

## “Healthy Minds”, Michael Gatlin, Romans 12:1, January 24, 2016

I'm Michael and I'm one of the pastors here at the Vineyard. My wife Brenda and I, they call us the senior pastors, I think because there's not as many age categories left for us anymore. And we're continuing a series of messages that we've been doing about health in every aspect of our life. We've talked about health in our spirituality, healthy faith, being healthy physically, healthy eating, and today; we're going to talk about healthy minds. And, we're answering and asking the question as we go through this series of messages, “How healthy do we want to be?” So, let me start here. If you were to make a list of the smartest people who have ever walked on our planet, just think about it for a moment. Who would you put on the list? The smartest people ever; who would you put on the list.

For some of us, we might put somebody like a current really successful leader, like somebody like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs. You might put political leaders; you might put scientific leaders; people who are solving problems. There are so many brilliant people on the planet today who are solving some pretty intense health and economic problems. You might go back a little bit and you might list like Einstein or someone else. My mind just went blank; I'm obviously not on the list. You might list Stephen Hawking; you might go way back to Greek philosophers, Aristotle or Plato.

I mean, you could go a lot of different directions, but here's the deal: if you weren't sitting in church on a Sunday morning, it would be pretty remarkable if anybody put Jesus' name on the list as one of the smartest people who has ever walked on our planet. There's an understanding of Jesus today, even in churches, that says, “Jesus is nice, but he's not really that smart.” Maybe because he never lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – I mean, he could be God, but has he ever played Minecraft? Like, if he was around today, would he even have an app? I mean, how does that even work? Probably a profile page on some social media. There's a true significant fact in our culture, among Christians and non-Christians alike that automatically disassociates Jesus from someone of brilliance or intellectual capacity. Hardly anybody looks on him as especially well-informed or brilliant, or smart. Mostly, we look on Jesus as an icon. Even as a religious icon; somebody who is fit for the role of sacrificial lamb, let's say, or alienated social critic, but little more. We might view Jesus as holy, but not incredibly smart, in lots of different ways.

And, that way of thinking really destroys our ability to follow Jesus in every area of our life. When we relegate him to a small part – let's say our faith life – it's like, who wants to be an apprentice to somebody who means well but maybe can't deliver on the promises? Who wants to follow somebody like that, especially in our culture today? Listen. Our commitment to Jesus has to stand on a foundational recognition that he is the one who knows the truth about our lives and also the truth about the universe that we live in. Do you think Jesus would be Lord and not smart? Do you imagine that Jesus would be divine and dumb? When we think about the smartest people who have ever walked on the face of the planet, that's kind of where we list him. Like, could Jesus be the one that Christians say he is, the one we read about in the Scriptures if he were not the best informed, the most intelligent, the smartest person who ever lived? Personally, I'm not sure anybody has ever understood molecular structure as well as Jesus. I mean, he's the one who turned water into wine; that's some pretty serious molecular restructuring. And, Jesus is the one who we read about at the end of the gospel of John who was able to actually walk through a wall and yet still eat fish and hug his friends. Like, how do you do that? The ghosts that we think about can't do that kind of thing; I mean, you never see Casper doing anything like that.

Here's the deal: Stephen Hawking, brilliant man, guesses at the origins of the universe. Jesus did the origins of the universe. There's a difference here. See, we really are talking about somebody who is brilliant. And, being a Christian, being a follower of Jesus, is all about apprenticing ourselves to Jesus. That's really what the word ‘disciple’ means; it's not just a student, it's an apprentice it's somebody who is learning how to live life from him in every sphere of life. I would put out there that not only is Jesus

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himself smart, but he encourages us to love God with all of our minds. There's this great little passage in Mark chapter 12, where a Pharisee is questioning Jesus about how would you sum up the law and the prophets and in verse 29, Jesus answers this way "Hear O Israel, the Lord, thy God is one," he's actually quoting from a couple of passages in Deuteronomy, known as the Shemah, which would be recited by Jewish people, every morning and every night. "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind and with all of your strength."

Today I want to focus on healthy minds and how it is that we love God with our minds. You know, when we're training pastors and leaders in the Vineyard, both in our church and around the country, we actually use a simple, little tool. It's like a tripod or three-legged stool, as we're talking about how to train really healthy, biblically based leaders. And, we talk about knowing, being, and doing as kind of our minds, our heart, and our hands and feet, what we actually do. And, we kind of break it down this way, our minds is learning what we believe and why we believe these things; it's acquiring kind of a really thoughtful, Christian, biblical worldview. And, it's really important to a healthy and flourishing life that we understand this stuff. And then there's the being side where we also cultivate a really deep inner life, developing emotional intimacy with God and other people, understanding how emotional intimacy develops; it's engaging in classic spiritual disciplines or formational spiritual exercises that develop us from the inside-out; it's developing Christ-likeness in every single area of our life. And then, there's the doing, where we actually learn how to do ministry and do leadership. We learn how to live in and use the Holy Spirit's power; how to use the authority that Jesus has passed on to us; it's developing a supernatural lifestyle, receiving answers to prayer and being able to pray for other people for healing, for demonic deliverance. It's growing and hearing and discerning God's voice and developing the courage to do the things that God tells us to do. And so, we want to be intellectually astute; we want to be emotionally together; we want to be full of God's kind of life; knowing, being, and doing the kingdom of God in every sphere of life.

So, today, we're going to focus on the mind. We're going to focus on some of the knowing stuff. And, we're going to use a passage that's been a favorite of mine since about 1977. See, that's why I'm at the end of some of those age categories. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. So, if you have a Bible, why don't you open up to Romans 12: 1 and 2 or access it on your phone which you just used to fill out the survey that you didn't have to put in the basket. Or, grab a Bible; there's lots of them under the chairs there in front of you. Romans 12: 1 and 2. I want you guys to do this and then I'm going to spend the next few minutes unpacking why knowing, why our mind is so important in terms of following Jesus. So, let me pray and then we'll unpack this.

Heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for today; thank you for this community, for the Vineyard. Thank you for all the ways that you grow us and develop. Thank you for the ways that you've created us with really sharp minds. And Lord, would you speak to us today? Would you use this talk, put power on this talk? And, would you give us freedom to really pursue you at an intellectual level as well as at a faith level? Would you grow us in this? In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

Okay, Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Here's what it reads: "Therefore, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is; his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

You know, it's interesting, if you start at the bottom of this and go backwards, Paul is saying, basically, that we can't know, for ourselves or anyone else, God's will, what God wants, until we are transformed by a renewing of our minds. It seems that our minds are right at the center of healthy spirituality; that the way that we think, that the things that we know are right at the center of a healthy relationship with God. Notice what Paul doesn't say. Paul doesn't say that we're going to be transformed by developing close feelings for God; he doesn't say that we're going to be transformed by obeying God's will, by exercising

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our will to obey biblical commands. He doesn't say we're going to be transformed by intensifying our desires for the right kinds of things; he doesn't say we're going to be transformed by fellow Christians; he doesn't say we're going to be transformed by sitting in a Vineyard worship service. All of those things are actually good things. But, that's not how he says we're going to be transformed. He says we're going to be transformed in our minds.

This whole idea of our minds, our knowledge, our wisdom, in the Bible comes up over and over again. It's not a new thing for the apostle Paul. The Old Testament speaks a lot about the place of knowledge and wisdom in life. So, if you go back to the very first biblical book that was ever written, according to historians and people who study that, the book of Job. Chapter 38, "Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up dominions over the earth?" God is rhetorically asking Job as Job is complaining about his situation. God is rhetorically asking him, "Do you know how things work?" To which the answer is, "I don't have a clue." I don't have a clue. That's Job's proper response. Do you know the laws of the heavens? It's like, no, I didn't know that there are any. Have I broken any? Am I in trouble? It's like when you get pulled over by an officer – not that that ever happens to any of you – it's like, do you know what the speed limit is? It's like that kind of thing. God's asking Job, "Do you know the laws?"

As a young man learning to follow Jesus and then, 20 years ago, as a pastor, stepping into that, used to have this little banner that I put on my wall, it followed me from office to office and I don't know where it is anymore, except imprinted in my memory. And, this little banner just simply said this, "God's God and you're not." It was a good reminder for a young guy, right? Young guys tend to think they know everything. It's not just a millennial thing. It's been around for centuries. The young folks tend to think they know everything, everything there is to know. I think we call it adolescence. And, it's like a great reminder that God is God and I'm not. And, I used to remind him of that over and over as I was learning how to be a pastor; things would get really messed up and I'd be like, "Hey God, this is your church, remember? This isn't mine. I didn't want to be here. You need to show up and fix this stuff." Like, how well do we really know what's going on in the universe? And so, we're counseled by the wise folks in the Scriptures, like King Solomon, Proverbs 2, "Make your ear attentive to wisdom. Apply your heart to knowledge. Look for it as for silver; search for it like a hidden treasure." Like, put your back into this thing. There's important stuff out there that you don't know. Listen. Let me sum this up for you a little bit. Christianity, biblical Christianity has never been about religious faith that is detached from real life in some mystical way. Instead, what we find in the Scriptures, is that we are constantly directed toward wisdom and knowledge. And so, even when the apostle Paul writes to the church and prays for them, look what he writes to the church in Colos: "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you," then he tells them what they're praying for, "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all wisdom that the spirit gives. In fact, Paul writes that as we become more like Christ, we're to be made new in the attitude of our minds. It's like, there's this really cool blinding of intellectual ability and faith in God; of Holy Spirit activity and growing in wisdom and knowledge.

These are not like opposite things; these things are together. You don't have to like check your mind at the door when you come into church. In fact, if anybody tells you that that's what you have to do, you're going to the wrong church; you're getting involved in some really wrong place. Think about it. What we have in the Scriptures are profoundly intelligent teachings written by mostly men who were directed by the Holy Spirit and in love with God. It's like, crazy. Human beings, directed by God, in love with God, wrote this incredibly intelligent stuff. It's like, that's what we have in the Scriptures that we can unpack. It's like, faith and a disciplined intellectual life are not natural enemies. In the first century, it was the leaders of that world who thought that the Christians were spending too much time learning. Listen to what Festus says to the apostle Paul – Festus was a Roman leader and he says this after learning about the gospel and all the stuff that Paul's unpacking; he says, "Your great learning is driving you mad." I love that. I don't think great learning drives us mad. I think it's really good that we apply the minds that God has given us to solve the problems that we have in our world today.

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So, Christianity is not just, as some assumes, disconnecting yourself from thinking, from honest, intellectual credibility. Far from it. If you want to be a healthy follower of Christ, engage your mind. And, in doing so, you'll experience a renewing of your mind that's completely transforming. So, knowledge and faith are not opposites; rather, they go together. They fit together well. Our faith is grounded in knowledge. In fact, here's the deal. If your relationship with God feels shallow, don't just try harder to feel more depth, but give yourself to knowing God, to knowing what he's like. I'm going to get to some practical application of that in a minute. If your worship of God feels shallow, then learn what's he's like. Practical example: I'm sitting with my wife, Brenda, an amazing woman. If I said to Brenda, "I love you; I just love so much about you." What if Brenda said back to me, "Tell me what you love about me," and I just simply said, "I don't know, you're just there. You have hair. I love that. It's awesome." Would Brenda feel deeply loved in that regard? No, because my compliments would be so shallow, it becomes meaningless. It's the same with our worship – you've got to dive into stuff. Like, I could begin to explain to Brenda one of the reasons I love her, one of the reasons why it's been such a joy to parent our children with her is, God has given her so much wisdom over the years about how to parent each one of them in the way that God created them. Like, she sees right to their soul. Like, I look at them and they think they're in trouble; Brenda looks at them and they know they're loved, because she sees like way down deep in their soul and then she begins to unpack for me what she sees. And, it helps me be a better father, because I never would have wanted to do this without her. And, I think, medically, biologically, I don't think I could have. See, she's way smarter than me in so many ways.

Like, if your worship of God feels shallow, maybe it's because you don't know much about him. I love J.P. Morlan's quote, "It may be that we have confused the need for a childlike faith with childlike thinking." We pay attention to the content of what we believe; what we believe matters. Discipleship to Jesus is a thoughtful life. And the simple truth is that those who are not very thoughtful about the content of what you believe, will not actually believe very much. C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Christ wants a child's heart and a grown-up's head." I love that. So, over the years, people ask me, "So Michael, what do I do with my doubts?" C.S. Lewis has another great quote, "Learn to doubt your doubts." That's a great quote. A doubt that we have is just a different system of doubt, another system of thinking. For example, if I say, "God loves you," and you say, "Well, I kind of doubt that God loves me," then I'd begin to say, "Well, why don't you begin to unpack that doubt? Why don't you begin to list all the reasons that God loves you? And then, let's begin to doubt those doubts. What if those doubts are not true?" You know, some of us have doubts and we just shy away from something. We wear our doubts like merit badges: "I have doubts about that." Well, great for you. That's awesome. You wouldn't be human if you didn't doubt things. That's not like a merit badge. That's an invitation to learning. It's okay to have doubts, but then let's press into those.

If you have doubts about Christianity, here's what I encourage you to do: Write them all down and then find people who are a little bit further along and ask them if they have the same doubt and if not, why. Begin to have conversations about that. In almost any room you walk into, unless you're a kindergarten teacher, you're probably not the smartest person in the room, and even then it's probably questionable because everything we needed to learn didn't we learn in kindergarten? I mean, they know a lot. Anyway. In most rooms that you walk into, you're probably not the smartest one in the room. What if we began to ask other people about some of these things; what if we began to read some other kinds of books; what if we began to press into some of this? What if you brought your doubts into the open and asked for help? I have found that's incredibly helpful, an incredibly helpful thing. Bring those things with you and press into those. And, don't settle for slogans. Don't settle for Christian clichés. Like, get real answers to your questions. Be a learner and see this as an invitation to grow in your faith.

So, what Paul does here in this passage, is absolutely amazing. What he basically says is, "For transformation of your life through the renewing of your mind, what you need to do is offer your body as a living sacrifice." Do you ever read the Bible and go, "What the heck?" Like, think about this. We're talking about healthy minds and Paul says, if you want to see a renewal of your mind, if you want to see transformation of your life, offer your body. Apparently, the path to transformation of our minds goes

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through our bodies. Does that sound strange to you? That would sound really weird to a first century Roman person who is reading this letter. It would sound incredibly strange to them. They were brought up with Plato's idea that the body was an embarrassing encumbrance. That the body is a tomb imprisons the spirit of a person, which weakens the mind; we're all longing for escape from our bodies. Do you notice today that we still hold onto Plato's; teaching that aren't coming from the scriptures and so we kind of split ourselves into different categories? Like, we have this kind of dualistic thinking about who we are that comes from Greek teaching. And so, like, oftentimes, what we'll say, when somebody is becoming a Christian, we'll say, "Give your heart to Christ." Paul says, no, offer your body as a living sacrifice. It involves all of you, which is a more Hebraic way of looking at how human beings are wired vs. the Greek dualistic way. If I'm getting over your head, just hold on for a minute; I'll get back down to planet earth in a second. But, for those of you that like this kind of stuff, there was your little tidbit to keep on chewing on. Dallas Willard writes this, he was a philosophy professor at USC for a number of years and wrote an incredible book called, The Divine Conspiracy which unpacks the Sermon on the Mount in some pretty incredible ways. If you've never read that, it's a great book. Here's what he says in a book called Renovation of the Heart. He says, "for good evil, our body lies right at the center of the spiritual life."

That confronts that Greek dualism like nothing else. So, when Paul says, "Offer your bodies, what he's really saying is God wants every part of our life. Our public life, our private life; our internal life, our external life; our individual life and our social life. Why is offering our body such a big deal? Our body defines much of who we are; our body is where we live life. You can't live life outside your body. Right? Your body is how you interact with the world. Like, if you want groceries, watching a cooking show for an hour a week isn't going to help you get groceries. Your body has to get into the car and your body has to make it to the grocery store and you have to wrap your arms around some groceries and your body has to take the groceries home and prepare something and stuff them into your mouth. Your body is like involved in the whole thing. Your body is where you live life. So much of what we do in our life is taking care of how our bodies look and how our bodies smell and how our bodies feel; providing security for our bodies.

I have a funny story about taking care of your body. When I first met Brenda and we got married almost 30 years ago, Brenda had all these products on the top of her dresser that I'd never heard of or seen before. I'm a guy. I don't use products. I'd never heard of or seen these products before. Now, she teases me, because I have a product on my dresser. I have multiple kinds of beard oil. It's like, multiple dabs, it glistens. It's cool. This is awesome. Little girls walking up the stairs in Vineyard Kids a few weeks ago said, "Bye Santa," and it's all because of the beard oil. It's so cool. And then, there's little scissors; you can trim your moustache and there's wax and combs. I have product now; who knew what you could do with hair. It's crazy, you should try it. It's really good.

Our bodies are how we interact with the world. And so, how does offering our bodies to God make a difference in our mind. Let me use something really simple to explain it. As a high school and college student, I played tennis almost every day. I loved tennis, so I'm going to use tennis as an example. I want to look at how offering our bodies to God makes a difference, using tennis as an example. Does anybody here play tennis? Okay, so there's like seven of us. So, here's what I want to do: I want you to picture yourself as a novice, beginning tennis player, but you want to learn how to play tennis. So, just put yourself in that mode for a minute. If you want to learn to play tennis well, but you currently aren't very good at it, you currently have very bad tennis habits. You don't even know it, because you're not on the court yet, but the moment you step on the court, you find the ball goes in places you didn't intend to hit it. And, why is the head of the racket so small? And why is it so slippery in my hands? And, why do you guys have to throw it way up high to hit it like that. I just go like that, and hit it over the net like ping pong with a really big court. You're going to find out that you have bad tennis habits and if you want to play well, you need to replace those with good tennis habits. It's why you're not on tour. You need to replace those things. And, where do your bad tennis habits live? They live in your body. Your bad tennis habits live in your body. They live in the grip; they live in your wrist; they live in your elbow. They live in your feet, your position on the court. They live in your elbows. Your bad tennis habits are ingrained tennis

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habits that live in the different parts of your body. It's not figurative, it's literal. You might have some good tennis habits in your shoulders but bad habits in your wrist. And, you fail to hit the ball consistently over the net, it just keeps hitting the net and you go, "Why is there a net in tennis? If we just got rid of the net, this thing would be way easier. There's a blockage in the middle of the court." And so, those who want to engage in good tennis habits. What do you do? Well, clearly, it's not enough to do daily tennis readings. Like, you could get up every morning and you could read some tennis readings. It's not really going to help you improve your game. You can watch inspirational tennis videos. You can watch the Australian Open; you can watch Wimbledon. You can watch it every year and that's not going to improve your game. You can even begin to listen to motivational tennis music. And, it doesn't matter if you listen to the old hymns or the new praise stuff; it's not going to improve your tennis game. If you want to improve your tennis game, what do you have to do? You have to present yourself. You have to present the various parts of your body to a tennis instructor on a tennis court. And, you have to practice what they're saying to practice over and over and over again under the watchful eye of your tennis instructor. And, you're tennis instructor's going to show you, when you're hitting a forehand shot, you have to grip the racket this way; when you're hitting a backhand shot, you have to grab it this way and the knuckles line up here and here; that when you swing, you have to keep your wrist solid; they're going to talk about the position of your feet and they're going to work on everything over and over again. Wrists, shoulders, hips, legs, over and over and over again until, slowly, you replace your bad tennis habits with good tennis habits. It will transform the way you think about the game; it will transform everything.

And, this is a direct application to what we're talking about. Right? So, it's very similar to what Paul wrote about in Romans 6, verse 11, "In the same way, count yourself dead to sin [the bad tennis habits] but alive to Christ Jesus. Do not let [bad tennis habits] sin reign in your body so that you will give way to its evil desires. Do not offer any part of your body to sin, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life. And offer every part of yourself. Offer every part of your body to him as an instrument of righteousness [the way to get good tennis habits]." This is exactly what Paul is saying to do. This is what he's saying in Romans 12, to be a living sacrifice. You put yourself out there. It involves a one-time commitment, yes it does. You have to commit to showing up on the tennis court the first time and saying, "I want to be apprenticed by you." But then, you have to show up every day after that and allow the watchful eye of the coach as they say, "Don't do that; do this. Don't do that; do this. You're doing it wrong." And, you're going to hear it over and over and over again as you do this.

And so, God's not asking for just what you can give him (time, resources, money). What God's asking for is every single part of your being. This gets to be really personal. And so, when you present yourself as a living sacrifice, it involves habitual, repeated exercise in our body, living this stuff out. And then, Paul says that this kind of worship is the only reasonable act of worship; it's the only logical thing to do based on his grace and mercy, which is what the whole first part of Romans, chapters 1-11, is all about. Paul is unpacking how incredibly graceful and merciful God is in so many ways. In fact, he gets to the end of chapter 11 and Paul breaks forth in worship. Look at this, chapter 11, verse 33. He says, "Oh the depths of the wisdom and the knowledge of God." Oh the depths of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. God is immeasurably smart. He knows so much more than we do. "How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out." God has an incredible plan; he has a good plan. "Who has known the mind of the Lord or been his counselor? God doesn't need any of our advice. When we start telling God how things should work, we're generally wrong. "Who has ever given to God that God should repay them?" He also doesn't need our resources; he's incredibly wealthy in so many different ways. And then, I love this, verse 36, "For from him and to him are all things." God is central to everything. He's the center of everything. What keeps everything in orbit in your life is having Christ at the center. You pull him out of the center, everything flies out of orbit. "To him be glory forever, amen." And then Paul says, "Therefore, because of God's mercy, I urge you brothers and sisters, to present your bodies as living sacrifices."

There's that word 'glory' right there in verse 36. "To him be glory forever." What does glory mean? What does glory mean? I think it goes well beyond your team winning the big event. Does anybody have teams that are still playing football today? A couple. There were several Broncos fans in the first service and it

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was so annoying. Hey, if your teams are playing, God bless you. Now I'm just rooting against teams. I have a lot of friends from New England. May they go down in flames (laughter). I'll tell them you clapped. So, here's what glory really means. Glory is the weightiest thing in our life. It's the most important, it's the most supreme; it's the most prominent; it's the first priority in your life; you greatest treasure, your deepest longing, your greatest sources of hope and joy and Paul is saying that that's what God is. Because of everything that he is, because of everything that God has done, God alone is worthy of that place of glory in our lives. And so, we offer our lives as living sacrifices. And, he says, "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So, I'm going to pretend I'm a coach for a few minutes and I'm going to give you some simple tips on how to not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So here are the simple tips:

The first one is nurture an intellectual love of God. It is not easy to not be conformed to our culture, to the society around us. So, nurture an intellectual love of God. Learn everything you can about God; everything you can about his character; everything you can about his story. And, see how your story is just a small part of his greater story. And see how your timeline isn't like this great, long thing, it's more like a pencil mark. Like, that's our timeline. See how it fits into what he's doing. Study what theologians call the attributes of God, like his character qualities.

One of the greatest books I read as a young guy was A. W. Tozer's book, Knowledge of the Holy and it kind of unpacks what God is really like. J.I. Packer's book Knowing God is the same thing in a different format. And then, if you've actually begun to unpack the attributes of God and are looking for something more, I have an old Puritan author for you, Stephen Charnock, a 17<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century, he wrote hundreds of pages on the attributes of God on the existence and attributes of God. He's got like 900 pages on God's holiness. It's like brilliant. Don't read it when you're tired, unless you like sleeping. And then, read the scriptures over and over and over again. Allow God's heart from the Scriptures to be poured into your life so that at some point, your life overflows with his kind of wisdom.

And like, there's a wonderful book, I think it's the last one in the bookstore, called Search the Scriptures and what it is is a chapter-by-chapter study of the Bible. And it's not telling you what it all means. For each chapter of the Bible, it gives you a little bit of background and then it asks you questions. So, first Peter chapter 2: 17. And then you go through and in a journal, you can write this stuff out. It's got little checkmarks next to it for those of you who are kind of anally gifted, you can go through and check off where you left off. It would take you like 3 years to go through the Bible and study it like that. If you've never done something like that, this is an incredible resource for that. If you want something simpler to do, Psalm 23 is one of the coolest little poems in all of Scripture. And, if you want to see your mind get transformed, this is putting your body under the watchful eye of the instructor. Read Psalm 23, put it by your nightstand and read it as the last thing you read every night before you go to sleep and then when you wake up read it first thing in the morning. and then, in 30 days – test me and try this – in 30 days, watch how God begins to transform the way you think.

You want to learn how to follow Jesus well? Engage your mind. Press into this stuff. I like reading books about thinking. Like, I struggled with dyslexia my whole time growing up until somebody handed me a book that was fun to read and it was the first book I read and it was like my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of college. And then I learned to read and I never graduated anything since. I don't know what the deal is. But, one of the books someone gave me was this old book from a French priest named Ernest called The Art of Thinking. This is a brilliant book. Read books on critical thinking; read books on various subjects. Like, if you want to grow your mind, press into this stuff. Dinet's stuff, in the 1930's was like the bestselling stuff in America and some of it has practical application for today. He talks about how the soul-destroying habit of saying something when you have nothing to say and how that withers your soul. Isn't that like all Facebook is? An opportunity to say something when we don't have anything to say? To show off our non-critical-thinking skills? Isn't that all that is? No wonder, we're struggling. Our souls are being destroyed by these habits.

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And then, learn to learn from people you agree with and people you don't agree with. Learn from biblical sources and non-biblical sources. Listen to John Stott, Christian theologian, scholar. "Don't neglect your critical faculties. Remember that God is a rational God who has made us in his image. God invites and expects us to explore his double revelation, in nature and in Scripture and then apply ourselves to that." It's brilliant the way that God has created the world. And then, the way the world is, the way creation speaks a lot of who he is. Or, listen to John Wesley, "To imagine none can teach you except those who are themselves saved from sin is a very grave mistake. Give not place to it for a moment." See, you can learn about God by listening to Van Morrison. It's awesome. You can learn about God from almost every human being. It's almost like hunting for treasure. We can learn from them. Do you realize we can learn from people who vote differently than you? Like a lot. It's crazy. Here's the deal: If you only hang out with people who already agree with you and if you only read books that you already agree with, you're just fortifying your position; you're not learning anything. And I am so sick of the polarization in our world today. We polarize on so many different things. And, here's a great way to start. Find the things you share in common and that you can agree about. We're both human and we like oxygen. That's a good place to start. Food is a good thing.. do you understand what I'm talking about? Join a small group here at the Vineyard and hang out with people who are nothing like you and watch how God grows healthy community between people who are really different from one another. And then, I have a few more things.

Embrace honesty. Be honest about what you believe and don't believe and the specific arguments. God is not honored when we use bad arguments to try to make a decent point. That is not honoring to God at all. So, learn how to make a good argument for the things that you believe and, just because we disagree about little things doesn't mean we have to disagree about everything.

And then, embrace wisdom. And, I use the word embrace on purpose, because you're not going to get it by dancing around it; you need to run towards it which is what Solomon says back in Proverbs 2, "My son [and I would add daughter], if you accept my words and store up my words with in you, turning your ears to wisdom and your heart to understanding, indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, if you search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God." Run towards this stuff, press into it.

And, as you do so, embrace humility. This is where the word 'worship' comes up. It requires humility to bow down in worship. I think the most healthy minds are those that are bowed down toward God. Those are the most healthy minds. And, if you want a healthy mind, worship is one of the most important things you can give yourself. We seek the truth in openmindedness, being critical of our own selves and not defensive; admitting that we're finite and willing to learn from our critics.

And then, lastly, be careful of GIGO. Ever heard of GIGO? No computer programmers in the room, huh? It's an old 1970's computer programming language. You didn't even know that they had computers then. It means "garbage in, garbage out" acronym. What you put in, you're going to get out. If you're putting in crap into the computer program, it ain't going to work. And, here's the deal, if you're putting crap into your life, that's what you're going to get out of it. Like, God has wired us and this is the way it works.

Don Williams, great Vineyard pastor, summed it up this way, "You become what you worship." So, whatever you give glory to, whatever you have at the center of your life, that's what you become like. If you give yourself to sex, if that's like your primary aim in your life and you're just watching porn all the time, eventually, you will become a pervert. If you just give yourself to greed, and all you want is more, more, more, whatever it takes to get it, you will become a very broken, stingy miser and everybody you meet, you'll think they're just out for your money. You become what you worship. That's GIGO; that's garbage in, garbage out. So, be careful of what you put in your mind, because whatever you put in your mind lives there forever. And, our actions, Proverbs 23:4, "So as a person thinks, so they are." So, why do we put the Scriptures into our minds, Psalm 119, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." It's like, one of the reasons I put this stuff into my mind is I'm trying to give up my bad

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tennis habits. I want good tennis habits. I want righteousness. Whatever I put into the reflective center of my being is the raw material of my actions. Paul writes this in Galatians chapter 6, verses 7 and 8, he says, "Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. Whatever you sow to the flesh, you will reap to the flesh and whatever you sow to the spirit you will reap in the spirit," that there's this law of planting and harvesting in our lives; what we put into the mind we're eventually going to get out. The life of the mind is incredibly important, incredibly valuable, and, I believe that God wants our worship with all of our minds, that we're supposed to put everything into that. I don't know about you, but when you do that, when I do that, I see the link of Christ flowing out. That's the kind of person I want to be. Who is in with me? Let's stand up.

So, heavenly Father, thank you for your presence here today. Thank you for your deep, deep love for us. Thank you for your grace and your mercy that you extend when we flub it up over and over again. Thank you for that. And, Holy Spirit, I ask that you would encourage us in our minds, that you would encourage healthy, critical thought and interaction with other people, that you'd encourage great arguments. That we'd be able to discuss really intelligently without putting other people down with stupid stuff. Could we worship you with our minds, our hearts, our soul, our strength; every single part of us.

One of the things we like to do here at the Vineyard is pray for one another. I'm going to invite you to come forward for prayer. God is speaking to so many of us in different ways and I think he wants to encourage us and grow us. These guys are going to lead us in some worship and I want to invite you to come get some prayer here today. For some of us, our minds, there's a few of us in the room here today, our minds are racked with anxiety. I didn't have time today to cover anxiety or depression; I didn't have time to cover mental illness. There are so many things that go on in the realm of our minds and I believe that a lot of that is chemical imbalances and I believe that God can even heal that and rebalance things. So, we pray and we go to the doctor. So, if you're racked with stuff like that, if that's destroying you, come up and get some prayer.

And, maybe you're someone here who just never felt that smart. Maybe you're like me and you just didn't read books at all for years and years. I believe God can come bring a love of learning into your life, that he's created you for that. So, we want to pray for one another about that stuff today and especially if you have doubts that are holding you back, about yourself, about God or the people around you, there's so much help that we can have with one another as we press into that. Other than that, these guys are going to lead us in worship. God bless you guys. Thanks so much for coming to the Vineyard today and have a great week.