVOLVING
OTHERS

Discuss it with others and listen to their personal reports. Be mutually supportive of each other to make these new found understanding a part of your daily life.