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DEVELOPING A CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAM FOR
SMALL GROUP LEADERS IN CORNERSTONE
KOREAN CHURCH, ELGIN, ILLINOIS

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DEVELOPING A CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAM FOR
SMALL GROUP LEADERS IN CORNERSTONE
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PREFACE

First of all, I want to thank God for His providence in my life. This doctoral study was difficult for me to continue, yet He was with me throughout this journey. He taught me humility in depending on His wisdom in the process. God put a passion in me and provided circumstances necessary for me to research and write this project.

Second, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my parents and my sister, who supported me with all their hearts. I am grateful for their financial help and prayers. They have been pivotal strong points for me to step forward not only in my ministry, but also in my doctoral study. My father was a great example for my present fatherhood. I greatly miss my father, who passed away before seeing me graduate. I wish to continue to be like him as a father to my children.

Third, I am thankful to my wife for her prayer. She is a strong praying woman. I believe in her and her love. I thank her for her life with me.

Fourth, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Anthony Foster. I am grateful for his sincere advice in writing the project. He helped me to see deeper meaning of the gospel. I appreciate his humility and grace during this project.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to develop and implement a critical thinking program for small group leaders in Cornerstone Korean Church, Elgin, Illinois.

Goals

While Jesus was on the earth, he provoked the religious leaders to think critically.¹ When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath (Matt 12), Jesus talked about rescuing a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath. Then Jesus asked, “How much more valuable is a man than a sheep?” (Matt 12:12). Lawrence Richards comments on this verse: “Jesus seeks basic principles imbedded in God’s Word, His perception shaped by them draws conclusions about what we are to believe and do that simply did not fit the religion of his day.”² The Pharisees failed to think critically about whether or not their current practices were truly based on the truth of the Word.

Believers become accustomed to their practices, yet may not actually lead their lives according to the Word. The Scriptures say, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (1 Cor 13:5a). Richards summarizes this idea:

“Christians constantly need to test their beliefs and behavior by the Word of God.”³

Believers need to think deeply about whether or not their minds and actions are in line

¹Lawrence O. Richards, “Critical Thinking and Christian Perspective,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 17-19.

²Ibid., 19.

³Ibid.

with the Word of God. Without critical thinking based on the Word of God, they may not lead thoroughly biblical lives.

In view of the relationship between believers' thinking and their biblical lives, this project was geared toward developing a critical thinking program to help small group leaders at Cornerstone Church look into their current beliefs and behaviors and transform their lives in accordance with the Word. This project sought to meet four goals.

1. Develop a four-week class that covered the biblical basis for the significance of critical thinking in Christian lives and explained critical thinking techniques.
2. Create a critical thinking questionnaire to help in the initial practice of critical thinking.
3. Increase the knowledge of critical thinking among four small group leaders through the four-week class.
4. Facilitate the initial practice of critical thinking among four small group leaders.

For the four-week class, the biblical-theological foundation for critical thinking was established and the components of critical thinking were studied, such as the attitudes of critical thinkers, awareness of one's context, assumptions, perspectives, and critical thinking techniques. This goal was measured by the supervisor of the project who used a rubric to evaluate content/biblical faithfulness, structure/logical flow, length, helpfulness, and applicability.⁴ The four-week class's curriculum was reviewed by the supervisor of the project. This goal was considered successful when a minimum of 90 percent of evaluation indicators are at the sufficient or above levels.

The second goal was to create a critical thinking questionnaire to help one's initial practice of critical thinking. The goal was also measured by a rubric to evaluate the workability and effectiveness of the questionnaire.⁵ The goal was deemed successful when 90 percent of evaluation indicators were at the sufficient or above levels.

⁴See appendix 1.

⁵See appendix 2.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of critical thinking among the four small group leaders through the four-week class. The small group leaders participated in four consecutive classes on Friday nights. Through those classes, the small group leaders grasped the meaning of critical thinking, discovered its importance for their Christian journey, and learned particular critical thinking techniques. The goal was measured by a grading rubric,⁶ which was taken before and after the four-week class in order to gauge the small group leaders' comprehension of critical thinking, its meaning, its significance, and its techniques. This goal was deemed successful when every group leader scored a "3" or above in all questions in all the categories.

The fourth goal was to facilitate the initial practice of critical thinking among the four small group leaders. In addition to learning about critical thinking, the small group leaders needed an opportunity to practice and develop a habit of critical thinking. The small group leaders were given a critical thinking questionnaire. They were encouraged to repeat the practice of critical thinking by using the same questionnaire two times over a period of two weeks. The questions helped them critically think about their thought process and daily matters.⁷ The goal was measured by an interview,⁸ which was conducted the week after each time the small group leaders completed the questionnaire. In the interview, the small group leaders were individually asked to share their findings and personal testimonies in terms of their answers to those questions in the critical thinking questionnaire. This goal was deemed successful when every small group leader completed the questionnaire once out of two opportunities and could articulate how they used the critical thinking questionnaire to intentionally apply critical thinking in their Christian lives during that two-week period.

⁶See appendix 3.

⁷The questions were developed together with the four-week class curriculum.

⁸See appendix 4.

Ministry Context

These goals were accomplished as the project was implemented at Cornerstone Korean Church, Elgin, Illinois. As of fall of 2014, the church had 50 members who were mostly 50 and above. It had a few young adults (30s and 40s) and no members in their 20s. Most church members regularly attended Sunday services and professed that they have been Christians for years. Some of them had a good knowledge of the Bible. However, they showed a tendency to cling to church traditions they had built over time. In conversations, they shared their “concerns” about the church, e.g., how the pastor needed to administer the baptismal ceremony, communion, and visitations, and even how the pastor’s wife and children should behave in the church. Moreover, they wanted church growth, but had not been involved in the evangelism that the church had done for several years.

In late 2014, the senior pastor and I discussed some challenges in Christian life and came up with one critical issue; being a true follower of Christ. They concluded that the church had focused too much on growth in number for several years. After several meetings, the pastors were determined to change the direction of the church. The lead pastor began to deliver sermons on the fundamentals of being a Christian and being a biblically-based church. He emphasized more intrinsic matters in the Christian life. The pastor’s sermons can be summarized in one Bible verse, James 2:17: “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” The lead pastor urged members to actively participate in true Christian lives and grow in the image of Christ (Eph 4:15). This challenge led to the necessity of church members’ critical thinking: examining their thoughts and behaviors according to the Word of God, making biblical decisions for their actions, and leading their lives accordingly. This critical thinking necessitates church members’ continual engagement in the process of renewing their minds (Rom 12:2). Through this mind renewal, they may acquire new perspectives and see certain unbiblical

thoughts in their current Christian journey.⁹ The pastors wanted church members to actively engage in this process so that they had an opportunity to put off their old thoughts and behaviors and seek to put on godly thoughts and behaviors instead (Eph 4:22-32). In exercising this phase of their faith journey, they would also grow and become mature Christians (Heb 5:14).

Most of the church members were educated in Korea under Confucian influence where there is an emphasis on man's subordination to authority¹⁰ and the dignity of common man is relatively neglected. Those members that were in Korea before they came to the United States received an education completely in a "banking" and top/down mode.¹¹ That kind of education was prevalent in theological education as well. The previous pastors of the old generation in Cornerstone Church had been influenced by Confucian culture and such banking mode of education. They did not train church members to stand independently strong in order for them to live out the Word of God in their daily lives. One of the disadvantages of this cultural aspect is that they were being driven by what other "big voices" said without critical biblical thinking. They passively received "information" from the pulpit. As a result, they were not willing to become the subject of their "faith-act" and did not engage themselves in the critical examination of their daily lives according to the Word of God. Instead, they treasured the church

⁹James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 714.

¹⁰Confucius said, "If the gentleman acquires the Way, he loves man; if the small man acquires the Way, he is easy to command." C. Huang, *The Analects of Confucius: A Literal Translation with an Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 166. Confucius finds the origin of subordination, a part of men's main social function, from their filial duty in their family. For Confucius, as expressed in the Five Moral Bands, subordination is natural as a son obeys his father in his family. The Five Moral Bands refers to a universal virtue underlying the relationships between father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, elder and younger brother, and between friends. Lionel Giles, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Heritage, 1970), xxxi-xxii.

¹¹In banking mode of education, students are viewed as empty and needing to be filled by teachers. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1973).

traditions that they established and practiced over time, and those traditions became the norms for their judgment.

The questions at that point were, “Do they know where they spiritually are?” and “Are they critically examining their present perspectives/assumptions upon which they speak and act?” (2 Cor 13:5 and 1 Thess 5:21). After hearing church members conversing with one another, one of the pastors wondered how much they had been critically conscious of how they spoke and behaved as Christians. He noticed several times that even in his presence, church members were not talking as they were supposed to as Christians. He thought that how and what they spoke would not be Christian at all if he had not been with them. One time, one of the elders mentioned that the emphasis in the church should be not only what it means to be saved and baptized, but also what a “life” of the saved and baptized is supposed to be. It was easy to observe that church members were not seriously thinking about their actions and even their thinking according to the Bible. The urgent matter, therefore, was that they needed to engage themselves in a true Christian life and work out their salvation with fear and trembling, that is, to think, speak, and act critically in accordance with the Word.

Rationale for the Project

Not many at Cornerstone Church were conscious of what and how they thought. However, every believer needs to think critically, conforming to the Word of God. Pastors cannot always keep up with the church members’ daily faith journey with what and how to think. Church members should be taught so that they can stand by themselves with the Word of God as they live out their faith in their daily life. Therefore, education in the church trained the church members, to some degree, to independently think according to the Word. Believers can be swayed by many worldly temptations, and if they are not trained to critically think in accordance with the Word, they will easily fall down into temptations and practice unbiblical thinking and commit sins. Therefore, this project sought to develop a critical thinking program that helped small group leaders

understand the importance of critical thinking and also developed an initial critical thinking tool for them to use to initiate critical thinking.

There were several anticipated benefits to be reaped when this critical thinking program was implemented for the church's small group leaders. First, the small group leaders learned that their thinking is significant in their Christian journey. They became conscious of what and how to think biblically. The Bible says, "Love your God with all your mind" (Matt 22:37), which indicates that every thought is significant. Pastors cannot guide the church members' thinking every moment of their lives, but the church members are the ones who need to critically think to defeat the enemy in the journey.

Second, leaders were able to pinpoint some church traditions or conventional ways of thinking and actions that were not beneficial to the church and daily Christian lives. People did not know what they are doing from time to time. Without the knowledge of doing so, people are often victims of their thinking. They were not distinguishing between what is biblical and unbiblical because that had been practicing the same things over and over again. The project helped the leaders to re-think their current Christian lives and reduce such a possibility of unbiblical thinking and actions

Third, the small group leaders got involved in their spiritual transformation by engaging in their progressive sanctification. The project helped them to be reflective of their thoughts and actions and seek to find alternative ways of thinking and actions. Continued use of the critical thinking tool may help them develop a habit of their critical thinking. Subsequently, they will gradually form a godly culture in and among themselves and impact other church members as well.

The issue of neglecting thinking in the Christian journey made the project necessary. Many Christians say, "I know the facts and stories in the Bible, but I seldom connect its teachings with my life,"¹² which is a frequent outcome of "content-oriented

¹²Stephen Snyder, "More Than Content," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 21.

instruction.”¹³ In “More Than Content,” Steven Snyder argues that Christian educators are not successful in teaching Christians how to think and why they should use thinking strategies to work through biblical content.¹⁴ Christ’s teaching provides clear examples of replacing content-oriented instruction with thought-provoking discussion that challenges its listeners to think critically about their heart attitudes and actions.

When Jesus was on earth, the average Jewish man or woman did not think for himself or herself, but relied on those who claimed, by right of superior knowledge, to sit on Moses’ seat and served as Israel’s contemporary lawgivers.¹⁵ Jesus held these leaders accountable for more than their outward signs of devotion and knowledge, however, by challenging the Pharisees to think critically. He pointed out that Pharisees broke God’s commands for the sake of keeping traditions.¹⁶ He also contrasted the pharisaical doctrine of *Corban* with God’s command to honor their parents.

Using parables and stories, Jesus posed thought-provoking questions. He stimulated listeners’ thinking and led them to think critically about their actions by bringing them out of the box. Horne claims that “Jesus expected his students to search their minds and hearts in relation to his teachings and to consider the realities of life.”¹⁷

As the body of Christ, Cornerstone Church needed to follow the example of Christ who said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me (John 4:34).” The primary concern of Cornerstone Church is to help individual church member to become a true follower of Christ as he or she does the will of God in obedience. This project aimed

¹³Snyder, “More Than Content,” 21.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Lawrence O. Richards, “Critical Thinking and Christian Perspective,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 1 (1994): 17.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Herman Horne, quoted in Robert W. Pazmino, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 73.

to help, first of all, the leaders in the church with their individual growth in faith by helping them critically think about their beliefs and actions and to live earnestly in accordance with the Word of God.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Critical thinking. For the purpose of this project, *critical thinking* is to examine one's thinking in a life situation, seeking and identifying unbiblical assumptions and behaviors, looking into alternative perspectives and implications in accordance with the Word of God, and integrating these findings into his life.¹⁸ The initial purpose of critical thinking is to help the small group leaders in Cornerstone Church to develop a habit of thinking, making decisions, and acting in their daily lives according to the Word of God.

One limitation was that any materials and curricula to be used for developing the curriculum for the project were within my capacity to search. Additionally, the development of the curriculum and the implementation of the project was the fifteen-week time allotment. One delimitation was that the curriculum and critical thinking questionnaire were evaluated by the supervisor of the project. Moreover, the critical thinking class and its questionnaire were delimited to no more than the four small group leaders in Cornerstone Church.

Research Methodology

This project's design helped the small group leaders learn the importance of critical thinking to live out their faith in their Christian journey. As stated, the success of the project was determined by four goals. The first goal was to develop a four-week class that covered a biblical basis for the significance of critical thinking in the Christian life and explained critical thinking techniques. In the first four weeks of the project, the

¹⁸Richard Paul, *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World* (Santa Rosa, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 1995), 20-23; Stephen Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 7-9.

critical thinking Bible lessons were developed for the four-week critical thinking class. These lessons were evaluated on the fifth week by the supervisor of the project, who used a rubric to ensure the curriculum's content/biblical faithfulness, structure/logical flow, length, helpfulness, and applicability.¹⁹

The second goal was to create a critical thinking questionnaire and its instructions for one's initial practice of critical thinking. This critical thinking questionnaire was produced alongside the four-week critical thinking class in the first four weeks of the project. The questionnaire was also evaluated by the supervisor of the project who used a rubric to measure the workability and practicality of the questionnaire.²⁰ Both the four-week critical thinking class and the critical thinking questionnaire were revised in the two weeks following the supervisor's evaluations.

The third goal was to increase knowledge of critical thinking through a four-week class. On the eighth week after revision, the four-week critical thinking class was facilitated for the four small group leaders in the church. The classes were held on Friday nights for four consecutive weeks. The class focused on the significance of critical thinking in the Christian life and critical thinking techniques. Before and after the four-week class, the small group leaders were given a test to measure any change in knowledge about the importance of critical thinking and its techniques.²¹ The pre-test was given during the first class, and the post-test was given in week 12 after all four classes were taught. The testing evaluated the progress of the small group leaders in their knowledge of critical thinking. The test after the four-week class had additional questions that asked the leaders' personal thoughts on critical thinking, for instance, if the class motivated them toward the betterment of their thinking and behavioral pattern, and why

¹⁹See appendix 1.

²⁰See appendix 2.

²¹See appendix 3.

or why not, and also if they had developed a thought or feeling about getting involved in the critical thinking process in their Christian journey.

The fourth goal facilitated the initial practice of critical thinking among small group leaders. After the four-week class and the post-test, the small group leaders were guided to practice critical thinking in their current lives. On Friday night of week 12, the leaders were given the critical thinking questionnaire and its instructions for their initial practice of critical thinking on their own. The small group leaders engaged themselves in the process of critical thinking by responding to the questions in the questionnaire. They used this questionnaire for the following two consecutive weeks. On Friday nights during week 13 and 14, the leaders were encouraged to share how they were doing with the critical thinking questionnaire tool and to stay engaged in the process. On Friday night of week 15, an interview was held in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the critical thinking questionnaire tool.²² The small group leaders were asked how they had used the tool, what the advantages or disadvantages were in using it, and more importantly, if they were motivated and willing to impact other church members at Cornerstone Church with their experiences of this project.

²²See appendix 4.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION
FOR CRITICAL THINKING

One's own thinking determines perspectives and attitudes, and therefore directs his own life. When he does not carefully choose his thoughts, he may live a foolish and miserable life. Accordingly, believers need to examine their own thinking, specifically if their thinking is in accordance with the Word of God.

Man's heart is the very obstacle to his own thinking. The Bible describes the heart as corrupt and evil (Jer 17:9), and that those who trust in themselves are fools (Prov 28:26). This crooked heart also leads man to resist change and to remain in a state of complacency. Yet, believers are urged to renew their minds in order to live transformed lives (Rom 12:2).

Accordingly, this chapter gives a biblical rationale for the necessity of believers' critical thinking. Believers need to not only recognize the corrupt heart, but actively engage in the process of the renewal of their minds. Especially, they are to "reckon" the reality of the gospel as their initiative act of critical thinking.

The Deceitful Heart: Jeremiah 17:9

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). The deceitfulness of the human heart has led man to continuous falls. Genesis 6:5 says, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Man's heart is not fully trustworthy, and there is always danger when he decides to follow his own heart without seeking the counsel of the Lord. Jesus says in Matthew 15:19-23,

What comes out of a man is what makes him "unclean." For from within, out of *men's hearts*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed,

malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.”

Man tends not to recognize the fact that his heart is corrupted. He believes he is capable of making right decisions by following his own heart. Jones describes man’s heart as the seat of his problem. He says that man’s will is perverted, and he cannot judge right because his understanding is shallow.¹ Man’s heart is fallible and cannot be fully trusted. His heart is deceitful (Jer 17:9a) and unsearchable (Prov 25:3). This heart is hidden from human sight. No one can understand this heart (Jer 17:9b). It can be known only to God and tested by Him.

It is, however, still worth understanding how this heart is described in the Bible. It may be wise for one to think and scrutinize how deceitful the heart is so as to make himself spiritually alert and to have a faithful Christian journey.

Describing the Heart

What is the heart then? The heart can be plainly understood in the Bible as a physical organ (2 Sam 18:14; 2 Kgs 9:24). However, the primary point of most Bible texts where the word “heart” is used relates more to the relationship of the human individual to God the creator than to the structure of the person (1 Sam 16:7; 2 Chr 19:3). God looks at man’s heart and values and judges according to what is in the heart. Therefore, God wants man to renew his heart as he continues to walk in Him (Rom 12:2).

Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry explain that the word “heart” (*leb*) can be viewed as a “composite personality of a man” and is generally used for all the aspects of a person: vital, affective, noetic, and voluntative aspect of a person.² At the same time, the heart simply points to one’s innermost nature. Psalm 7:10 says, “My shield is God

¹Douglas Rawlinson Jones, *Jeremiah*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 242.

²G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 7:412.

Most High, who saves the upright in *heart*.” Jeremiah 17:10 says, “I the LORD search the *heart* and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

Thompson illustrates several aspects of man’s heart: emotional, intellectual and volitional.³ He believes that the heart of man in the psychology of OT times refers frequently to the mind, that is, the source of a man’s thinking and action. He also mentions that “heart” is sometimes used to refer to the “seat of emotions” as the “seat of thought and will.” Consequently, “heart,” according to Thompson, is believed to comprise hidden elements in man’s character and personality.

Wilson also mentions that the word “heart” is generally used for all the aspects of a person.⁴ He specifically describes the heart as the “fountain of life in the blood,” which directs one’s actions and conduct. Wilson mentions the affective aspect of the heart of a man: “The heart is the seat of feeling and the affections, and takes those epithets and verbs which designate the affections themselves.”⁵ Moreover, he emphasizes the Hebrew people’s more general usage of the word as the “seat of intellect,” which indicates (1) mind, purpose, intention; (2) understanding, knowledge, insight; and (3) courage, spirit.⁶ Holladay clarifies that specifically the heart in Jeremiah 17:9 means “the heart, the mind, that central faculty within the person that makes decisions.”⁷ He says that the reference to the heart in this verse is the only instance in the Old Testament with the definite article. Other instances of this word are to a particular heart that is characterized,

³J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 422.

⁴William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 212.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 494.

e.g., the heart of a wise man (Prov 16:23) or of kings (Prov 25:3). Therefore, Holladay believes the heart in this verse with the definite article is the “summation of the character of any heart.”⁸

What Does this Heart Do?

This heart of man cannot lead him to the right path. The man that depends on this heart will live a miserable life (Jer 17:5a). His decisions with this heart may seem right to him, but it will lead him to death (Prov 14:12). Huey describes, “The human heart has an unlimited capacity for wickedness and deceit so that human resources are incapable of dealing with it.”⁹ “Deceitful” is elsewhere translated “stained” (Hos 6:8) and “rough ground” (Isa 40:4).¹⁰ Huey traces the usage of the word, “deceitful” in the Old Testament and finds the root occurrence of the word in Genesis 3:15, “heel,” where Satan would attack Eve’s offspring. He then concludes that deceitfulness is characteristic of Satan and his followers (John 8:44).¹¹ Holladay also explains that deceitful means “uneven, bumpy ground,” the opposite of “level ground.” In other words, “deceitfulness” describes the crookedness of man’s heart that is full of twists, turns, and bends.¹² Therefore, it is rougher than anything and incurable.

This incurable heart of man will naturally lead him to destruction unless he intentionally adheres to the Word of God. His daily decision making process cannot be fully truthful because what man thinks and does is self-deceptive. In illustrating man’s self-deception, Plantinga writes, “We become our dupes, playing the role of both

⁸Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 494.

⁹F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 174.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 494.

perpetrator and victim. We know the truth, and yet we do not know it, because we persuade ourselves of its opposite.”¹³ This description implies that man by himself has no way out from his own self-deception. Plantinga also quotes St. Augustine: “The human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to live itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself.”¹⁴ People with this deceitful heart not only deceive themselves, but also deny that they are deceiving themselves.¹⁵

Features of the Deceitful Heart

There are several features of a deceitful heart. First, people with this deceitful heart do not acknowledge God in their lives and are spiritually blind. According to Jeremiah, the Israelites had rejected God, the Lord of the covenant.¹⁶ The current generation kept on doing the same thing and did even worse things than their father’s generation (Jer 6:12). Therefore, Jeremiah urged the Israelites to return to Him so that God would restore them and provide them security (Jer 15:19-20). However, God told Jeremiah that the Israelites would not even understand why they were experiencing such disasters (Jer 16:10). At this, Jeremiah was told to explain that it was because they had abandoned God and followed other gods. The Israelites did not acknowledge God as their God, and were spiritually blinded when asking about their hardships.¹⁷ The Israelites were thinking and acting as if there were no God and experiencing adversities in their lives as a result.

¹³Cornelius J. Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 105.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁶Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 418.

¹⁷Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 168.

“The fool says in his heart, there is no God” (Ps 14:1). Romans 1:18-21 explains that the foolish suppress what they know to be true because their thinking has become futile, and their hearts are darkened. In Romans 1:21a, these men neither “glorify God nor give thanks to Him.” They think they can have their own way in order to accomplish the purpose of their own self-defined lives. Paul’s reference to “people” in the text (Rom 1) includes the entire human race.¹⁸ Therefore, all men have this sinful nature of not acknowledging God in their lives. Christians with deceitful hearts can fall into temptation any time and have their own way in thinking and acting as if there is no God. They may believe in themselves and not recognize they are ignoring God in their lives.

Second, people, deceived by their own hearts, think and act selfishly and unjustly. Jeremiah warns those people who were living self-centered lives. Some Israelites made money unjustly and accumulated their own wealth (Jer 17:11). Jones understands that the target of the verse (Jer 17:11) was Jehoiakim who demonstrated a ruthless and unjust rule (Jer 22).¹⁹ Jehoiakim is depicted as one who used his reign for his own ends. Jehoiakim made dishonest gain, did not pay workmen, and failed to protect the humble and poor. Jones uses the phrase “self-conscious democracy” to describe the way Jehoiakim dealt with his people, e.g., Jehoiakim made his people serve for nothing during the building process of his palace (Jer 22:13).²⁰ Jeremiah warns such unjust and selfish people of their corresponding punishment, that is, in the long run they would lose their wealth and be called fools.

¹⁸Everett F. Harrison, *Romans*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 22.

¹⁹Jones, *Jeremiah*, 243.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 290.

James 1:14-15 says, “But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” Selfishness is one’s desire to satisfy only himself. Richardson mentions that the “personal struggle with evil desire is not usually one of a confrontation with the devil but rather a confrontation with our own worst enemy, namely, our very selves.”²¹ The selfish go against the Word of God that says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4). They may even ask for humility in others, seeking proper self-respect from them, and that attitude may cause relational problems among them. Without realizing that their thinking is selfish, they fail to recognize that they are self-deceiving.

Man’s desires are not to be for his own sake, but for the glory of God. Akin explains that man with sinful nature is prone to pervert the goodness of God’s creation.²² In his comments on 1 John 2:16, Akin asserts that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life in the verse are only examples, but “John would include anything and any way in which humans improperly fulfill fleshly desires.”²³ In other words, man would likely do anything possible to quench his fleshly thirst. The problem is that he is not conscious of the deceitful heart and continues to feed on his sinfulness. He keeps on doing so until he realizes that he has gone too far and regrets what he has done.

Third, the deceitful heart is idolatrous. Jeremiah proclaims that there had been an engraved sin of the Israelite’s idolatry. The Israelite children were said to remember

²¹Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, The New American Commentary, vol. 36 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 82.

²²Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3, John*, The New American Commentary, vol. 38 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 109.

²³*Ibid.*, 110.

their fathers' idols (Jer 17:2) just as idols were handed down to generations. The children were more wicked than their fathers (Jer 16:12). Thompson comments, "Ultimately their rebellion arose from the stubbornness of their own evil heart, and they followed inward promptings rather than obey Yahweh."²⁴ According to Jeremiah, the consequence of this Israelites' sin would be their insecurity and poverty (Jer 17:3-4).

A deceitful heart allows people to turn their eyes to something other than God (Jer 17:5-6). They tend to worship created things rather than the Creator. The problem, however, is not that God created the material things of the world, but that people have made these things into idols.²⁵ The desire of man with the deceitful heart may seem to seek good, but the Bible describes the heart as lustful, desiring evil (1 John 2:16). It has been always "what I want," not the will of God.

Welch describes the lust of man, "To look to Christ to meet our perceived psychological needs is to Christianize our lusts. We are asking God to give us what we want, so we can feel better about ourselves, or so we can have more happiness, not holiness, in our lives."²⁶ He also states that the nature of "I want" is woven into the fabric of his life. In other words, it is part of who he is. People fail to critically think about whether what they want is in line with the Word of God. They do not even recognize that they are confused between the two. Welch says that the believer' sins are forgiven, and yet "the word, 'sinner' is a present tense description of everyone."²⁷ The believer's perfection is still on its way. Until then, the man with the deceitful heart will continue seeking what he wants and replacing God with it.

²⁴Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 408.

²⁵Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 109.

²⁶Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 150.

²⁷Ibid.

Fourth, the foolish thinking in one's deceitful heart is addictive and incurable. Man tends to go back to his foolishness no matter how he tries to straighten the crookedness of his thinking. Man deceives himself by thinking he can stop his foolish thinking or acting at a certain point. He deceives himself by thinking he can be decisive not to slide farther down to the pitfall, and yet looks for pleasures that are more thrilling and twisted, like an addict. Moreover, he seems to long for something good or for his own well being, but his attempt is toward destruction as he leans on his own deceitful heart.

According to Clements, Jeremiah proclaims that the defilement of the Promised Land was a result of the "folly of trusting in merely human wisdom."²⁸ Clements further states, "It is not simply the outward claim to trust in God that matters, but the genuine inner reality of doing so."²⁹ The Israelites had been frequently warned of idolatry, such as in Deuteronomy 11:16: "Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods." Exodus 23:32-33 also warns the Israelites, "Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods . . . they will cause you to sin against me because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you." However, their foolishness kept returning because they had leaned on their own deceitful heart. Clements asks in conclusion, "Why do human beings behave so badly and pursue such absurd illusions?" and he answers, "Because they trust their own thinking rather than God's."³⁰

God understood the heart. Only He can search man's heart rightly. Unless man leans on Him, he may continue leading his life astray with his own deceitful heart. The God who understands man's heart can lead him in the right path. Therefore, man needs

²⁸R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 107.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 106.

His Word to depend upon for his thinking in order that his Christian journey in this world may be led according to the will of the Lord.

Logizomai: Romans 6:11

Believers in critical thinking have a foundation upon which they develop godly patterns or habits of thinking, speaking, and actions thereof. The foundation for believers' thinking has to be the Word of God. However, in Romans 6, Paul urges his fellow Christians to keep anchoring their thinking in the reality that God has provided through Christ Jesus: believers' old selves were crucified with Christ so that they should no longer be slaves to sin (v. 6). Paul provides a core and working basis for believers' thinking: "Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11).

In Romans 6, Paul reminds Christians of Christ Jesus' work at the cross and of his resurrection. He also explains that they are united with Christ in his death and resurrection (vv. 5-10). Paul then urges Christians to continually consider (*logizesthe*) believers' reality (dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus) that has been brought forth by their union with Christ. Paul proclaims that as believers deeply think about this reality, they may offer themselves to God as instruments of righteousness.

Etymologically, the word *logizomai* means "count, collect, reckon, calculate; also consider, deliberate, draw a logical conclusion, and decide."³¹ Out of the 40 times *logizomai* is used in the New Testament, Paul uses *logizomai* 34 times. Paul uses this word in several nuances. For instance, he uses *logizomos* as people's general reasoning. In Romans 2:15, Paul shows people's general reasoning in conjunction with the conscience. Since the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, people with their *logizomos* (thoughts) are able to accuse and excuse themselves.³² Paul also uses

³¹Verlyn Verbrugge, ed., *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 756.

³²Hans W. Heidland, "Logizomai," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 287.

logizomai when people “evaluate” a person or a thing. In 2 Corinthians 10:2, Paul’s opponents “evaluate” Paul in human standards, that is, the Sophist standards of public presentation and leadership. Ironically, in the same verse Paul uses *logizomai* to mean his “considering” a counterattack to his opponents. He declares that he is “considering” bringing a bold confidence against these opponents when he comes to Corinth; he is “considering” tearing down any ungodly thoughts raised up against a true knowledge of God.

People can “reckon” or *logizomai* in any way possible. However, Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5 urges that believers may bind up all wrong “thinking” and bring it into submission to Christ.³³ Believers are not to maintain their current *logizomoi* following the pattern of this world, but are to come to Christ in full obedience as they demolish their ungodly *logizomoi*.

Moreover, believers’ *logizomai* should not be confined only to their thinking. Their *logizomoi* has to entail subsequent actions. Heidland asserts that *logizomai* is the beginning of a deed.³⁴ Paul’s *logizomai* involves not only thinking, but also “judging, planning and resolving.”³⁵ In his ministry, Paul shows his intention to meet his opponents (2 Cor 10:1-2). Defending his authority, he “reckons” and plans to face the challenge boldly. He has warned of his power and willingness to discipline the disobedient vigorously when he comes.³⁶ However, Paul keeps his attitude lenient overall. He expresses, “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you” (2 Cor 10:1a). Guthrie comments on this verse:

³³George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 475.

³⁴Heidland, “Logizomai,” 288.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 466.

Paul draws on the very character of Christ in setting the tone for the confrontation. . . . Christ's ministry was marked by a power-backed boldness against his opponents, even while he lived in humble submission to the Father . . . this is why there is no contradiction between Paul's boldness toward the opponents and the graciousness with which he addresses the church generally.³⁷

Guthrie further says that Paul's reckoning must be grounded in the gospel of Christ and his *logizomai* has been done in his submission to Christ.³⁸

Believers' *logizomai* is not self-focused. Their *logizomai* is to be toward community. Heidland asserts that believers' *logizomai* is not arbitrarily led to action, but it needs to edify the community as it fulfills the work of salvation.³⁹ In Philippians 4:8-9, Paul asks his fellow Christians to "consider" the virtues of a good life. The eight virtues in the verse (4:8) resemble those in Greek literature.⁴⁰ According to Hansen, Paul here challenges them to *logizomai* all that is good in the surrounding culture, even if the culture opposes the church.⁴¹ Paul thinks that believers should know what is good, better than the world does, and they need to excel in manifesting those virtues in their lives. When they can consistently and genuinely practice those virtues, they may eventually bring peace not only with God in Christ (4:9), but also renew their broken relationships with one another. Hansen states, "Peace in the biblical sense is nearly synonymous with messianic salvation. Through the Messiah, God will bring the condition of peace: reconciliation with God and harmony in all relationships."⁴² Believers' *logizomai*,

³⁷Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 468.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Hans W. Heidland, "Logizomai," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 289.

⁴⁰G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 295.

⁴¹Ibid., 296.

⁴²Ibid., 303.

therefore, is not to be individualistic, but communal in that their “reckoning” needs to have the purpose to bring forth an enhanced community.

Paul emphasizes that his fellow Christians should “consider” their status; their belongingness to Christ (2 Cor 10:7). God has claimed His people through the ransom paid at the cross. Believers are His—they are alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, believers’ *logizomai* according to the will of God is now possible. Heidland suggests that people’s arrogant *logizomoi* are the thoughts that can be subdued by God’s power that is set forth at the cross.⁴³ God has completely settled the account of sin by means of the cross: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Cor 5:19). Instead of God’s “reckoning” man’s sins, He “reckons” and deals with them in Christ.

The verb *logizesthe* in Romans 6:11 is present imperative. This word is used as a command disclosing believers’ position in relation to sin and Christ Jesus. This verse, however, does not mean that believers are unable to sin; rather, it indicates that the “mastery and dominion” of sin has ended for those in Christ Jesus.⁴⁴ Therefore, believers’ reckoning in Christ Jesus only can be meaningful. Their *logizomai* in Christ Jesus only can be “counted” by God because Christ is the only person who can satisfy God. Origen states,

Whoever thinks or considers that he is dead will not sin. For example, if lust for a woman gets hold of me or if greed for silver, gold or riches stirs me and I say in my heart that I have died with Christ. . . . The lust is immediately quenched and sin disappears. . . . It is as if Paul were saying that we are alive to God in wisdom, peace, righteousness and sanctification, all of which Christ is. Living to God in these is the same as living to God in Christ Jesus. For as nobody lives to God without these, so it is certain that no one can live to God except in Christ Jesus.⁴⁵

⁴³Heidland, “Logizomai,” 536.

⁴⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 322.

⁴⁵Origen Adamantius, *Romans*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 156.

Believers' reckoning without Christ Jesus is fruitless and meaningless. Believers' *logizomai* without him results in foolish words and actions.

Christ's death itself is a death to sin. Christians who have died with Christ are "reckoned" dead to sin. His death also led them to resurrection and new life, and they are "considered" as those who are alive to God. Schneider states the significance of believers' "reckoning" itself of this truth:

The effect of the activity of reckoning death to sin is not that of making something true in experience of a Christian which was heretofore true: This is so because the believer is a new creature after the point of salvation. Rather, reckoning has the effect of making a Christian consciously aware of and able to act on the truth of death to sin.⁴⁶

God reckons faith as righteousness in Genesis 15:6. Such an "evaluation" of God toward Abraham is also reflected for those reconciled through Christ. Heidland describes,

On the basis of the cross righteousness is now the true reality . . . the reality of God's assessment thus serves as a norm of action. Believers become new creatures by God's *logizesthai*, which carries it the imparting of the Spirit. . . . When Christ is normative, *logizesthai* involves the power to live.⁴⁷

Accordingly, when believers wish to develop a "normal and meaningful" pattern of thinking, they need to center Christ Jesus in their lives and "reckon" him as the point of departure in their thinking. With such a solid foundation in Christ, believers may continue to search and depend on the wisdom of God for their daily challenges. The cessation of seeking the wisdom of God will cause them to live foolish lives.

The Foolish and the Wise: Proverbs 28:26

Proverbs 28:26 says, "Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe." Man may think he is doing what is right even if what he does is wrong (Prov 14:12). It is because he is deceived by his own heart that he knows

⁴⁶Joseph J. Schneider, Jr., "A Study of the Greek Word *Logizomai*" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1973), 46.

⁴⁷Heidland, "Logizomai," 537.

“something.” Yet the truth is that he does not see and know everything. Waltke writes that one must know everything if he wants to know “the skill of living that entails making wise decisions.” Since it is not possible, however, man needs to be “redirected by the sage’s heavenly teaching,” and that teaching is to point people to trust in the Lord.⁴⁸

The foolish tend not to listen to advice (Prov 12:15) and do not like discipline (Prov 15:5). They think that they know what is best (Prov 12:15). They despise wisdom (Prov 23:9) and merely repeat their folly like a dog that returns to its vomit (Prov 26:11). The Bible implies that one needs not be an independent thinker, but must always to entrust his affairs to the Lord, seeking and walking in wisdom.

Critical thinkers know they are not self-sufficient in their thinking process. Once they believe they are capable of thinking right on their own, they cease to be critical thinkers. Therefore, they humbly trust in the Lord, seeking to learn and walk in His wisdom.

The Foolish

Longman III describes the foolishness as self-reliance: “To trust in one’s own heart is the epitome of folly because the heart is limited in its knowledge and also apart from relationship with God, wicked.”⁴⁹ Therefore, their lives are not secured, but “on the road to death.” Waltke pairs verse 26 with the verse 25: “The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust Yahweh are refreshed.” Accordingly, he explains that the fools in Proverbs 28:26 are transgressing their social boundaries and becoming “destructive” and “disruptive.”⁵⁰ He mentions that these people do not trust God, but ignore God who

⁴⁸Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 427.

⁴⁹Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker), 497.

⁵⁰Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 427.

upholds “his divinely established moral boundaries” such as honest work, contentment, and helping others. The foolish are spiritually blinded and fail to critically think and entrust their daily affairs to the Lord. They treasure and depend on created things more than God.

Plantinga claims that one’s belief in his own wisdom is a sure sign of folly.⁵¹ Man’s judgment is from his own knowledge and experiences that lack wisdom. His foolish discernment is from the immorality of his own sinful nature. Such a person will perish because of his prideful attitude (Prov 16:18). Plantinga describes a proud person:

A proud person tries to reinvent reality. He tries to redraw the borders of human behavior to suit himself, displacing God as the Lord and boundary keeper of life. At bottom, the fool is out of touch with reality. For, of course, our wills are not sovereign. We are not really our own centers, anchors, or lawgivers. We have not made ourselves. . . . The image of ourselves as center of the world is fantasy—perhaps, in its sheer detachment from reality, even a form of madness. This is especially clear at the most ruinous levels of evil.⁵²

According to his own reinvented reality, a fool shows all kinds of madness in his life, such as praising the wicked, oppressing others, chasing fantasies, showing partiality, and robbing his own parents by forcibly and illegally taking and withholding wealth from him.

The consequence of those foolish acts is a fugitive life. The foolish ones flee even if there is no one pursuing (28:1). Waltke mentions that these people have psychological insecurity.⁵³ He also comments that by their own consciences, the fools have to flee either “phantom enemies,” or “to the entrance of the grave hoping to escape his inward torment.”⁵⁴ In short, fools will inwardly and outwardly experience troubles. They go through agony in this world and even after death.

⁵¹Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 124.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 125.

⁵³Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, 406.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 422.

Unknowingly, fools live in fear of something other than God, specifically, other men. In their hearts they fear that other people can expose or humiliate them. According to Welch, “nakedness or the shame of being exposed to others . . . symbolizes the deeper, spiritual nakedness and shame that needs covering.”⁵⁵ Therefore, man tries to “protect himself and avoid the gaze of others.” The fear of man also gradually develops an attitude of seeking the approval of other men.⁵⁶ In doing so, they want to be perceived as fine or great. They cannot simply give up seeking the approval of other men, but keep this kind of attitude in order to secure their self-esteem and pride. Consequently, judgments are blurred and are dependent on what others believe to be true and excellent. In covering their shame and keeping their pride safe, they ignore wisdom and trust what they think is right.

The Wise: Critical Thinkers’ Attitudes

The sage in the verse Proverbs 28:26 uses “walking in wisdom” in contrast to “trusting in themselves.” The fools trust in themselves, but the wise do not. Fools experience fear and insecurity in their lives because they trust in themselves. They even live their lives according to what others say is right. However, the wise trust in the Word and strive to walk in wisdom. As a result, they experience safety and comfort (28:26b).

Wise men possess certain attitudes that help them to walk in wisdom. First, wise men walk in wisdom (28:26) as a subsequent action of their genuine fear and love of God. “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 10:12). People obey God through their fear and love of God. Block states that Deuteronomy 10:12 involves two fundamental dispositions: fear

⁵⁵Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, 25.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

and love, and therefore active expressions: walk, serve, and keep.⁵⁷ He writes, “Fear is primary and love is at the core. Without these, the actions are legalistic efforts.” In other words, one’s obedience (walk, serve, keep) has to show up as a result of his fear and love of God. Without fear and love, he may not be able to practice and gain true wisdom.

However, one’s pride plays a role an obstacle to this fear. Proverbs describes that the fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Prov 8:13). Waltke explains the evil in Proverbs 8:13 refers to pride and arrogance because “evil is based on these fundamental vices that refuse to submit authority.”⁵⁸ He asserts that evil is a “self-confident attitude that throws off God’s rule to pursue selfish interests.” Therefore, fools destroy relationship with the Lord.

Second, the wise are humble, and therefore, teachable. They do not despise wisdom. They are willing to be taught and accept discipline. Waltke asserts that a person needs the sage’s heavenly teaching and faith in the Lord. Without such teaching, the person will live a brainless life. Garrett claims, “The verse [28:26] extends the theology of trust to one of submission to God’s teaching. Those who trust in God do not lean on their own devices to keep them safe.”⁵⁹

Garrett also relates this verse to the teaching of the wise and foolish builders from Matthew 7:24-27. He believes that the wise are humble and active seekers of wisdom. They trust the Word as the absolute source in their learning process as they build a solid house. In contrast, the fools depend on their own wisdom. They believe that they are capable of thinking right on their own. Clifford comments that the fools in this verse

⁵⁷Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 270.

⁵⁸Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-14*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 401.

⁵⁹Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 227.

(28:26) rely on their unaided judgment.⁶⁰ He says they do not lean on genuine wisdom from above, that is, “God and mediated by tradition including parents and teachers.”⁶¹ To be wise, therefore, is “not to be autonomous but to be obedient and receptive.”⁶²

Proverbs 8 describes that wisdom can be found at various places, and it invites everyone, the fools and the wise.⁶³ However, not all can find wisdom. Waltke writes, “Wisdom makes her proclamation heard far and wide and does not wait for an audience to come to her.”⁶⁴ In other words, those who actively seek wisdom will obtain it. Wisdom will not reach people in passivity. The wise voluntarily seek wisdom from the Lord who generously gives (Jas 1:5). One’s walk in wisdom means, therefore, his humble and strenuous effort in order to find and learn wisdom.

Third, the wise have a repentant heart. According to Waltke, the fool in verse 28:26 is hardened in his sin, and his judgment is inescapable.⁶⁵ The fool here does not have a repentant heart and is not likely to hear wisdom. The fool may think only about his critical problems that can be seen and are tangible. However, critical thinkers see their unseen problems in the Christian journey. They understand what is more important in the journey, which is walking in wisdom while living in this transient world. Accordingly, they do not spend so much energy solving only seen problems, but struggling against evil powers, not flesh and blood (Eph 6:12).

⁶⁰Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster Knox, 1999), 248.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 94.

⁶⁴Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-14*, 394.

⁶⁵Ibid., 428.

When Job faced indescribable turmoil in his life, he reasoned out with his friends and even before the Lord. He seemed to be able to process his thinking right with his friends. However, confrontation with the Lord brought about humility and repentance. Walton says that Job regrets “his previous statements, his characterization of God, his presumptuous belief in his own understanding, and his arrogant challenges.”⁶⁶ Alden writes, “His confrontation with the Lord did bring about a change of mind and an expansion and deepening of his knowledge of God.”⁶⁷ Subsequently, Job accepts his reality as he stops his mourning, putting dust and ashes out of his mind. He repents and begins his normal life.

Fourth, the wise earnestly reflect on the command of God, specifically to love God and his neighbors. The sage warns the fools in Proverbs 28. The fools are selfish rulers who oppress people by imposing new taxes, laws, and even intercepting their means. These people do not fear God, and therefore, do not listen to wisdom. They neither humble themselves, nor repent of their sins. They are described as greedy (28:25). Fools are not satisfied with their own lives, and their selfishness and ruthlessness will bring about strife among people. Their greediness also becomes a hindrance to gaining what they want.⁶⁸

However, the sage teaches that one has to be generous to the needy (Prov 22:9). He is not to ignore the poor since that is insulting the Creator (Prov 14:31; 17:5). Clifford writes, “God’s honor is bound with each person, no matter how lowly.”⁶⁹ He

⁶⁶John H. Walton, *Job*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 432.

⁶⁷Robert L. Alden, *Job*, The American Commentary, vol. 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 409.

⁶⁸Allen P. Ross, *Proverbs*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 227.

⁶⁹Clifford, *Proverbs*, 147.

also asserts that the reason a poor person is used specifically in the verse (17:5) is because it is “the type perhaps least likely to gain respect.”⁷⁰ In other words, it is not only the poor, but all are created in the image of God and must be valued and respected as His image-bearers.

The wise are not egoistic thinkers. Their discernment is not self-seeking, but the wise cares about others. Plantinga writes, “The really discerning person, the one whose discernment marks genuine wisdom, does not merely inspect reality or analyze it: the one who discerns also loves.”⁷¹ Critical thinkers do not make selfish decisions for the sake of themselves only, but have to consider the interests of others.

The attitudes mentioned in this section are necessary for critical thinking. But those attitudes do not appear unless one fundamentally changes his own heart by the help of the Holy Spirit. He cannot take initiatives by himself in acquiring those attitudes and thinking critically in his daily life. It is only by the grace of the Lord that he can begin to seek, internalize, and manifest wisdom.

Huey writes, “The only remedy for the deceitful heart is a radical change, nothing less than rebirth.”⁷² God has initiated his redemptive work and born-again man can participate in it. However, the state of being born again does not mean that one can continually get involved in the work. Rebirth is only a beginning, and he needs to work out his salvation for the rest of his life in fear and humility (Phil 2:12). He should enliven his faith with the help of the Spirit and practice wisdom until his death, and that has to be done by his continual renewal process of his mind.

⁷⁰Clifford, *Proverbs*, 164.

⁷¹Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 117.

⁷²Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 174.

Renewing the Mind: Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Man constantly thinks and makes decisions. His thinking directs and determines his actions. It is necessary for the believer to carefully examine his mind if his thinking and subsequent actions are biblical. In other words, he needs to renew his mind, seeking to change ungodly ways of his thinking to godly ones and live a transformed life.

However, the renewing of the mind is not a one-time event. It must occur every day since believers are to be in the growing process of their faith (1 Pet 2:2-3), and this growth takes place by practicing wisdom in their daily life (Heb 5:12-14). Failure to be in this continual process indicates negligence in their responsibilities in the faith journey. Consequently, those people may not be able to experience God’s good, pleasing and perfect will.

Renewing the Mind: What May Need to Happen in Critical Thinking

Man is totally depraved (Rom 3:9-18). He is born a sinner and subject to sinning. However, believers are able to resist their old habit not to conform to the present evil age by renewing their minds, and this renewal is possible because believers are redeemed from their sin. Schreiner writes, “Their minds are not given over to futility but are renewed to understand the truth.”⁷³ Jewett writes, “The original capacity of the human race to recognize and respond to the truth, which was distorted as a result of sin, has now been recovered and restored.”⁷⁴ Believers are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) and have been given the authority to overcome all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19).

⁷³Schreiner, *Romans*, 647.

⁷⁴Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 733.

Renewing of the mind does not imply one's complete turn-over of his mind onto righteousness. It is one's continual change of perspective (way of thinking) based on the Word and his adjustment to daily life with those new perspectives. Believers are to consistently deny themselves (Matt 16:24) and identify themselves with Christ (Gal 2:20). They need to give up anything that will hinder them from doing the will of God and follow the Example, the Provider, and Standard of all biblical perspectives. Dunn comments on Romans 12:2,

The combination of the ideas of transformation and renewal may indicate some sort of balance of continuity and discontinuity with what was before. There is a continuity of the subject; but the fundamental attitudes must be changed and new perspectives taken up.⁷⁵

Dunn's comment implies the necessity of one's constant struggle between old perspectives and new ones. One cannot remove all old perspectives in life and live a totally new life.

In other words, he cannot change the total pattern of his thinking. Moo states,

Those who belong to Christ have been transferred from the old realm of sin and death into the new realm of righteousness and life. But this transfer, while decisive and final, does not isolate us from the influence of the old realm. For while belonging to the new realm, we continue to live, as people still in the body in the old realm.⁷⁶

The renewal of one's mind is, therefore, a constant process in which he recognizes and internalizes new perspectives as he develops more biblical perspectives and sees his life with a better biblical worldview,

Nevertheless, the development of biblical perspectives is not confined in his "head" only. The renewal of his mind is to be shown outwardly. Schreiner argues that the words, "body" in the first verse of the chapter, "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice," and "mind" in the verse above, "be transformed by the renewing of the mind," should not

⁷⁵James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 714.

⁷⁶Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 755.

be rigidly separated.⁷⁷ He says, “Paul views human beings holistically, and thus there is an intimate connection between what one thinks and what one does.”⁷⁸ Schreiner also argues that “worship” in verse 1 does not mean “public assemblies,” but “the yielding of one’s whole life to God in the concrete reality of everyday existence.”⁷⁹ Therefore, he says, “Those who worship God give their entire lives over to him so that he is honored and praised in everything they do.”⁸⁰ Moreover, Schreiner does not distinguish between transformed (μεταμορφώσθε) and conform (συσχηματίζω) in the verse (Rom 12:2). He argues, “Paul views human beings holistically, and thus there is an intimate connection between what one thinks and what one does.”⁸¹

Renewal of one’s mind entails transformed actions in life. As a result of renewing his mind, the new perspectives, will be concretized in his reality. Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24 demands such real life practices:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

The new self in these verses suggests one’s new course of actions to be shown in one’s life.⁸² This course of new actions starts from his mind (inward) with alternative ways of thinking based on the newly acquired perspectives or biblically re-oriented perspectives. The verses also imply the necessity of constant work in order to develop a habit of deserting the old self and putting on the new one. In the course of time, one may go

⁷⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 646.

⁷⁸Ibid. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 714 and Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 755, argue the same.

⁷⁹Schreiner, *Romans*, 646.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 290.

through trials and errors, but his orientation is to commit his life to God in this continual process. Once he stops this process, his faith journey will gradually retreat.

The challenge in this process can be the external influences upon believers' lives. The worldly patterns of lives established and practiced over a long period of time hinder believers from leading biblical lives. Willard writes that the historically developed and socially shared ideas have become man's ways of thinking: "They [ideas] are so pervasive and essential to how we think about how we approach life that we often do not even know they are there or understand when and how they are at work."⁸³ Willard also argues that man needs correct information to work on in order for believers to continue to live transformed lives: "The needed transformation is very largely a matter of replacing in ourselves those idea systems of evil and their corresponding cultures with the idea system that Jesus Christ embodied and taught with a culture of the kingdom of God."⁸⁴ This argument implies that believers have to hear and be reminded of the truth of the Word whenever necessary because their sanctification lies in the truth (John 17:17).

One may not easily recognize the external ungodly factors on thinking in this fallen world because these factors are culturally and socially embedded.⁸⁵ However, this embedment does not nullify believers' responsibility for their growth in faith because the true reality given to believers is that they are no longer slaves to sin (Rom 6:6b) and God predestined them to be conformed to the likeness of His Son (Rom 8:29). Paul says, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. . . . The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God" (Rom 6:8, 10). Paul urges that believers are not to let sin reign in their mortal bodies and obey its evil desires.

⁸³Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 97.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 98.

⁸⁵The external influences are discussed in the beginning part of chap. 3.

Accordingly, the goal of believers' thinking is clear, that is, to live as instruments of righteousness, not wickedness, since they are alive to God in Christ (Rom 6:11).

Christ became the once-for-all sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God. Therefore, believers no longer offer "literal sacrifices," but "spiritual sacrifices" that are not confined to one place or to one time, but involves all places and all times."⁸⁶ Schreiner writes, "Human beings are transformed as their thinking is altered . . . our thinking is altered as we behold the glory of the Lord. Gradual transformation from glory to glory occurs as believers meditate and reflect on the beauty and splendor of the Lord."⁸⁷ According to Moo, this renewal process is "to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think" and approving the will of God in the verse (Rom 12:2) means "to understand and agree with what God wants of us with a view to putting it into practice."⁸⁸ Those in this renewal process can continue to discern, appreciate, and determine to obey God's will. Stott claims that once one's mind is renewed, he is able to discern and desire the will of God, and his life can be transformed.⁸⁹

Believers need to renew their minds, not only because they know they have to change their perspectives, but also because they truly understand that exercising their faith by putting new ways of thinking into practice can make a life pleasing to God. Such renewal is crucial in believers' lives because it leads to a pursuit of the ultimate purpose of their lives, that is, glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

It is truly through the renewal of the mind that one can bring forth godly actions to please the Lord. However, some may still seemingly show good behaviors by deceiving themselves without examining their own hearts. In Jesus' time, such people

⁸⁶Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 754.

⁸⁷Schreiner, *Romans*, 648.

⁸⁸Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 757.

⁸⁹John Stott, *Romans: Encountering the Gospel's Power* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 324.

nullified the very Word of God and were called hypocrites. These hypocrites worshipped God in vain and imposed man-made doctrines on other people (Matt 15:9). One can become “pharisaic” anytime he does not genuinely engage in the renewal process. He may become judgmental towards others and fail to see his own heart that produces evil.

The Stereotype: Matthew 15:8-9

Matthew 15:8-9 is written, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” One’s current cyclical life may be one of comfort zones where he resists change and does not engage himself in the constant renewal process. However, a critical thinker carefully looks into current life practices and the assumptions that have produced those practices. Whenever necessary, the critical thinker will get out of their comfort zones and work towards change.

The Pharisees never struggled in thinking about what had gone wrong in the first place, but insisted on manifesting their religious practices according to the beliefs that had been handed down over the years. When the Pharisees rebuked the disciples’ not washing their hands before they ate (Matt 15:1, 2) they had concerns based on certain assumptions of the hands at that time. Nolland explains that the hands were subject to their own distinctive ritual defilement.⁹⁰ This defilement was thought to be transferred to food that would in turn defile the person eating, and this action was something that the pious would not do.

Critical thinkers look into the deep desire that is ungodly. They explore their hearts in depth and find their sinful thinking and behaviors. They acknowledge their weaknesses and limitations. In contrast, Pharisaic people are reluctant to admit ungodly actions, but repeat them until those sinful behaviors become habitual and stay regular and

⁹⁰John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 615.

traditional. Thus, they do not consider their habits or traditions as detestable before God, and they would get offended when questioned.

In response to the Pharisees' rebuking disciples, Jesus asked a simple and provoking question to the Pharisees and implored them to think in depth: "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt 15:3). Jesus pointed out the Pharisee's practice that nullified the very Word of God, that is, to honor parents. However, this question was not to challenge the Pharisees' views about the duty of children to their parents. Keener argues that a Pharisaic teacher could have hurled out the same question because Judaism heavily emphasized honoring and obeying one's parents.⁹¹ He also says, "Pharisaic tradition also unapologetically criticizes Pharisees who fell short of what they considered appropriate Pharisaic values."⁹² The problem was not that they did not know what went wrong from the beginning. Their problem was that they failed to teach ethical principles behind the laws. Keener claims, "Jewish teachers who engaged in legal casuistry never contended that such casuistry was the heart of the law nor approved of people exploiting loopholes."⁹³ Therefore, when finally questioned by Jesus, they got offended.

The Pharisees were called hypocrites (Matt 15:7). The following verses are self-explanatory of what it means to be hypocritical—the Pharisees worshipped God with their lips, and their hearts were far from Him. They worshipped God in vain by making an excuse and giving no honor to their parents after all. According to Osborne, Jesus used a typology at this point quoting Isaiah's prophecy: people performed the sacrifices, but in reality in their hearts they were not serving Him.⁹⁴ Morris comments, "People went

⁹¹Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 411.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids:

through the motions of worship, but quite oblivious of the fact that punctilious performance of rites and ceremonies is no substitute for genuine, inward devotion.”⁹⁵ The Pharisees’ worship was not acceptable to God.

Such worship in vain is not only the reality of the Pharisees, but it can be a prevalent phenomenon of today’s believers as well. Osborne notes,

This [the text discussed] is a warning for our day and not just for Jesus’ day. Again, we are at the heart of what it means to be a true follower of Christ: to think the things of God rather than of humankind (Mark 8:33b), to seek and think the things above rather than the things on earth (Col 3:1-2), to seek treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth (Matt 6:19-21).⁹⁶

Accordingly, critical thinkers consistently bear in mind that a true worship has nothing to do with outer appearances, but inward preparedness. Specifically, critical thinkers remind themselves that one’s acceptance of the gospel of Jesus and trust in the Lord causes him to truly worship the Lord. John 4:23 says, “The true worshippers shall worship Him in spirit and truth.” Carson comments,

These [spirit and truth] are not two separable characteristics of the worship that must be offered: it must be ‘in spirit and truth’, i.e. essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God’s Word-made-flesh, the one who is God’s truth, the faithful exposition and fulfillment of God and his saving purposes.⁹⁷

Unless one recognizes and believes in the “Word-made-flesh,” he cannot truly worship Him. It is the power of the gospel that leads to true worship of the Lord. One can perform an act of worshiping God without his heart genuinely involved. However, Scripture says that without faith, one cannot please the Lord. One’s genuine trust in Christ brings forth true worship.

Zondervan, 2010), 587.

⁹⁵Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 394.

⁹⁶Osborne, *Matthew*, 587.

⁹⁷D. A. Carson. *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 225.

When Jesus reasoned with the Pharisees, the disciples knew that Jesus offended the Pharisees. The disciples knew the Pharisees were well trained and highly respected men who were loyal to God and loved by Him. The Pharisees thought of themselves as guides for the blind and lights for those who are in the dark. They were prideful that they had said the right things even if their hearts were away from God. However, Jesus was not concerned with the wrongly dignified popularity of these men among people, but rather interested in speaking the truth. Jesus pinpointed their worship without true hearts devoted to God.

Moreover, Jesus cared for the people who would be blindly guided by these hypocrites. The Pharisees resisted change and kept not only themselves, but also others in the style of their stereotyped norms of their own religiosity. Osborne writes,

They [the Pharisees] are blind to God's true law, for they have no heart for him and in fact have rejected God's Son and Messiah. Therefore they are blind to God's truths, and even worse they will only increase the blindness of the people they influence.⁹⁸

Hence, Jesus went back to the original rebuking of the Pharisees to the disciples (Matt 15:17-20). He explained what really defiles a man: the heart. Food that goes into the stomach does not in any way defile the heart and thus the person.

The stereotype of the Pharisees was a result of their failure in thinking critically on the Word of God. They were instead immersed in traditions. Keener claims that Jesus challenged Pharisees about "the danger of evaluating morality on the basis of extra-biblical traditions."⁹⁹ Yet, the focus of the Pharisees was still on the externals. Osborne notes,

The externals took precedence over the internal reality of the truths of God. When they [The Pharisees] rejected God's Messiah, they rejected the God of the Bible,

⁹⁸Osborne, *Matthew*, 590.

⁹⁹Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 411.

and that led them to depend even more on the externals. When the inner reality is gone, the external appearance is all one has, and it becomes idolatry.¹⁰⁰

Keener writes that the Pharisees' unbiblical practice was a result of their "spending more time debating laws as laws than teaching ethical principles behind the laws."¹⁰¹ In the end, the Pharisees' zeal towards their own religiosity consumed Jesus.

Believers need to change from the inside out, not the other way around. Their focus has to be on the hearts, not the externals. Their zeal should not be the same as Pharisees that were blindly religious and nationalistic. Their zeal has to be humbly towards themselves, that is, to critically think their fleshly desire that has produced ungodly perspectives in life. Their zeal is to replace those assumptions with genuine biblical perspectives in order to practice the will of God.

The Pharisees were responsive to their contemporary practices for the sake of their practices per se. In other words, they stayed in their complacency. However, critical thinkers are to be responsive to the Creator of this universe for genuine change. Believers are to respond to God's call.¹⁰² They are called individually according to God's purposes. The response to God's calling will never be boring because it is a response to the Creator of the universe. Guinness writes that believers should not settle down to "the comfortable, the mediocre, the banal, and the boring."¹⁰³ If believers are to think critically according to the Word of God, they cannot be negligent of their responsibility to respond to God and do the will of God in their faith journey. For this, believers do not stay in status quo, but keep themselves in the constant process of critical thinking.

¹⁰⁰Osborne, *Matthew*, 593.

¹⁰¹Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 411.

¹⁰²Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 24.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 144.

Conclusion

Believers need to think critically, depending on and trusting in the Word of God by actively engaging themselves in the constant process of renewing their minds. They will examine their hearts and put off old perspectives that have formed old habits and put on new godly perspectives. Believers do not confine themselves within their own practices that have developed over time. They do not stay in status quo. They are willing to continuously change as they grow toward Christ-likeness. Specifically the initial and enduring power in this process comes from consistent “reckoning” of the reality of the gospel.

In the process, believers need to keep certain attitudes of critical thinkers such as fearing God and humble, repentant, and altruistic attitudes. Specifically, critical thinkers do not trust in their own deceitful hearts because the heart is atheistic, selfish, idolatrous, and addictive. When one trusts in his own heart, his life will be insecure and miserable. In contrast, he who walks in wisdom may live a life of safety and peace.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES OF CRITICAL THINKING

Today's world is rapidly changing. The world has produced complex realities. People are bombarded with and swayed by information, divergent notions, and ideologies. Richard Paul and Linda Elder write, "The problems we now face, and will increasingly face, require a radically different form of thinking—thinking that is more complex, more adaptable, and more sensitive to divergent points of view."¹ However, believers need to bear in mind that this fast-changing world has continued to evolve into a spiral of evil, producing various forms of vice and attracting and confusing people into the depth of its chaos. The complexity of today's world has distracted believers from keeping a clear conscious and distinguishing what is biblically right and wrong. Therefore, unless believers develop a habit of critical thinking based on the Word, they may readily follow the pattern of this sinful world.

In the process of forming this habit, believers should constantly and genuinely depend on the redeeming power of the gospel. The Spirit of God through the power of the gospel has initiated believers' transformation. Yet, believers' transformation has to continue by a constant "reckoning" of the true reality of the gospel, specifically, the glorious Son who can please God to the highest degree.

¹Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2014), 1.

Contextual Awareness

Theorists in critical thinking assert that it is essential to identify and understand one's own context in the process of critical thinking. It is because one's own context influences the shaping of his perceptions, understandings, and interpretations of the world.² Stephen Brookfield writes that critical thinkers should be contextually aware because "practices, structures, and actions are never context-free."³ In explaining the importance of contextual awareness, Brookfield explains,

Such awareness [contextual awareness] is evident when the assumptions undergirding our ideas and behaviors are seen to be culturally and historically specific. When people realize that actions, values, beliefs, and moral codes can be fully understood only when the context in which they are framed is appreciated, they become much more contextually aware.⁴

This awareness of context is not only for one's better adaptation to it, but that he may have to examine the existing ways of thinking and acting in the context. Brookfield comments,

Simply because a practice or structure has existed for a long time does not mean that it is the most appropriate for all time or even for this moment. Just because an idea is accepted by everyone else does not mean that we have to believe in its innate truth without first checking its correspondence with reality as we experience it.⁵

In explaining critical consciousness, Paulo Freire also objects man's mere adjustment to his own world. He challenges people to not only think critically on their own context, but also challenge themselves to produce a better reality: "Adaptation is behavior characteristic of the animal sphere; exhibited by man, it is symptomatic of his dehumanization."⁶ According to Freire, every man has a right to be educated as a subject

²Stephen D. Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 7.

³Ibid., 8.

⁴Ibid., 16.

⁵Ibid., 9.

⁶Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973), 4.

who creates, recreates, and decides on a reality: “If men are unable to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, they are carried along in the wake of change.”⁷

Freire urges that man should accurately understand the reality by analyzing its cause. He believes that when man understands the reality right, he can critically respond to it:

It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of his understanding. Critical understanding leads to critical action.

Specifically, Freire wants the common man to be enabled to understand the problems of context and intervene in that context. He hopes to liberate men so that they may not be “in the world, but engage in relations with the world.”⁸

Jack Mezirow, in his transformative or emancipatory learning, advocates that learners need to know their own contexts. His transformative learning involves learner’s becoming aware of “the history, contexts (norms, codes, reaction patterns, perceptual filters), and consequences of their beliefs.”⁹ He believes that transformative learning focuses on a critique of premises that need reassessment. Moreover, in an emphasis of communicative learning, Mezirow asserts that adults should be freed from their own belief systems in order for them to share their real needs and interests.¹⁰ Mezirow notes,

In order to be free we must be able to “name” our reality, to know it divorced from what has been taken for granted, to speak with our own voice. Thus it becomes crucial that the individual learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social

⁷Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 7.

⁸Ibid., 43.

⁹Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A. Wiley, 1991), 215.

¹⁰Ibid., 217.

realities defined by others. Transformation theory provides a description of the dynamics of the way adults learn to do this.¹¹

Like Freire, Mezirow's transformative learning seeks man's liberation from merely adapting himself to his own context and applying old ways of his knowing in it. In this rapidly changing world, man needs to be guided to be proactively interactive with the world and to better operate its systems and manage his life.

Critique on Contextual Awareness

One's contextual awareness in his critical thinking is an important factor since it helps him to learn how his thinking has been influenced and oriented within. At the same time, it is also true that he needs to be challenged to become a subject in his thinking, interacting proactively with the world. Biblically speaking, believers are commanded to cultivate the creation and rule the earth. Believers' response to the world should not be subordination to it, but governance over it (Gen 1:28).

However, it is necessary for believers to recognize the inadequacy of the contextual awareness from the secular critical thinking. Believers should be able to acknowledge a possibility of fallacy in their thinking and understand certain shortcomings from the secular critical thinking literature. The following are the flaws of the secular critical thinking that believers need to consider in the process of their critical thinking.

First, the contextual awareness of secular critical thinking theorists never provides people a clue of the sinfulness and deceitfulness of their own hearts. The main purpose of people's contextual awareness in their critical thinking process is to seek and understand external influences on their thinking. It is true that such a contextual awareness may enable people to get "out of the box" and examine their thinking and their situations at various angles. However, the altered ideas from the process of their critical thinking are, at best, compromised results of their interactions with out-of-their-own-contexts where others may also produce fallacious thinking with their sinful and deceitful

¹¹Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 3.

hearts. The secular critical thinking in this sense is cyclical within its own fallacy because it does not look into the problem of sinful and deceitful hearts.

Stowell mentions, “As Christians we are so inundated with our cultural input that we are no longer immune to the temptation and focus on externals and make choices based on non-Christian standards.”¹² He sees that this outward focus fails believers in seeing their inner propensity to sin. Thus they may neglect the fact that their sinfulness is enough to cause their life problems. As a result, they find excuses from external, not internal after they sin.

In describing the first excuse of man on externals as in Adam’s on Eve and even on God, Stowell mentions, “Excuses are the anesthetic of Satan that numbs us to the operation of sin in our lives. They make us insensitive to sin’s impact and deceive us as to our responsibilities.”¹³ Consequently, Stowell believes that Christians get weaker and weaker by avoiding their own responsibilities for their life choices. Thus, he insists, “When it comes to the treachery of sin, we *must* take it personally because sin begins within! It is an intimate reality.”¹⁴

Second, secular critical thinking theorists never stresses the fallen-ness of this world. Their interest is what is right or best in regard to individual or communal perspectives, but not what is true and false in light of absolutes. Thus, relativistic worldviews are acceptable at all times.

Modern society advocates respect of individual thoughts and opinions. People are skeptical of absolutes and believe in relativism. Intellectual skepticism of people has nullified the truthfulness of the Bible, and the enhancement of individualism has given

¹²Joseph M. Stowell, *Kingdom Conflict: Personal Triumph in a Supernatural Struggle* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 61.

¹³*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 17, emphasis original.

birth to moral confusion in modern society. Andreas Kostenberger and David Jones write, “Libertarian ideology elevates human freedom and self-determination as the supreme principles for human relationships.”¹⁵ They view that one of the results of moral confusion is the replacement of the biblical-traditional model of marriage and the family with more “progressive” models.¹⁶ The world confuses man’s thinking between what is godly and ungodly. This fallen world even changes and blurs the idea of sin. Mohler notes,

Words such as *disease, antisocial behavior, and lack of moral development* has replaced *sin* as explanations for human behavior. . . . We should notice the decline of sin within the church. Some leading churches and television preachers have followed the lead of the psychological community in rejecting the notion of sin. The word is seldom uttered in many churches—even some who would describe themselves as evangelical. This is an abdication of the gospel. Where sin is not faced as sin, grace cannot be grace.¹⁷

This fallen world does not offer a clear notion of sin. It has not only obscured, but minimized, the meaning of what is sinful and rebellious against God. The fallen world keeps on producing ungodly patterns of thinking and developing ideas deviated from absolutes. As a result, people are slaves to sin without their knowledge.

Not only individualism, but the development of technology in the civilized world has brought about many choices. Guinness notes, “The modern world offers an endless range of choice . . . other people, places, periods, and psyches are accessible as never before. Yet coherent wisdom to interpret it all eludes us.”¹⁸ He claims that this pluralized society affects “the private sphere of modern society at all levels, from

¹⁵Andreas J. Kostenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 16.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Disappearance of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2009), 27-28, emphasis original.

¹⁸Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 165.

consumer goods to relationships to worldviews and faiths.”¹⁹ Therefore, a modern man cannot have a focused life. Overwhelmed by choices, he may not be able to think rationally and make right decisions for his life.

Therefore, it is significant that believers not only examine their hearts, but also think critically about the patterns of this world, specifically the unbiblical ideologies and trends of this fallen world. Recognizing and understanding the fallen-ness of this world should be a part of critical thinking process for believers. Yet believers’ scrutiny of this fallen world and their own ungodly practices should not lead themselves to negating their personal responsibilities for their sins in their lives. They need to keep in mind that the purpose of identifying the patterns of this world is to discern where their own hearts are fallen into.

Third, the context in secular critical thinking literature is confined to this world only. Such a limited context, whether timely or physically, may lead people to a self-focused life. According to functionalism, man is described as solely dependent on his own needs and desires for survival. In commenting a functional view on man, Gustafson writes,

There are needs that have to be met, and human beings find ways to meet these needs. Indeed, for many sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists man is finally an organism in an environment, seeking to establish those patterns of life that make for survival under the most harmonious conditions possible.²⁰

Over time, man develops his own patterns for survival. He adapts himself to his own environment as a part of it. At the same time, he also sets particular goals for his life as he establishes survival patterns. Those goals are, for instance, “physiological

¹⁹Guinness, *The Call*, 165.

²⁰James M. Gustafson, “Man—Social Science and Christian Faith,” in *Conflicting Images of Man*, ed. William Nicholas (New York: Seabury, 1966), 60.

gratifications (through food, sex, sleep, and comfort), love and affection, respect, self-respect, power or control, skill, enlightenment, and prestige.”²¹

Such an analysis of man is produced not only because of man’s life confined to this world, but also because of man’s unbelief in the existence of God. Gustafson comments,

Most functional interpretations of man believe that there is no point of reference beyond the self or beyond nature, to which life refers. . . . Religion has no point of reference that is objective to the needs of self and society. To speak of God is to speak of something is incapable of empirical verification, whereas to speak of human needs is to define something which, men can agree, does exist.²²

Accordingly, the basis of man’s thinking is no more than man’s experiential realm of this world. His own desires and interests are mainly derived from such an empirical world.

The context for believers, however, is extensive to eternity because of the redemptive work of Christ. Believers do not live in a separated world from the eternity; they live in the continuum of the present and the future. Lane illustrates,

In the person of Jesus, God and humanity have become one, a divine-human threshold has been crossed, a new relationship between grace and nature has been established. Consequently the gulf between heaven and earth, between the eternal and the historical, between the divine and the human, between the sacred and the secular, between the natural and the supernatural have been overcome in Christ as the Word incarnate.²³

Believers are hopeful for the future. Their lives do not end here in this world, but will continue in the new heaven and earth. In their hope for eternity future, believers are challenged to live faithfully according to the Word of God.

Believers need to understand that the word “hope” does not imply their emotional status only, but includes their rational and willful effort to continue the ministry of Jesus. In the renewal of Christian hope, Kee mentions,

²¹Gustafson, “Man—Social Science and Christian Faith,” 62.

²²Ibid., 63.

²³Dermot A. Lane, *Keeping Hope Alive* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996), 127.

The message of hope in the Bible is not just an assurance that God's purpose will eventually prevail. It is also a solemn reminder of the impermanency of all of life this side of that consummating event. It reminds us of the shortness of time within which we are called to individuals to fulfill our share in the ministry of reconciliation.²⁴

Believers are participants in God's master plan. They are co-workers in the continuing business of his redemption. For this, they are commanded to pro-actively engage in the actualization of their faith in their daily lives.

Believers should not limit their thinking in the confinement of the time in this world. Believers should be able to continually think and understand the expansive reality offered by God through the redemptive work of His Son. In the process of believers' critical thinking, they must think through the present time toward the eternity future. When they fail to think in such a continuum of time, restored and reset in the reality of gospel, they can only come up with myopic decisions for their lives.

Summary

Believers cannot ignore their own contexts in the process of critical thinking. Stowell writes that the world within man is stimulated by the world without.²⁵ People are influenced by their contexts in their thinking process. Thus, to study their contexts can be helpful for them to better understand their ways of current thinking. However, the understanding of their contexts should never be a way of their evasion from the scrutiny of their hearts. God sees the hearts of believers more than anything (1 Sam 16:7). He knows where the hearts have fallen into. Therefore, believers are to examine their hearts and take responsibility for their own ungodly thinking and actions.

In addition, believers should realize that they live in the fallen world. Their critical thinking is not dependent on the patterns of this world, specifically on relativistic worldviews. They should root their thinking in the wisdom of God and be vigilant of the

²⁴Howard Clark Kee, *The Renewal of Hope* (New York: Haddam House, 1959), 177.

²⁵Stowell, *Kingdom Conflict*, 16.

deceptions of this world. They need to focus on the wisdom of God speaking to every situation of their lives.

Further, believers should keep in mind that they have an eschatological view of life. Their lives are not confined to this world, and therefore, their thinking should not be limited to this present time. Their thinking must not be physically-oriented, but spiritually-extended to eternity. They need to truly “reckon” the thorough reality presented in the gospel so that they can better “consider or evaluate” the realities and circumstances of this fallen world. Believers live in hope, and in that hope, they may be able to continually take part in the continuum of the ministry of Jesus. In that hope, their thinking can be freed and cooperative with the plan of God toward His creation.

Self-Awareness

Theorists in critical thinking believe there is a positive relationship between self-concept and thinking. They assert that one’s self concept greatly influences the pattern of his own thinking. Paul and Elder state, “All of our activity is a product of inward ideas of who and what we are, ideas of what we are experiencing, of where we are going, of where we have come from.”²⁶ Paul specifically describes critical thinking that includes self-assessing, self-examining, and self-improving.²⁷ However, Paul and Elder also explain that the relational cause between self-concept and thinking is usually and unconsciously driven by the egocentricity of man. Paul and Elder specifically mention that people are not significantly concerned with their growth and integrity, rather “they seek to get what they want, avoid the disapproval of others, and justify themselves in

²⁶Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking*, 57.

²⁷Richard W. Paul, *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World* (Santa Rosa, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 1995), 59.

their minds.”²⁸ These tendencies prevent people from having fair-minded thinking. In other words, their egocentricity is an obstacle in their critical thinking process.

According to Paul and Elder, people develop the pattern of their own thinking based on the three functions of man: thinking, feeling, and wanting.²⁹ One’s mind continually communicates to him in these three functions. These three distinctive functions interact and influence each other. Paul and Elder believe that when people fail to recognize these continual interrelationships and balance these three functions of their minds, they would merely be selfish thinkers.³⁰ Therefore, they need to consistently practice critical thinking with these functions of their minds so that they can finally learn to regulate and command over their own minds’ functions and have better life decisions.

Thayer-Bacon remarks that Paul’s critical thinking may help the student to understand others’ point of view, but the focus on one’s egocentricity weakens his own identity.³¹ She quotes Paul’s critical thinking as follows, “To teach critical thinking is to help the student to develop reasoning skills precisely in those areas where he is most likely to have egocentric and sociocentric biases. Such biases exist most profoundly in the area of his identity and vested interests.”³² Thayer-Bacon values Paul’s sensitivity on man’s egocentricity that hinders his critical thinking, but she insists that one’s recognition of his own identity can also be thwarted with the over-emphasis of egocentricity. Likewise, Siegel states it is not easy to think critically since critical thinking challenges one’s inclination to the egocentric and sociocentric areas of the mind: “Paul’s sense of critical thinking has to focus on those areas [egocentricity] just to counteract those deep

²⁸Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking*, 52.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 56.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), 35.

³²*Ibid.*

egocentric tendencies.”³³ Siegel asserts that “Paul’s view of critical thinking may still help people to depersonalize their own world view, to know themselves, and understand the psychology of their rational commitment.”³⁴ However, he believes that Paul’s stress on egocentricity of man is exclusive of the wholeness of his identity, and therefore, one needs to have more extensive self-awareness in his critical thinking process.

Brookfield expresses that self-image, self-understanding, and one’s own thinking are interwoven.³⁵ He believes that facilitating students to reflect and analyze their current assumptions is a process of helping them to better understand a self and improve a self-image.³⁶ According to Brookfield, by having a better self-understanding, students can readily engage themselves in the process of critical thinking:

As people begin to look critically at their past values, common-sense ideas and habitual behaviors, they begin the precarious business of contemplating new self-images, perspectives, and actions. Skilled helpers can support these first tentative stages in critical thought by listening empathetically to people’s “travelers’ tales” of their journeys into unexplored personal and political territories. . . . As people strive for clarity in self-understanding . . . the opportunity to discuss these activities is enormously helpful.³⁷

In order to help these activities, therefore, Brookfield asserts that facilitators should be “sympathizers, empathizers, reactors, devil’s advocates, initiators, and prompters.”³⁸

Theorists in critical thinking advocate that people should not be satisfied with their current self-image or self-understanding. As critical thinkers are supposed to constantly engage themselves in improving their thinking, they are not to settle with their current self-images or self-understanding; they are to continuously develop their self-

³³Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 16.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 10.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

images as their thinking is improved. Brookfield states, “We do not take our identities as settled; rather, we are aware of the scope for development in all areas of life. We see the future as open to our influence.”³⁹

Accordingly, the goal of critical thinking is often centered on man’s capacity.

Brookfield writes,

They [helpers or educators] help clients . . . to recognize aspects of their situations that are of their own making and hence open to being changed by an act of will. . . . They help people to realize that while actions are shaped by context, context can be altered to be more congruent with people’s desires.⁴⁰

Critical thinking theorists hope to help people develop thinking according to an individual’s fervent trials and errors. People are believed to have a potential to change their situations. Thus, they need to realize and maximize their abilities by taking an initiative to understand who they are and what they are capable of.

Critique on Self-Awareness

It is true that man’s self-awareness and confidence in himself may help him change and improve his life. Similarly, the Bible teaches that believers would need to understand what they are good at and make an effort in developing and investing their talents in their lives (Matt 25:14-30).

However, it is necessary for believers to clearly understand who they are as defined in the gospel and keep themselves alert with that state of mind. This world of confusion may blur the minds of believers and make them fail to see who they really are in Christ. Thus, believers may need to understand their deficiencies in secular critical thinking in order to keep a sturdy self in the Word.

First, critical thinking in this fallen world emphasizes man’s self-respect without reverence toward the Creator. The absence of fear of the Lord would lead him to false and deceptive thinking in the end. The modern world emphasizes individual self-

³⁹Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 10.

⁴⁰Ibid.

esteem and favors the enhancement of one's pride. It deceives people and stirs up sinful hearts to be prideful and conceited as becoming somebody respectable. Edward Welch notes, "There *is* no reason why we should feel great about ourselves. We truly *are* deficient."⁴¹ In the explanation of the paradox of self-esteem, Welch writes,

Low self-esteem usually means that I think too highly of myself. I'm too self-involved, I feel I deserve better than what I have. The reason I feel bad about myself is that I aspire to something more. I want just a few minutes of greatness. I am a peasant who wants to be king . . . this is the dark, quieter side of pride—thwarted pride.⁴²

The consequent action of this thwarted pride is to hide and spy. The obvious result over time can be a lonesome life, and to the extreme, one's suicide.

Man wants to place himself in the center of anything. He believes in his own reasoning in making his own decisions. In desiring happiness, man chooses what is good according to himself, not according to God.⁴³ However, replacing God can only bring about discontentment and anxiety because of his lack of, or no trust in, the Ultimate Source. The consequence of his centeredness would be an insecure and miserable life. In explaining man's pride, Cooper claims,

This distrust in God perpetuates our anxiety. We attempt to outmaneuver life and find our own solution to the problem of anxiety. . . . Without a trust in God, our own attempts at self-assertion, individuation or self-actualization are off-balance. We lack balance because we are usually overwhelmed by existential anxiety.⁴⁴

Anxiety in man would continue to get hold of him. As an insatiable being, he cannot be satisfied with anything in the world. Once his needs are met, he would soon feel anxious for something else.

⁴¹Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1997), 28, emphasis original.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius B. Zema, and Grace Monahan (Garden City, NY: Image, 1958), 300.

⁴⁴Terry D. Cooper, *Sin, Pride and Self-Acceptance: The Problems of Identity in Theology and Psychology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 153.

Man claims to be wise and does not realize he is a fool. The Bible clearly states that man's thinking, therefore, is "futile, and he exchanges the glory of God for images resembling a mortal human being (Rom 1:21-23)." Man's pride leads him to his negligence of the existence of God and puts himself in the replacement of God. In so doing, he expresses love of himself, and that confines himself in his own sinfulness. Augustine writes,

Man regards himself as his own light, and turns away from that light which would make man himself a light if he would set his heart on it. . . . Love of self, unmediated by the love of God which alone makes love of one's self permissible, locks men into a life of division and sinfulness.⁴⁵

According to Mangis, this kind of self-love leads him to two kinds of pride: inward and outward pride.⁴⁶ Outward pride involves an inordinate desire to excel, hence one wants to feel superior to others and satisfy "his deeper hunger for a sense of significance."⁴⁷

Inward pride is one's obsession with others; how they feel about him or her. It is a secret pride in which one has the goal of "an inflated sense of self."⁴⁸ Both prides bring about one's perversity in making decisions in life. People's self-willed decisions in this stubbornness would result in conflicts among them, and that would ruin communal lives as well. Men are saturated in their own lusts, and their lusts are against one another.

According to Augustine, these lusts have their own names:

As lust for revenge is called anger, so lust for money is avarice, lust to win at any price is obstinacy, lust for bragging is vanity. And there are still many other kinds of lust, some with names and some without. For example, it would be difficult to find a havoc with the souls of ambitious soldiers and comes to light in every civil war.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Augustine, *City of God*, 573.

⁴⁶Michael Mangis, *Signature Sins: Taming Our Wayward Hearts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 30-31.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Augustine, *City of God*, 315.

Man with his self-respect is dependent on his wisdom that is fallible and imperfect. He believes that his decisions can be right without foreseeing the possibility to wrong his own life and others. However, the truth is that his wisdom is far short of infinite knowledge of God. Hence, believers should humbly acknowledge their fallibility in their thinking. They need to see the possibility of fallacy in their thinking when they fail to trust in the Wisdom.

Second, secular critical thinking leaves out the aspect of total depravity of man. The Bible teaches that man is fallen (Rom 5:18). Man has chosen to rebel against God and live for self, not living in obedience to God (Rom 5:19). He has become spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) and unable to do anything good (Isa 64:6). Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, “God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices.” A. W. Pink describes a result of this man’s fall:

Man is not now as God made him. He has lost the crown and glory of his creation, and has plunged himself into an awful gulf of sin and misery. By his own perversity he has wrecked himself and placed an entail of woe upon his posterity. He is a ruined creature as the result of his apostasy from God. . . . [Man is] without strength, thoroughly incapable of bettering himself; exposed to the wrath of God, and unable to perform a single work which can find acceptance with Him.⁵⁰

Sin affected every area of man’s life and went beyond Adam and Eve. John Cheeseman writes,

The fall of Adam, in which all men participate (1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Rom. 5:12-21) extends to all man’s faculties: his heart (Jeremiah 17:9), his mind (Ephes. 4:17, 18), his will (John 5:40), his conscience (Titus 1:15) and every other part of him. The doctrine of ‘total depravity’ is not that every man is as bad as he could possibly be, but that man’s nature is corrupted and disabled in every aspect.⁵¹

However, man is still capable of thinking and reasoning. He has not lost his faculties of intelligence. Millard Erickson explains,

Total depravity is not being totally insensitive to matters of conscience, of right and wrong. For Paul’s statement in Romans 2:15 says that Gentiles have the law written

⁵⁰A. W. Pink, *Doctrine of Human Depravity* (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 1998), 5.

⁵¹John Cheeseman, “The Total Depravity of Human Nature,” *Crossway* 26 (1987): 1.

on their heart, so that their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them.⁵²

Yet his ability to perceive and appreciate the things of God is corrupted by sin. Man's depravity reveals that man has no love or fear of God; his ambitions are entirely selfish. He is prideful of himself and he will not seek God.

Further, man in frailty does not desire the counsel of God, either. He deceives himself that he can manage his life even if he has his own weaknesses, or he does not seriously consider the danger of fall when he overlooks his vulnerabilities. Mangis expresses,

Just as there are both universal and uniquely individual facets of every human being, there are universal and uniquely individual patterns to human sin . . . my personal suspicions about the ways God may fail me will show themselves in the areas of my greatest vulnerabilities . . . our vulnerabilities distinguish what we are. Like flaws in a diamond, they reveal our individual pain.⁵³

Man disregards the possibility of fall in his frailty and may commit sins. As he lets himself repeat certain sins over time, he may develop and form ungodly patterns in his life.

One's own personality trait can also influence him in forming particular sin patterns in his life. Mangis believes that even if there are individual differences, man's thought and behavior fall into identifiable patterns because each individual possesses his own personality traits with which he tends to commit particular sins. Accordingly, he asserts that one's knowledge of his own temperament or personality can be helpful to find certain patterns of his own sin.⁵⁴ Thus, he suggests believers should carefully examine themselves to find out their own weaknesses and personality traits. They need to be self-aware of their own sinful patterns as they recognize when, how, or where they are more likely to commit particular sins. In doing so, they may be able to think and plan in advance certain ways to avoid temptations.

⁵²Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1995), 628.

⁵³Mangis, *Signature Sins*, 78.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 79.

Believers have to think critically about the significance of their trust in God more than the search for their frailties and personality traits. Man is a sinner. He would sin whether he feels satisfied or deficient. He would sin whether he has strengths or weaknesses. Cooper notes,

We sometimes choose destructive behavior for no reason other than our dissatisfaction with human limitations. Sin is not rational. . . . There was no reason for him to steal the pears. He wasn't hungry and he didn't need them. His desire to steal could not be reduced to a deficiency in his life. Thus, even if all the external conditions of our lives could be perfect, we would not escape the temptation to sin. Temptation is not simply an external problem. Rising within our own consciousness is an invitation to move beyond what is humanly possible, distrust our Source and injure many people in our frantic search for justification and security.⁵⁵

Therefore, believers should bear in mind that their recognition of sins in their lives is a partial process of critical thinking. Their search of their weaknesses or even strengths will not end their sin problem, either. What is more important in believers' lives is their sincere and genuine dependence on and trust in God who has redeemed them in His love and grace. In the midst of the effect of sin on their lives because of total depravity of man, believers should continually seek the help of God who is the very Source of all truths.

Third, believers should keep in mind that they are new creatures in union with Christ. Critical thinking in the secular world may stress constructing one's better self-image for their healthier and sounder thinking. Yet the building of his self-image in the world has no foundation, and is mainly rooted in this age of relativism. This age produces divergent perspectives of individuals and allows them to indulge themselves in narcissistic self-perpetuation. However, believers have received a new self-image at the time of being born again. They are new creatures in union with Christ. Specifically their union with Christ will help them to live as new creatures. J. Todd Billings writes,

The good news is that in Jesus Christ, we receive forgiveness and new life. We did not manufacture this news. The news is not about our own efforts to imitate Christ or to do what Jesus would do. First and foremost, the good news of the gospel is the

⁵⁵Cooper, *Sin, Pride & Self-Acceptance*, 163.

gift of actually being united to Jesus Christ—a gift received from God in a way that activates us to live into this new life, coming to us as part of God’s new creation.⁵⁶

He further mentions that their union with Christ helps them to understand the incomprehensible God even if their understanding is not perfect: “While Christians can look forward to ‘face-to-face’ fellowship with God, that knowledgeable fellowship will be just as dependent upon God’s condescending love made known in Christ.”⁵⁷ To be human is to be in communion with God. Thus, Billings claims, “It is impossible to act ‘in oneself’ in taking a step toward God, because acting ‘in oneself’ is part of the very definition of sin—the corollary to salvation as communion.”⁵⁸ In other words, without communion with God in Christ, it is impossible for believers to keep growing into their adopted identity in Christ. Their failure in reflecting on their new self in Christ would lead them to a fall.

John Calvin emphasizes the inseparableness of the double grace in union with Christ: justification and sanctification.⁵⁹ Believers are united to Jesus Christ by faith and have already died with Christ and been raised up with him (Col 3:1-4). Believers’ present existence in union with Jesus is secured that their lives are hidden with Christ in God and that Christ is their life. Yet Calvin points out that sanctification, like justification, is a gift received in union with Christ:

Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.⁶⁰

⁵⁶J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 31.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 94.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 3.3.1.

According to Billings, the idea of God's adoption of his people illuminates the role of justification:

For any adoption to be valid, in the ancient world as well as our own, the adoptive parents must have legal rights to the child. The child cannot just start acting like the child of the new parents. . . . The legal dimension is indispensable—and it is what provides the context for sanctification as a transformative process by the Spirit.⁶¹

Even if adoption is a countercultural process due to today's cultural deism (people do not take the gospel seriously, but seek therapeutic theology and their personal happiness), Billings demands that Christians should act with their new identity as adopted by God; for both vertical and horizontal dimensions of their faith.⁶²

Although believers live in this fallen world, their union with Christ is so intimate that they have their very being in God. They are His holy temple; the special people in which God dwells by His Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). This union will never fluctuate; no one, nothing, can snatch them out of Jesus' grip (John 10:28), and nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:31-39). Believers are in Christ and have become new creatures in that they now have the ability to have fellowship with God. In other words, they are enabled to live in accordance with His Word.

Summary

Critical thinking in the secular literature promotes a better self-image. It is believed that a better self-image can result in a good thinker, a sound reality, and therefore, a quality life. However, this worldly self seeks his own respect that will eventually bring anxiety and insecurity in his life. The self does not respond to the divine purpose. It turns to false gods, its own ideologies, and deceptive realities. The self may manipulate others or withdraw within as it seeks its own comfort and pleasures. No

⁶¹Billings, *Union with Christ*, 20.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 34.

matter how it operates, the self may become confused and eventually drag itself into the dungeon of evil.

However, believers have new selves in the Incarnate Truth according to the gospel; they are new creatures in the sonship of God. They have totally different self-images in Christ. Nevertheless, believers may still deal with their old selves, e.g., finding their weaknesses and personal traits with which they tend to fall into temptations. Yet they should remember that it is far more important to trust in the Lord whose Spirit has touched and initiated the renewal of their hearts. Believers have to seek wisdom from God, who is the very Source of life. Believers also have to realize they are privileged to grow in union with Christ. Only in union with Christ are they able to understand God and keep growing into their new self. In union with Christ, believers can live in accordance with His will and glorify Him.

Self-awareness is significant for believers' critical thinking. People need to understand how they perceive themselves because their self-concept affects their thinking, however, self-awareness for believers is not to know themselves and establish better self-images according to the relativistic or individualistic points of view—their self-awareness is to faithfully recognize and “reckon” the new self, rooted in the restored reality according to the gospel. Believers have to know and realize who they truly are in Christ. Their “reckoning” of this new self is an initial and necessary step for the actualization of their faith in their lives.

Critical Thinking Techniques

The most well-known method in facilitating critical thinking is dialogue. In terms of judging the best solution for daily problems, Richard Paul suggests that students should be led to exploratory dialogue.⁶³ He believes that to think dialogically about

⁶³Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 300.

alternatives to a problem is not enough, but reasoning dialogically helps to evaluate perspectives. Paul further notes that in the dialogue, students propose ideas, probe their roots and assumptions, test ideas, and move between various points of views.⁶⁴

Lipman writes, “The community of inquiry represents a magnification of the efficiency of the learning process.”⁶⁵ The community of inquiry involves a consideration of alternatives through the examination of the reasons supporting each alternative.

Mezirow also states that engaging discourse leads learners to “more developmentally advanced meaning perspectives.”⁶⁶ A developmentally advanced meaning is

1. More integrative of experience.
2. Based on full information.
3. Free from both internal and external coercion.
4. Open to other perspectives and points of view.
5. Accepting of others as equal participants in discourse.
6. Objective and rational in assessing contending arguments and evidence.⁶⁷

Mezirow further writes that in this communicative learning, learners are perceived as a “psychological subject,” not an “object to be controlled and manipulated.”⁶⁸

Likewise, in his attack on the banking concept of education, Freire refutes the idea that students are viewed as empty to be filled by teachers.⁶⁹ Freire insists on reciprocity through dialogue between teachers and students in the classroom. He believes

⁶⁴Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 300.

⁶⁵Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93.

⁶⁶Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 78.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid., 79.

⁶⁹Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 58.

that critical thinkers are integrated people who have both an adaptive capacity to adjust oneself to reality and a critical capacity to make choices and transform reality.⁷⁰

Harvey Siegel speaks about ethics in the teaching and learning process and offers an “evidential style of belief” versus a “non-evidential style of belief.”⁷¹ A person who has an evidential style of belief is just like a critical thinker who assesses evidence or reasons for his or her beliefs. Conversely, Siegel writes, “If a belief is held non-evidentially . . . it is not open to rational evaluation and critical assessment.”⁷² Siegel proposes that indoctrination is “belief-inculcation” that fosters a non-evidential or non-critical style of belief.⁷³ He remarks that “in being indoctrinated, one’s freedom, dignity, autonomy, and control over his or her life is intercepted.”⁷⁴

These ideas are not to suggest the desertion of the traditional lecture method in the sphere of church education. Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill demonstrate that lectures can still provide an opportunity for educators to encourage democratic talk.⁷⁵ For instance, educators can introduce alternative perspectives, exposing the learners to different viewpoints. Brookfield and Preskill give a couple of suggestions. One approach is dramatic and theatrical, in which educators begin with their own points of view standing in one part of their classroom and then moving to another to state an opposing

⁷⁰Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 43.

⁷¹Siegel, *Educating Reason*, 78-81.

⁷²Ibid., 80.

⁷³Ibid., 80-81.

⁷⁴Ibid., 81.

⁷⁵Stephen Brookfield and Stephen Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 45.

view. Another approach is to yield time to a colleague with an opposing point of view to express it in order to stimulate the students' thinking.⁷⁶

In dialogue, critical questioning is an important element to help or facilitate one's critical thinking. Critical questioning is to elicit the assumptions underlying one's thoughts and actions. Brookfield states that critical questioning is an effective way to externalize ingrained assumptions.⁷⁷ Specifically, he suggests that identifiable specific events, people, and actions should be questioned to clarify the assumptions of the learners. Paul also remarks that by making their thoughts explicit through questioning, students will develop and evaluate their thinking. He argues that questioning specific issues is helpful in pursuing perspectives to the most basic assumptions of the students: "Everyday life is filled with multilogical problems for which there are competing answers and so require dialogical thinking."⁷⁸ He believes that dialogical discussion naturally occurs if teachers stimulate learners' thinking through critical questioning, which he calls, Socratic questioning. All thoughts can be pursued in four directions:

1. Their origin: how did you come to think this?
2. Their support: why do you believe this?
3. Their conflicts with other thoughts: what do you think of this contrasting view?
4. Their implications and consequences: what are the practical consequences of believing this?⁷⁹

Using Socratic questioning, learners can probe each others' thinking for support and implications. Next is a brief example of Paul's taxonomy of Socratic questioning:

1. Questions of clarification: what is your main point? What do you mean by _____? Could you give me an example?
2. Questions that probe assumptions: what are you assuming? Is it always the case? Why would someone make this assumption?

⁷⁶Brookfield and Preskill, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching*, 46-47.

⁷⁷Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 93.

⁷⁸Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 296.

⁷⁹Ibid.

3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence: how do you know? How could we find out whether that is true? Do you have any evidence for that?
4. Questions about viewpoints or perspectives: why have you chosen this rather than that perspective? Can anyone see this another way? What is an alternative?
5. Questions that probe implications and consequences: what are you implying by that? What would happen as a result? What effect would that have?
6. Questions about the question: how can we find out? What does this question assume? Why is this question important?⁸⁰

Paul believes that by using Socratic questioning learners can develop sensitivity to their own assumptions and to those of others.

Critique on Critical Thinking Techniques

Overall, critical thinking theorists assert that dialogue is an important tool to help people think critically. However, their strategies in dialogue are expressed only on horizontal relationships among men only. However, the Bible stresses man's relationships with both God and his fellow men (Exod 20). Specifically, believers have to understand that their relationship with God is the foundation of all other relationships. God has initiated his relationship with men ever since the Creation. Even after the Fall, God's plan to continue his relationship with them is clearly manifested throughout the biblical narratives. In particular, God has shown His faithful relationship through the sacrifice of His only Son. In response to God's love and mercy, believers are commanded not only to love God, but also other men. Thus, believers may need to take the following points into consideration in their relationships with God and also their fellow men.

First, man, created as an image of God, is required to listen to Him in his dialogical relationship. Man as an image bearer has the responsibility of hearing; the hearing of God's Word. According to Anderson, hearing the Word of God itself is "a distinctively human quality of being and a mark of the image and likeness of God."⁸¹ He

⁸⁰Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 341-44.

⁸¹Ray Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 82.

says that to be human is to hear the divine Word. When a person refuses to listen, he denies his own humanity and rejects the Source of life.

Believers in critical thinking are to be hearers of the Word of God. Their ability to hear Him has been restored through His Son. Soren Kierkegaard says that believers are not mere observers of the Word, but hearers of it so that they can become doers of the Word. He emphasizes self-examination in believers' lives, and mentions, "You must not look at the mirror [the Word], observe the mirror, but must see yourself in the mirror."⁸² He further stresses,

It is I to whom it [the Word] is speaking. . . . God's Word cannot take hold of me because I do not place myself in any personal (subjective) relation to the Word, but on the contrary—ah, what earnestness, for which I am then so highly commended by men—change the Word into an impersonal something (the objective, an objective doctrine, etc.), to which I—both earnest and cultured—relate myself objectively.⁸³

Instead of hearing God, man listens to his fellow men who are finite. He is being swayed by their ideas and thoughts. He listens to not only other men, but also leans himself on what he feels. According to Mahaney, believers' challenge is to actively listen to the Word, not themselves:

On a daily basis we're faced with two simple choices. We can either *listen* to ourselves and our constantly changing feelings about our circumstance, or we can *talk* to ourselves about the unchanging truth of who God is and what He's accomplished for us at the cross.⁸⁴

Accordingly, he suggests that believers seek wisdom by studying the Word: "Never be content with your current grasp of the gospel. The gospel is life-permeating, world-altering, universe-changing truth. . . . Its depth man will never exhaust."⁸⁵

⁸²Soren Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination: Judge for Yourself* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 25.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁴C. J. Mahaney, *The Cross-Centered Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2002), 47, emphasis original.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 67.

Will Metzger writes that the message of the gospel is so complex that it needs to be learned and understood before it could be lived and applied.⁸⁶ Commenting on the reduced gospel message, Metzger explains,

So often we are told to think of the gospel content in terms of a simple plan of salvation with three or four basic facts. Yet the evangelistic mandate our Lord give us was “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20). . . . Likewise, many of today’s evangelists continue to trying to prove their case for stripping down the extensive theology of the gospel to a minimal amount of truth content.⁸⁷

Metzger asserts that with the reduced gospel message, believers can have distorted views on God, His love, and humanity.⁸⁸ Therefore, believers’ study of the gospel should be a strenuous effort. They should not be content with their present knowledge of the gospel, but search for its depth and wholeness for their daily genuine believers’ lives.

Believers are privileged to claim that they are God’s children and can ask for wisdom (Jas 1:5). God gives generously without hesitation. His commitment to his people is without “mental reservation.”⁸⁹ However, wisdom is given to “those who trust in God, who are not double-minded.”⁹⁰ It is granted to those who earnestly seek with all their hearts and souls (Deut 4:29). Peter Davids writes,

Those who compromise their faith, who look to both God and the world for their norms and security, are in reality lacking the essence of any faith at all. If they had faith they could have wisdom, which . . . would make them perfect (probably by helping them to discern the situation of testing and react to it properly).⁹¹

⁸⁶Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 34.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., 39.

⁸⁹Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 71.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

True wisdom comes from God. Man's wisdom is not sufficient for his life in this world that God has created. He needs the wisdom of God, and His wisdom is profusely given to those who humbly ask for it (Jas 1:5).

Believers need to not only take their responsibility to hear Him, but also properly respond to Him. Thieliicke says that to understand what God has been said, believers need to (1) recognize that the Word of God is directed to themselves, not others, and 2) become involved in formulating their personal replies.⁹² Believers do not take God as the third person. They take the Word personally, and therefore, they have to reply to Him. Then their response should be in full obedience to Him. Brueggemann argues,

Communion with the God of Israel is understood primarily in terms of obedience. There is no communion prior to or apart from obedience. But obedience is the move required for communion. . . . Obedience is the primal form of biblical faith. It follows that obedience belongs to full humanness. That should not surprise us if we reflect on the mission of the gospel, which is to bring all creation to joyous obedience.

Man is commanded—therefore, he is.⁹³ Man as created by God is a being that can exist by obeying His commands and cease its life when it disobeys. Man's existence can be in a safe status when he lives a life as commanded. Therefore, the Bible constantly reminds man of not leaning on his own insight, but to trust in the Creator (Prov 3:5-8). The Bible always refers man to the sovereign rule of God because wisdom is from Him. Hence his consciousness of God, specifically fear of Him, is necessary because it will lead his life as it is meant to be.

Second, man as an image bearer has to reflect the relational aspect of the Triune God in his dialogue with his fellow men. God is a three-persons-in-one-being (Gen 5:2-3; Deut 6:4; Exod 20:3). The members of the Trinity have inseparable equivalence of one another in power and status. They exist in a perfect, blessed community of love and mutual

⁹²Helmut Thieliicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 34.

⁹³Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 97.

affirmation. They support, assist, promote, and glorify one another. In other words, the divine life of the Triune God is fundamentally personal and relational.

Erickson claims that the Triune God must have willed what would come to pass, and that willing should be “an informed decision-making process; one of their decisions would be which of them would carry out each of the respective functions.”⁹⁴ Similarly, Tanner points out,

Their revealing one another is also one good example of such a mutual relationship: in the life of the Son, the liberating character of the Spirit’s work becomes apparent (Luke 4:18-21), and the Spirit is the one who makes the Son known (1 Cor 12:3). They also form mutual paths of access to one another; no one comes to the Father except through the Son (John 14:6).⁹⁵

In this relationality, LaCugna claims, “Each divine person is irresistibly drawn to the other, taking his existence from the other, containing the other in him, while at the same time pouring self out into the other.”⁹⁶

Specifically, Greek fathers called this interdependent and mutual indwelling of the Trinity *Perichoresis*. *Perichoresis* means “being-in-one-another; to be a divine person is to be by nature in relation to other persons.” In describing the term, LaCugna says *Perichoresis* is like “the glue holding together the three individual persons in a substantial unity.”⁹⁷ Tanner also describes, “It is in virtue of their [the Triune God] relations with one another that they are what they are, in full mutuality of co-implication.”⁹⁸ Man is one in relationship with others. Man by himself cannot represent *Imago Dei*. He needs other

⁹⁴Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 310.

⁹⁵Kathryn Tanner, “The Trinity as Christian Teaching,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Giles Emery and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 351.

⁹⁶Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 275

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Tanner, “The Trinity as Christian Teaching,” 351.

fellow men. In short, as Anderson states, “The *imago* is not totally present in the form of individual humanity but more completely as co-humanity.”⁹⁹ Therefore, the human community is supposed to mirror the *Perichoresis* in order to bring in the originality in human relationship.

Such relationality is in a loving relationship. The members of the Trinity show eternally glorious love for one another. God is love (1 John 4:8). God delighted in the Son’s baptism, and the Spirit was descending (Matt 3:16-17). In the metaphor of the one body and its many parts (1 Cor 12), the reconciled unity is sought with the diversity of gifted people. The mutuality of the three persons of the Trinity invites believers to endure such diversity and promote one another’s given talents in order to work toward the unity of the body. The mutuality calls on believers to humble themselves in which one seeks the interests of others (Phil 2:4). It summons them to build up the community of otherness. Mark 12:30-31 says, “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 and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In John 13:34, Christ gave a new command; “Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another.” Jesus wants his disciples to love one another, and that is to mark them as believers. Believers as disciples of Christ should walk in Christ as they demonstrate this kind of love that Jesus taught.

Hence, believers’ dialogue should be initiated in love (Eph 4:15). God has loved and saved them while they were sinners (Rom 5:8). God has brought them into the relationship of sonship. They are joined to the sonship of the incarnate Son. First John 3:1a says, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are.” In illustrating the notion of adoption, Sanders mentions,

It [Adoption] emphasizes the quality of the new relationship that God brings us into, a relationship of having been made into his children. In explicitly Trinitarian terms,

⁹⁹Anderson, *On Being Human*, 73.

this means that God brings us into the relationship of sonship that has always been part of his divine life.¹⁰⁰

Now believers have joined in the part of *Perichoresis* with the Triune God. Moreover, God's children have an imprint of Trinitarian relationality not only with Him, but also with fellow believers since they are sons of God. The sonship of God points believers to His grace as they are to express His love to one another in their relationship.

Third, the genuine dialogue requires a clear conscience. In dialogue with God, other fellow men, or themselves, believers need to prepare their consciences as clear as possible in order to live godly lives and make biblical decisions in their lives. One way to help believers have clear consciences can be critical questioning. As stated, secular critical thinking theorists promote critical questioning to retrospect people's past in order to find out their assumptions or the origin of their thinking. Their main concern for this finding is to correct their fallacious assumptions or thinking according to the norms defined by their own desirable perspectives. Believers, however, take the Word of God as the norm for critical questioning. For instance, believers may question themselves if their assumptions are biblically related and oriented. In so doing, they may seek and identify some patterns of unbiblical thinking in their minds.

In particular, believers' critical questioning needs to deal with believers' wayward hearts that have produced ungodly assumptions and thinking patterns in their daily lives. The initial purpose of critical questioning for believers may be to help them see where their hearts have fallen into. Powlison suggests the following questions to examine one's idolatrous heart:

1. To who or what do you look for life-sustaining stability, security, and acceptance?
2. What do you really want and expect [out of your life]?
3. What would make you happy?

¹⁰⁰Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 157.

4. What would make you an acceptable person?
5. Where do you look for power and success?¹⁰¹

Believers may ask themselves or can guide others with such questions to find out the idolatrous elements in their hearts. They need to humbly and boldly face their heart problems and think critically about what has captivated their hearts; their own God-replacements.

Subsequently, believers have to search the unbiblical behaviors in their daily lives as well. Eyrich and Fitzpatrick suggest the following questions to examine one's motivation and subsequent actions;

1. What is the lustful passion that is motivating the worship of a idol?
2. How is the glory of God being exchanged for the glory of man?
3. What sinful tools are being utilized?
4. What thinking patterns and behaviors must be put off?
5. What thinking patterns and attitudes must be renewed?
6. What new thinking patterns and behaviors must be put on?¹⁰²

Believers' critical thinking is not to be confined to their thinking, but extended to actions in their lives. Therefore, it is necessary for believers to critically question their specific actions that may have been undesirable to the will of God.

In this world of deception, man tends to fail to think critically and does not exactly understand or know what he is doing. He seeks happiness and pursues joy, pleasure, and satisfaction. He puts his endeavor in finding something to quench his thirst for happiness. While doing so, he unknowingly chases his own idolatrous heart and exhausts his life. However, true happiness never comes from man's seeking and satisfying fleshly desires. It can come only from the Creator who has restored His

¹⁰¹David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995), 36.

¹⁰²Howard Eyrich and Elyse Fitzpatrick, "The Diagnoses and Treatment of Idols of the Heart," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth*, ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 348.

relationship with His people. True happiness is in the God whose redemptive plan has been operated through the Son. Only those who have accepted the forgiveness of God and been reconciled to Him can have true peace and happiness. Psalm 32:1-2 says, “What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.” Man can be truly happy when his sins are forgiven. He can be satisfied when he is free from the bondage of sin.

Believers have received this forgiveness and need to continually prepare clear paths to the Lord in order to keep right relationships with Him. Believers are required to continually confess and repent their sins in order to have clear consciences. Their guilty consciences cannot make their dialogues genuine and truthful. Without confession and repentance of sins, their dialogues would continue to be covered, and therefore, deceiving. Unless cleared with their hearts, they would use lying lips, and their conversations may be unjoyful. With unclear consciences, they may continue to harden their hearts and distance themselves from God and others.

Believers’ consistent effort in having clear consciences is necessary because it would help them build up true dialogical relationships. Yet, believers need to understand that having a biblically clear conscience is a gradual process. Priest writes,

The Scriptures are clear that conscience is prone to error and that aspect of the sanctification of the believer is that conscience is gradually corrected by the written law—that the Holy Spirit uses the Scripture to gradually transform our mind, including its moral understanding, into the image of God’s original perfect plan for us.¹⁰³

Hence, believers should not be deceived by momentary successes in clearing their conscience. They need to continue to work on renewing their minds for their whole life.

¹⁰³Robert J. Priest, “Missionary Elenctics: Conscience and Culture,” *Missiology* 22, no. 3 (July 1994): 299.

In dialogical relationships with fellow men, believers have to understand people from different contexts. People have formed various ways in thinking and behavioral patterns. Priest specifically asserts, “In intercultural situations, people may tend to morally condemn others for behaviors about which others have no conscience.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, believers need to be sensitive enough to learn and recognize the cultures of others. They are not to criticize one another, but understand the present states of one another’s consciences and help one another to live up to the biblical truths. Priest urges believers to recognize, “Culture has played in the formation of their own conscience, and believers need help in distinguishing scruples grounded in transcendent biblical moral truth from scruples shaped, at least in part, by conventional cultural meanings.”¹⁰⁵ Men are born into a mixture of cultures. In dialogues, people have to deal with a variety of consciences. Every believer is from his own context and is in a constant process of renewing his minds while struggling to have clear consciences in accordance with the Word. Believers, in *Perichoresis* relationship with others, need to continue to support one another so as to have a clear conscience.

Believers’ dialogues are not self-seeking dialogues; their dialogues are before the presence of God and among fellow men whose images have been redeemed in Christ. Their dialogues are to be in the love of God and others. Thus, believers may need to critically question the truthfulness and faithfulness of their own heart and seek a clear conscience.

Summary

Human community is created as communicative. People in the community rule God’s creation through their words in dialogues. They construct realities through dialogical relationships with one another. Therefore, critical thinking theorists suggest

¹⁰⁴Priest, “Missionary Elenctics,” 297.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 306.

that dialogue is one of the ways to keep modifying and reconstructing better realities for individuals and corporate entities. However, believers need to remember that, since the Fall, people's dialogues have been deviated from God's standards. They have been constructing realities in their own favor with their own ideologies, theories, and perspectives. In such realities, believers produce a great deal of untruthful and detestable images and scenes before the eyes of God. Through the dialogues of deception, people have become children of Satan. These kinds of dialogues have brought about the chaos and confusion of this world.

However, believers have been reconciled to God and enabled to hear the truthfulness of the Word. Thus, they should continue listening to the Word of God and seek to faithfully perform their duties in their lives. They need to proactively search right responses from the Bible for their life situations. Once believers obtain biblical answers to their specific life situations, they need to put their acquired knowledge into practice in full obedience.

In addition, believers should be able to reflect the triune God's dialogical relationship in their dialogues. Man is created to be communal, and he can be a true man through his communal relationship. In their dialogical relationships, believers have to manifest mutual respect and love. The triune God has shown his *Perichoresis* relationship in his reciprocity. As adopted sons and daughters of God, believers' dialogical relationship is to be in *Perichoresis* with God and other fellows.

Finally, it is significant for believers to keep clear consciences. Believers can be easily confused by the world of lies. Without knowledge, they may follow the patterns of this world. Hence, they can alert themselves by developing a habit of critically questioning on their idolatrous heart and actions henceforth. Critical questions can be helpful in discovering their unbiblical assumptions or thinking, and subsequent behaviors in their lives. Answering heart-related questions can be a way to lead themselves to confession and repentance of their sins.

Character Development: The Final Goal of Critical Thinking

A purpose of critical thinking in the secular world is to reinterpret one's realities, redefine oneself, and re-construct his life as he recreates his realities. For this purpose, theorists of critical thinking believe that teachers should help students seek the authenticity and accuracy of their own reasoning. In the process of critical thinking, therefore, students are challenged to identify and challenge their own assumptions.¹⁰⁶ Critical thinking theorists believe that this inquiry of their own assumptions necessitates the study of their socio-cultural environments, and further brings out their socio-economic and political awakening. Callison specifically notes critical thinking in relation to critical literacy:

More than seeking meaning through the selection and use of information, critical literacy is the process for seeking self. The student who has reached mature levels in critical literacy will challenge, de-construct and re-construct information in terms of arguments to justify social and political reform. Through this process, the student defines himself or herself.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, according to Brookfield, this whole process of individual critical thinking is finally toward a healthy democracy because individual changes through critical thinking would affect the context of their wider society:

A critically reflective person is aware that individual biographies are partly social products are that values, beliefs, and behavioral norms are culturally produced. From this awareness springs an understanding that changes in individual lives are often inextricably linked to alterations in wider social structures.¹⁰⁸

Theorists of critical thinking assert that critical thinkers are to not only develop an ability of thinking, but also develop their character in the process. In his view on critical thinking, Richard Paul distinguishes between critical thinking in the weak sense

¹⁰⁶Most critical thinking theorists discuss the importance of finding one's own assumptions, e.g., Stephen D. Brookfield, Barry K. Beyer, Paulo Freire, Richard Paul, and Matthew Lipman.

¹⁰⁷Daniel Callison, "Critical Literacy," *Social Library Activities Monthly* 16, no. 9 (2000): 34.

¹⁰⁸Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 58.

and in the strong sense.¹⁰⁹ A critical thinker in the weak sense is “a person who uses the intellectual skills of critical thinking selectively for his or her own sake.” On the contrary, a critical thinker in the strong sense is “a person who uses the fullest powers of his or her mind in the service of sincere, fair-minded understanding and evaluation of his or her beliefs.”¹¹⁰ Paul believes that critical thinkers should be socially and morally responsible in that they not only argue from opposing points of view, but also seek and identify weaknesses and limitations in their own positions.¹¹¹

As mentioned previously in this chapter, Paul expresses that people by nature are egocentric, and as a result, their tendency in thinking can be irrational. He states that the human egocentric mind is a “major obstacle to developing intellectual virtues.”¹¹² Paul explains, “Critical thinkers should painstakingly study how humans can better ground, develop, and apply thought.”¹¹³ Relationally, Paul points out some dispositions of critical thinking, such as intellectual humility, courage, integrity, perseverance, empathy, and fair-mindedness.¹¹⁴

Similarly, many critical thinking theorists relate moral reasoning to critical thinking. Specifically, critical thinking in classroom settings has to involve moral obligations to learners regarding the manner of teaching. Siegel states that students’ rights to question, challenge, and seek reasons, explanations, and justifications must be

¹⁰⁹Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 324.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid., 264.

¹¹³Richard W. Paul, “The State of Critical Thinking Today,” *New Directions for Community College* 130 (2005): 28.

¹¹⁴Paul, *Critical Thinking*, 324.

respected.¹¹⁵ Matthew Lipman says that the contributions of all learners should be welcomed in mutual respect.¹¹⁶

In particular, Siegel believes that the development of critical thinking does not only involve reasoning abilities, but also a “critical spirit” that includes certain dispositions, attitudes, habits of mind, and character traits. In the emphasis of “identity-constitutive ideal,” Siegel points out that teachers should be models of critical thinking to their students.¹¹⁷ Teachers can inculcate dispositions of critical thinking, helping their students develop an individual character in their critical thinking. In thought of developing an individual ideal character, Siegel specifically points out the necessity of autonomy:

The ideal [of cultivating reason] calls for the fostering of certain skills and abilities, and for the fostering of a certain sort of character. It is thus a general ideal of a certain sort of person whom it is the task of education to help create. This aspect of the educational ideal of rationality aligns it with the complementary ideal of autonomy, since a rational person will also be an autonomous one, capable of judging for herself the justifiedness of candidate beliefs and the legitimacy of candidate values.¹¹⁸

It is not to say, however, that Siegel ignores motivational constituents of critical thinking from teachers since one’s moral autonomy cannot be “heteronomously instructive.”¹¹⁹ In other words, Siegel thinks that teachers are facilitators up to a certain point before students are able to develop an ability for their autonomy in their critical thinking. Therefore, Siegel believes that an educational aim is to help students to gradually develop themselves from inculcated thinking agents to self-governing critical thinkers.

In helping children develop into morally responsible agents, Feinberg asserts that facilitators need to help children develop a habit of critical self-revision. In order to

¹¹⁵Siegel, *Educating Reason*, 57.

¹¹⁶Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 122.

¹¹⁷Harvey Siegel, “Cultivating Reason,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Randall Curren (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 307.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Siegel, *Educating Reason*, 86-87.

make self-regulative behaviors take place, facilitators should not be manipulative and coercive. Feinberg believes that children have to be guided to become an autonomous agent in their moral development as well:

Always the self that contributes to the making of the newer self is the product both of outside influences and an earlier self that was not quite as fully formed. That earlier self, in turn, was the product both of outside influences and a still earlier self that was still less fully formed and fixed, and so on, all the way back to infancy. At every subsequent stage the immature child plays a greater role in the creation of his own life, until at the arbitrarily fixed point of full maturity, he is at last fully in charge of himself. . . . Perhaps we are all self-made in the way just described, except those who have been severely manipulated, indoctrinated, or coerced throughout childhood. But the self we have created in this way for ourselves will not be an authentic self unless the habit of critical self-revision was implanted in us early by parents, educators, or peers, and strengthened by our own constant exercise of it.¹²⁰

Feinberg views that certain basic directions in moral principles are important for children. Yet their autonomy in critical self-reflection has to be eventually encouraged as they become better critical thinkers of morality.

Critique on Character Development

After all, critical thinking theorists in secular literature advocate relativistic and individualistic moral principles. As they promote individual autonomy in moral development, they would define their moral principles individually or culturally, or compromise mutually on moral decisions. As a result, various moral norms have produced conflicts and confusions in this world. However, man's moral principles are not to be dependent on individual thoughts and wisdom, but to be revealed from the wisdom of the Ultimate Truths Holder. Man himself, fallen in nature, cannot be resourceful as he needs to be. Thus, believers' first and foremost genuine moral responsibility is their dependence on divine truths. John Jefferson Davis writes, "Human reason, being impaired by sin, is not to serve as a separate norm over against Scripture, but rather as the servant of divine

¹²⁰Joel Feinberg, *Harm to Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 34-35.

revelation in the application of biblical truth.”¹²¹ With this dutiful response in mind, believers may need to consider the following points in taking their moral responsibilities and developing a Christian character henceforth.

First, the Word of God is sufficient for man’s godliness. Scripture provides the principles of morality and helps believers discern what is right and wrong in solving life’s problems. Especially, believers have to understand that their daily problems are not psychological problems, but often rooted in their spiritual problems. Lambert writes,

Secular psychologists cannot truly understand the problems people have because people’s problems are deeply theological. Secularists suppress the truth in unrighteousness and so miss the godward dimension at the root of all problems. . . . They [secularists] fail to understand that all problems in living—emotional, mental, relational, behavioral—have a spiritual core.¹²²

Hence, believers are not supposed to solve their daily problems with their own instant and mundane judgments and schemes. They should humbly refer to the ultimate wisdom of God when they face life’s troubles.

Second 2 Timothy 3:15-16 says, “You have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation. . . . All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training.” The verse can be a surety for believers’ reference to Scripture in dealing with their problems. The Word of God is the manual for the education of man. It can instruct and modify him for what his life is supposed to be. Commenting on these verses, Lambert describes salvation:

In 2 Timothy, salvation is not a limiting term but rather a mammoth expression referring to all of the problems from which Jesus intends to redeem people. Will there be dissociative identity disorder in heaven? No. How about obsessive-compulsive disorder? No. . . . Indeed, none of the difficulties in living mentioned will exist in heaven. Why? because these problems will finally be eradicated by the precious blood of Jesus and the life–living Spirit in God’s great work of salvation.¹²³

¹²¹John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics* (Philipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 19.

¹²²Heath Lambert, “Introduction: The Sufficiency of Scripture,” in *Counseling the Hard Cases*, ed. Stuart Scott and Heath Lambert (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 8-9.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 11.

Relationally, therefore, Christians possess everything necessary to help people with their nonmedical problems (2 Pet 1:3-4). More specifically, believers have everything essential because they have Christ. Lambert illustrates,

This granting of all essential things flows from the faithfulness of God in Christ. That is to say that God has provided these essentials in Christ. The Bible is sufficient because Christ is sufficient, and God shows us in the Word how to encounter him in all of life's complexities.¹²⁴

The sufficiency of Scripture is well expressed in the finished work of Christ.

N. T. Wright states,

The transformation we are promised at the end of time has already begun in Jesus. When God raised him from the dead, he launched his entire project of new creation, and called people of all sorts to be part of that project, already, here and now. And that means that the steps we take toward the ultimate goal—the things which make sense of Christian living in what might otherwise be a long interval between initial faith and final salvation—already partake of that same character of transformation.¹²⁵

Believers are assured through their transformation. Their transformation may continue in their lives from the time of their second birth. However, Christian character cannot be conceived only in terms of the Christian journey from a standing start to a future destination because it belongs to an end that has already begun. Wright expresses, “What you will be is what you already are in Christ.”¹²⁶ With this eschatological view on the development of their character, Wright says that “believers’ sense of a character is not to be undermined, but should be enhanced.”¹²⁷

The gospel is the core expression of the sufficient Word of God. The finished work of Christ gives the meaning and importance of believers’ lives and keeps their lives in relationship with the Father. Goldsworthy illustrates,

¹²⁴Lambert, “Introduction: The Sufficiency of Scripture,” 13.

¹²⁵N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 31.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 117.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*

Christ is the truth, the final fullest word to mankind, all other words in the Bible are given their final meaning by him. . . . God’s word to us in the Bible is mediated to us through Jesus Christ. There is no direct word from the Father to you or me. Every word of the Father comes to us through the person and work of Jesus.¹²⁸

Christ is the assurance of the culmination of believers’ transformation. He has given believers the promised victory for their lives. Believers should, therefore, focus on Jesus. Wright describes,

Jesus himself, backed up by the early Christian writers, speaks repeatedly about the development of a particular *character*—the transforming, shaping, and marking of a life and its habits—will generate the sort of behavior that rules might have pointed toward but which a “rule-keeping” *mentality* can never achieve. And it will produce the sort of life which will in fact be true to self—though the “self” to which it will at last be true is the redeemed self, the transformed self, not the merely “discovered” self of popular thought.¹²⁹

Believers are to trust in Christ who has satisfied the wrath of God, perfected the law, and brought about the full possibility for believers’ transformation. The Word in flesh living in believers assures that the grace and wisdom of God is sufficient, and they can do all things through Him who strengthens them (Phil 4:13).

Second, Christ is the goal for believers’ character development. Specifically, believers are to behold the glory of the Lord Jesus and be transformed into his image. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospers describe what it means to become like Jesus:

Jesus’ sinlessness is not the sum total of his attributes. A rock is sinless, but becoming like a rock means something more than becoming sinless. It means taking on the quality of rock: being hard, unemotional, and unaffected by the weather, amongst a whole lot of other qualities.¹³⁰

¹²⁸Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 72.

¹²⁹Wright, *After You Believe*, 7.

¹³⁰Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cospers, *Faithmapping: A Gospel Atlas for Your Spiritual Journey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 165.

In other words, to become like Jesus is not only to take his righteousness into one's life, but one is to seriously consider and resemble the character of Jesus that has fulfilled the will of God. Montgomery and Cospers assert,

Becoming like Jesus means taking on his character, his way of looking at the world, his way of loving and interacting with others. It means cultivating a relationship with God like Jesus' own—one of intimacy, depth, and care. It means living a life that's at war with evil's grip on the world around us.¹³¹

Jesus' character is manifested in every detail of his own life: in his thinking, action, dealing with relationships with God and men, and managing spiritual warfare in this world. Simply put, believers are to seriously consider and take Jesus' way in everything; what and how Jesus would think, speak, and act.

In the process of resembling the character of Jesus, however, believers need to be careful not to indulge themselves in their self-righteousness. Man easily becomes self-absorbed and prideful. The Pharisees considered themselves righteous; they adhered to their legalistic traditions and kept them well. The Pharisees thought that they could gain God's acceptance due to their righteous actions. After all, they rejected the Son of God who is the end of law for righteousness. Unknowingly, believers may fall into the temptation of legalistic pattern. Especially, believers may fall into temptation of self-satisfaction and pride and despise others. Ryrie clarifies what it means to be legalistic:

It [legalism] is a wrong attitude toward the code of laws under which a person lives. Legalism involves the presence of law, the wrong motive toward obeying that law and often the wrong use of the power provided to keep law, but it is basically a wrong attitude. Thus legalism may be defined as a fleshly attitude which conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self.¹³²

Therefore, believers have to continue examining themselves to discover the status of their hearts. They need to continually remind themselves of, and return to, the truth of the gospel; Jesus perfected the law. Believers have become righteous by their faith, not by their work.

¹³¹Montgomery and Cospers, *Faithmapping*, 165.

¹³²Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 159.

God is pleased with His Son (Matt 3:17), and His people that He has endowed His sonship. When believers imitate the Son, doing their roles as the sons of God, they can better worship and please Him. Eric Johnson states,

The *telos* of God's redemptive agenda for humans is *Christlikeness*. Humans glorify God best by resembling the Son of Man. . . . God's speech was more than revelation; it was action... God's speech-acts were intended to turn us into those who look like the Son of God. As the signs of God's glory become more deeply internalized, believers increasingly manifest the glory of God themselves.¹³³

Johnson claims that one way to become a Christlike self is believers' self-assessment.¹³⁴ He asserts that believers' accurate knowledge of themselves can manifest more of God's glory:

With regard to the self, Christlikeness would seem to consist in a well-developed, complex and accurate self, one composed of truthful self-knowledge—and lots of it—valid self-evaluations and a strong sense of identity. Christ's self-assessment would have mirrored his Father's assessment of him (John 5:30-38; 8:50-55; 12:44-50), so Christlikeness in the self entails the Christian's consent to God's knowledge and evaluations of him or her, as best as can be discerned.¹³⁵

Jesus himself presented his accurate and truthful self to his contemporary people. Jesus reasoned with and refuted people about what they thought he might not possibly have said or done if he had been truly the Son of God. In such a self-manifestation, he fulfilled the purpose of his life on earth. Likewise, believers need to take this character of Jesus; they should assess their current selves and firmly stand on who they are in Christ and what they live for.

The Bible commands believers to be holy (1 Pet 1:16). The purpose of believers' salvation is their holiness (Eph 1:4). God did not call believers to be impure, but to live a holy life (1 Thess 4:7). For the holiness of believers, Paul urges people to be

¹³³Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 542, emphasis original.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 544.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 545.

imitators (Eph 5:1) and followers of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1). Christ himself commands this; deny oneself and take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23). Piper illustrates,

When he bids us take up our cross, he means come and die. The cross was a place of horrible execution. It would have been unthinkable in Jesus' day to wear a cross as a piece of Jewelry. It would have been like wearing a miniature electric chair or lynching rope. His words must have had a terrifying effect: "Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt 10:38).¹³⁶

Taking on the character of Jesus means that believers may have hard lives in this world. The hardships may come in many aspects, such as physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Yet, believers are promised a future incomparable to their present sufferings (Rom 8:18). Hence, they are to press on even in hard races of their lives as they grow into the image of Christ.

Third, believers need to keep working on their own self-discipline. Even if believers are assured of the initiative for their transformation, they are still commanded to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). In particular, Wright emphasizes self-discipline in order to develop Christian character. He asserts that character "does not come by accident. It comes through the self-discipline required to do anything in life really well."¹³⁷ He further notes that one's character is a kind of "second-order level of naturalness like an acquired taste, such choices and actions, which started off being practiced with difficulty, ended up being a second nature."¹³⁸ Accordingly, Wright uses a "put on" analogy in the Bible for a way to build up one's character:

As with the "putting off," so the "putting on" is a matter of consciously deciding, again and again, to do certain things in certain ways, to create patterns of memory and imagination deep within the psyche and, as we saw from contemporary neuroscience, deep within the actual physical structure of our mysterious brain. Gradually, bit by bit, the "putting on" of these qualities—qualities that seem for the

¹³⁶John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 95.

¹³⁷Wright, *After You Believe*, 23.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

moment so artificial, so unnatural, so “unlike me”—will in fact transform the character at its deepest level.¹³⁹

Believers are to live diligent lives. Their lives are not simple and easy; they need to work hard on this second nature birthed at their conversions. They should continue their good work until they eventually develop a habit and finally form a Christian character.

John MacArthur stresses the importance of the believers’ role in self-discipline. He considers that believers may experience the work of God in their lives better and more in depth when they have self-discipline as commanded in the Word. According to MacArthur, God, who resides in believers by His Spirit, produces two attitudes.¹⁴⁰ One attitude is to move their wills toward sanctification; believers have a righteous discontent with their present spiritual state. The other is to have a holy aspiration; believers long to be purer, holier, more righteous, and more genuine in their walk with Christ. Moreover, God helps them to live for Him and is pleased when they work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:13). However, MacArthur says that this work of God will not be fully realized unless believers exercise self-discipline: “The Lord can work effectively only through lives that are disciplined and submitted to Him.”¹⁴¹

Believers’ self-discipline to submit themselves to Him eventually leads to the best decisions in their lives. In pursuing excellence, MacArthur asserts that believers must think deeply with integrity and choose wisely the best of alternatives over merely the good. He explains that when Paul says the word “excellent” in Philippians 1:10, Paul goes beyond “one’s ability to discern between good and evil, between truth and error.”¹⁴²

¹³⁹Wright, *After You Believe*, 145.

¹⁴⁰John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Power of Integrity: Building a Life without Compromise* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 111.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 42.

Specifically, what is best is not found in the standards of the human law, but believers' love rooted in their knowledge of God. O'Brien states,

The Jew was to choose what was essential on the basis of the law. . . . But the Philippians who were in Christ were to make such choices of what was vital on the basis of an ever increasing love—a love that penetrated more deeply into the knowledge of God and the treasure of Christ, and imparted to the Christian a keener and more delicate more sense for specific situations.¹⁴³

Believers' decisions, when based on the love of God, cannot be solely for themselves, but for others. Hansen notes that even if what is best is not always obvious, "love seeks what is best for the other person."¹⁴⁴ According to him, Paul prays that the expansion of their love, guided by knowing Christ, instructs them on how to choose the best way to love in each situation.¹⁴⁵ In other words, believers may be able to love their neighbors to the highest degree when they are submissive to the Word of God.

Paul says that believers are to train themselves to be godly (1 Tim 4:7). He specifically uses the term "training," just as in the physical training Greek athletes went through; "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" (1 Cor 9:25). Believers need regular training. They have to invest their time in planning and practicing self-discipline. Bridges states,

We must discipline our lives for a regular healthy diet of the Word of God. We need a planned time each day for reading or studying the Bible. Every Christian who makes progress in holiness is a person who has disciplined his life so that he spends regular time in the Bible. There simply is no other way.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1991), 78.

¹⁴⁴G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2009), 60.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992), 98.

Believers need to battle Satan in this regard and arrange their schedules to have consistent intake of the Word of God.

In addition, believers should remember that the goal of their meditation of the Word is application. They have to come up with specific actions to take in life situations. Bridges suggests the following questions as they think of applications from the Word:

1. What does this passage teach concerning God's will for a holy life?
2. How does my life measure up to that Scripture; specifically where and how do I fall short? (Be specific; don't generalize.)
3. What definite steps of action do I need to take to obey?¹⁴⁷

Self-discipline requires perseverance. Believers may have all kinds of temptations, such as procrastination of their scheduled time in the Word, passiveness in their application of the Word, and withholding themselves from confessing and repenting of sins for a certain period of time. With such temptations, believers may experience certain failures. However, they are to arise and keep pressing on with their good work. Proverbs 24:16 says, "For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes." Believers have hope in the Lord who will hold them up in times of troubles. The Lord promised to carry their good work on to completion in the end (Phil 1:6).

Summary

A purpose of critical thinking in secular literature is to develop a reasoning skill of man. His skillful reasoning can be used for his autonomy to build up his moral character. Facilitators of critical thinking help in handing down to students what is conventionally acceptable and guiding them to eventually become responsible citizens. However, the inadequacy for one's moral development in secular critical thinking literature is evident because of the ignorance of absolute truths revealed in the Word.

¹⁴⁷Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, 104.

Believers may reason with other men, but they, in their reasoning, should refer to the Word of God and need the Holy Spirit's guidance. Secular critical thinkers miss the fact that Scripture provides what is essential for man's moral principles. Specifically, they do not recognize that people's problems are spiritual in their origin. Hence, secular critical thinkers ignore biblical truths and keep creating instant and momentary strategies in solving their problems. However, believers are to earnestly seek the wisdom of God for their daily problems. They need to take the biblical truths as their norms in answering for the troubles in their lives.

Specifically, believers understand that Jesus gives the final meaning and solution for this world. They know that Jesus is the perfect man who has fulfilled the Master Plan of the Father. Jesus' work on earth provided the assurance of believers' participation in their transformation. The finished work of Jesus has confirmed the victory of their lives in the end. However, believers need to persevere in the sufferings of their present lives in this world. Believers may go through difficulties and hardships, thus, they must to work on their self-discipline in order to fight good fights while in this world. Through self-discipline, they are able to continue battling Satan who tries to deceive and overtake them.

According to Wright, character is the "pattern of thinking and acting which runs right through someone, so that wherever you cut into them (as it were), you see the same person through and through."¹⁴⁸ Critical thinking may be used for many purposes; most people may believe that they need to critically think for better adaption to this fast growing and changing world. However, believers are not to merely adapt themselves to this world as non-believers do; believers are to build up and expand a Christ culture in this world. One way to advance His culture is to renew their minds and live transformed according to the Word. The Spirit of God took an initiative for believers' transformation

¹⁴⁸Wright, *After You Believe*, 17.

and believers are now responsible for taking further steps, with the help of the Counselor, to develop “best” patterns of thinking and actions in their daily lives.

Conclusion

The modern world advocates respect of individual thoughts and opinions. People are skeptical of absolutes and believe in relativism. Critical thinking theorists in the realm of such a world have thought and spoken many ways in facilitating and developing people’s critical thinking.

Theorists in critical thinking have considered the significance of contextual and self-awareness. They argue that people’s awareness of their own context and who they are helps people to understand the origins of their thinking. However, believers’ awareness of their contextual factors and self-identity in this fallen world are inadequate in the process of their critical thinking. Believers should bear in mind that they live in the objective reality of the gospel.

The gospel provides foundations for believers’ thinking, speech, and actions. Believers need to deeply take into consideration the redemptive purpose of God’s will. Specifically, they are to live in the incarnate truth—Christ Jesus who gives the ultimate meaning of man’s life. Hence, believers are commanded to follow him. Specifically, they are to engage themselves in the consistent practice of building up character by resembling that of Christ Jesus.

In the process of developing critical thinking, believers may adopt critical thinking techniques, such as dialogue and critical questioning. Believers, however, should remember that their dialogical relationship has to reflect the relational aspect of the triune God. Their relationship has to be in truth and love. Accordingly, their practices for developing critical thinking can not only be individual, but reciprocal. Believers are to support one another to come up with the best decisions as possible in order to advance the kingdom of God. As in faith community, they are to hold up and encourage one another to think, speak, and act for His glory.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAM

The purpose of the project was to develop a critical thinking program for Cornerstone Church. The program was to help small group leaders live authentic Christian lives as they grow in Christ. One way for them live out their faith was to help them renew their minds to lead them to transformed lives. Concretely, the program facilitated a rethinking about the leaders' thoughts, habits, and decisions. To lead them to think critically, the curriculum accomplished five things

First, the curriculum attempted to help the leaders understand the nature of man's heart. Man's heart is idolatrous. Unknowingly or unconsciously, his heart is deviated from what is true. Believers are to look into their hearts in order to see how truthful and genuine their hearts are. Specifically they need to see if their thinking is in line with what is biblical. Believers can be deceived by their own thoughts and beliefs. Believers need to be spiritually alert that they may not become self-deceptive and do ungodly things. They should not forget to fix their eyes on the Word of God as they mirror their hearts on the truthfulness of the Word. This program was created to give an opportunity not only to see their own hearts, but also to think about what they do in their lives with what is in their hearts. Believers can live wise or foolish lives depending on who they trust. They can lean on their own understanding or the wisdom of God.

Second, the curriculum helped small group leaders understand the meaning and importance of critical thinking in the church context. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

To renew one's mind is a constant process as he is to be in the progressive sanctification. Believers have to indulge themselves in rethinking their thoughts and behavioral patterns. They may have become Pharisees, failing to think critically about what they think and do. Believers need to re-align their thoughts in accordance with the will of God. They need to consider the fact that the process of this alignment may not give the final answers. They are to continue working in order to find better answers because they may make mistakes in the process. Accordingly, critical thinkers must have an attitude of humility.

Third, the curriculum aimed to help leaders see important factors influencing their critical thinking. The external factors can be major events in their past, cultural and familial backgrounds, and individual experiences. The internal factors can be one's self-concept, thoughts, and feelings. These factors impact believers' lives. However, believers are to deal with their heart issues before the Lord. Man is sinful in nature. He should not make any excuses before the Creator. Therefore, believers need to deeply think about their own propensity to sin against God. They have to critically think their own idolatrous hearts and be repentant of their evil thoughts, decisions, and habits.

Fourth, the curriculum offered what believers need to do in order to think critically in their Christian journey. Believers have a responsibility to hear the Word of God. Thus, they should make every effort to expose themselves to the Word of God. One way is to study and meditate the Word alone. However, the Word can also be learned in the dialogical relationship among believers. The Triune God has given His attributes to be imitated by believers in their dialogical relationship. Believers need to help one another through true care and concern. Another way to facilitate critical thinking is critical questioning. Critical questioning does not simply consist of fact-gathering questions, but heart questions. Critical questioning gives believers a chance to think about what is biblically true and what needs to be manifested in their lives against unbiblical thoughts and behaviors. Critical questioning also reminds believers of who they are in Christ. Believers should reckon that they are bought by the price of the blood of Jesus

Christ. They are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. Critical questioning helps believers to consider themselves as those who God defines they are, not those who they say and think they are. In other words, critical questioning leads believers to the gospel because the power of the gospel will lift them up to a better faith life journey.

Fifth, the curriculum provided a questionnaire for critical thinking practice. The questions in the questionnaire were for the small group leaders to think through their current thought processes, habits, and decisions they have made. The list of questions reflect what has been discussed. The questions dealt with external and internal factors, identity in Christ, heart issues, and a future plan for change. The questionnaire is an initial sample for the leaders' temporary practice for critical thinking. They had an opportunity to understand what critical thinking may look like and how they may be able to practice their critical thinking in real life situations.

The supervisor of the project evaluated the curriculum's content/biblical faithfulness, structure/logical flow, length, helpfulness, and applicability. After the evaluation, the senior pastor reviewed the curriculum and agreed to start the implementation of the curriculum in the church.

Phase 1

Phase 1 concerned developing a critical thinking program. This period included conversations with pastoral staff and small group leaders.

The curriculum was developed based on the chapters 2 and 3 of this project. Before the curriculum was written, the pastoral staff (i.e., the senior pastor, and I) met to discuss the overall idea on how to develop the content of the curriculum. As stated, the curriculum focused on the heart of man, the importance of critical thinking, certain factors influencing man's thinking, critical thinking strategies, and a practical questionnaire for the leaders' practice of critical thinking.

The senior pastor made an announcement for a small group leaders' meeting in order to discuss what would be done for the project. The senior pastor read the rationale

of the project and further explained the purpose of developing the program. The church has four small group leaders, and they all attended the meeting. The four leaders questioned the purpose for clarification. They agreed to the rationale in which the leaders, as well as the church members, need to be more actively engaged in their individual faith journey. The small group leaders wished that Cornerstone Church had implemented this kind of program earlier. One of the leaders expressed, “It is something the church keeps on doing so that we turn on ‘our consciousness of faith’ in our daily lives. . . . After we take this program, I am willing to help other church members to take this program as well. We have not done anything like this.” All small group leaders expressed their willingness to take the critical thinking program. They also made a decision to entrust me and the supervisor of the project with developing and implementing the curriculum.

The curriculum was developed according to the content order of chapters 2 and 3. The curriculum contains four sessions, and the fourth session included the questionnaire. As stated, the first lesson discussed the heart of man. The second lesson discussed the importance of critical thinking as Christians. The third tackled significant and influential factors in critical thinking. The fourth explained ways to help and improve critical thinking, and provided a questionnaire that gave the small group leaders an opportunity to practice critical thinking in two consecutive weeks.

Phase 2

Phase 2 concerned the implementation of the curriculum. This section explains the four sessions.

Session 1

Session 1 included a pre-test and dealt with the heart of man. The purpose of the session was to find out the leaders’ knowledge about critical thinking and to help them understand how deceitful and corrupt man’s heart is. On the first Friday in November 2016, the first session was held. During the session, the small group leaders

took the pre-test on critical thinking. It took about forty minutes to answer all the questions. The pre-test had five categories. The first category concerned the definition of critical thinking. For this category, the leaders were asked to write what critical thinking means in the church context. The first question needed further explanation because the small group leaders had a hard time understanding the word *critical thinking*. Thus, I simplified the question to, what “right thinking” would mean as Christians. I put the question in other ways as well: “How should our thinking as Christians be?” and “What can biblical thinking be?” In response, one small group leader said, “We do not usually think about our thinking. This question should not be anything unusual. But it is still a hard question.” Then we all laughed aloud.

After the first question, they were allowed to ask any question regarding questions in the pre-test. The concept of critical thinking or dealing with their own thinking was something new to the small group members because their education was to memorize facts and do what they were told to do, not think about their own thinking. After the clarification of the intention of the project and what critical thinking could mean, however, the leaders were able to proceed and answer the rest of the questions.

The second category of questions covered the importance of critical thinking. The leaders were asked to answer why their thinking is important in their faith journeys. They also had to come up with some Bible verses that talk about thinking. Even if they did not have much time to think about the matter of thinking in their Christian lives, they gradually became interested in answering the questions. As they took the test, it was clear that they began to think more deeply about the importance of thinking. One of leaders expressed, “This program sounds interesting, and I am expecting to learn and change my thinking.” Another said skeptically, “Can we change our thinking for a short period of time through this program?” I responded, “We are to fight good fight to the end of our lives.”

In the third category of the pre-test, the leaders were asked about influential factors in their thinking and to write truths from the Bible that they know affect their thinking process. Even when they were told to give short and general answers, the small group leaders wanted to give long answers for this question. Some of them looked back on their childhood and wanted to write about memories that affected their personalities and formed certain thinking patterns. Regarding Bible verses, they came up with favorite Bible verses that had an impact on their lives. They did not come up with foundational Bible verses that they need in the process of changing their lives as well as their thinking, that is, verses relating to their identity in Christ and the gospel verses. However, the intention of this category of the questions was later on to lead them to the gospel verses that they must hold on to in their faith journeys.

The fourth category dealt with critical thinking techniques. I had to explain the question and simplify it as how one can be helped for “right thinking” as Christians. After the test, they expressed that no one really helped with their thinking process so far. One of the leaders said, “I change my thinking only when I feel like it listening to good sermons. I feel like I need to intentionally think about my own thinking from now on.” Another leader mentioned, “I like questions in the test. Those questions made me think my own thinking. I wish I could have more time to think about those questions and answer them.” Other leader mentioned, “I wish we could share our answers and talk about more details of our lives in relation to what our right thinking as Christians is supposed to be.”

The four small group leaders got score 1 in all questions in all categories, which means that they did not give related answers on the issue of critical thinking. This result made them anticipate more from the program. A leader expressed, “There must be lots of things to learn through this program, and we hope that we will be gaining something to change our thinking.” Another added, “I am already critical now for my thinking.”

After the pre-test was the first lesson, “The Heart.” The questions had already triggered them to think further and get actively engaged in the conversations during the class. First, they had an opportunity to discuss their own understanding of the heart of man. However, the small group leaders described their own personalities instead of their understanding of the heart of man. I directed the discussion so that they would talk about the wickedness of man’s heart. I mentioned man’s sinful and corrupted heart. I also picked some Bible verses to describe the heart of man, such as Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, and Mark 7:21. The leaders were then given time to discuss what kind of life this heart would produce. Some of them talked about TV soap operas to give examples of man’s wicked heart. Others mentioned Bible characters who showed sinful hearts, such as Saul and Judas Iscariot.

Afterward, I explained the three features of man’s heart: abandoning God, selfishness, and idolatry. They shared their own experiences in terms of those three features as well. One leader said, “There is always pride in us that make us do all those three and more. Christ humbled himself and became the example of what humility means for us.” The small group leaders shared general struggles of man because of pride. For instance, a leader mentioned that man wants to be the owner of his own life and be independent from the Lord. Man is consciously or unconsciously narcissistic. We discussed passive and active aggressiveness of man accordingly.

While talking about their own idolatrous hearts, they also contrasted the hearts of the wise and the foolish. We noted the Pharisees’ pride that they could “see” (Matt 23). One leader emphasized, “We’d better confess that we cannot see even though we think we can see. Once we believe we are able to see, we start to get blind.” We specifically pointed out the falsity of man on his dependence of his own “able-ness.” We all admitted once again that man should not be independent in thinking, but dependent on the wisdom of God. One of the leaders spoke, “God gave us the power of dependence. People believe that independence is the only power.”

Session 2

Session 2 discussed the mind of the Pharisees and the reason why the Pharisees failed in understanding Jesus' questions. It also covered Romans 6:11, especially the verb *Logizomai*, and the importance of reckoning the truth that "we are dead in sin, but alive to God in Christ." This session started with thinking about the stereotypes of the Pharisees. We reflected on the questions of Jesus and the attitudes of the Pharisees, specifically why they failed in thinking critically (Matt 15). One leader said, "We need a person like Jesus who would ask questions leading us to think, and yet it is our hearts that resist those questions. We do not even want to hear such questions."

People are afraid of sharp and surgical questions. The small group leaders agreed that they would be offended like the Pharisees were. The leaders concluded that it was about the attitudes of their hearts responding to such questions. One leader mentioned, "Are we ready for questions at all? I mean, do we have right attitudes? Unless we have right attitudes, we cannot think and answer right." We came back to the heart of man and asked, "How can we have right attitudes?"

The small group leaders started to think about renewing the mind. First, they had an opportunity to define renewing the mind in their own words. They talked about two things in this process: the necessity of their repentance and the Word of God to fill their hearts. One leader said, "We need to prepare our hearts by confessing our sins and repent before Him." Another leader agreed and added, "That is right, but we need to be filled with the Word of God as well." They continued talking about the importance of the constant process of repentance and being fed by the truthfulness of the Word. The conversation furthered on those two topics for some time.

I then shared the foundational thought on critical thinking, Romans 6:11: "Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The leaders mediated on the power of the gospel in their thinking and actions: how would this verse be helpful in the process of changing their thinking and actions, and what may they put off and put on in thinking and actions. The leaders confessed that they did not seriously think about this

gospel verse and then failed to obey the Word. One of the leaders said, “We are always deceived by the father of lie, and we are trying to do good deeds leaving the power of the Word behind.” They all admitted that they were struggling in fighting good fights without thinking about the power of the gospel; they are dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. They confessed that they were not seriously conscious of how powerful the gospel can work for their lives. They seemed to put the gospel in their sub-consciousness and seldom take out and utilize it in their lives. One leader expressed, “One millimeter of slight tilt makes an enormous gap at the end. There is a big trouble if we fail to deeply and truly think about the gospel” Another leader stated, “I do not think it is a slight tilt. It is black and white difference.”

Session 3

Session 3 explained the external and internal factors affecting one’s thinking, especially one’s own contexts and self-understanding. Many people make excuses when they do unbiblical actions. This does not mean that they can ignore their own contexts. Outer circumstances are influential in forming behavioral patterns, but in discussing internal factors, specifically self-concepts, they are to understand their gospel-centered self in Christ that would change their whole perspective toward their lives.

This lesson was discussed for a long time because we shared childhood stories and how assumptions had been affected and formed by them. They had a chance to deeply think why they were thinking what they were thinking. In their hectic lives, they did not have much time to think about their stories of the past and how influential those stories were for their lives. Some leaders pointed out specific life moments that had impacted their whole lives. Other leaders could not share their stories without tears.

After a time of sharing, they were led to discuss the eschatological view of life and biblical self-image. During this time, they were reminded of the eternity future in heaven that should influence their thinking; their lives are not confined to this world, but will finally be in eternity. They learned that such an eschatological view of life should

keep impacting their thinking. Accordingly, they should invest their effort not in this world, but also in heaven (Col 1:11-12).

They also had a chance to discuss how differently they should have acted in the past if they had the biblical understanding of who they are. The small group leaders confessed that they always had identity issues. They were disturbed by the world that had defined who they are. They confessed how important it is to return to the biblical identity of who they are in Christ. The leaders mentioned that their small group members would not seriously and earnestly think about their identity issues either. One leader said, “We always become blurry in our spirituality. Is it not that we believe that we know the gospel at any rate? We say we can ‘see’, but we are looking at what we need to see.”

Session 4

Session 4 involved the introduction of the critical thinking technique, such as dialogue and critical questioning. It approached dialogue in the dialogical relationship of the Triune God that needs to be reflected in relationships. In the process of dialogical relationship, it is also significant to ask right questions to lead oneself and others to critical thinking. Questions have to help one examine his own heart and lead him to finding unbiblical thoughts and actions thereof.

The leaders had an opportunity to widen the meaning of dialogue. They thought about their dialogues with other people, but until this class, they did not know how the Triune God reflected in their dialogues. One of the leaders stated, “I have a clearer idea when we say that we are created in the image of God. No man is an island. I cannot be a man without other fellow human.” We talked about the plural form, “we,” when God created man in Genesis. Then, we also shared the importance of one body with many parts in church (1 Cor 12).

Moreover, the leaders were guided to the importance of ‘hearing responsibility’ to God as Christians. In this discussion, they were reminded to depend on the wisdom of God by hearing as well as studying the Word. What one hears is what one

thinks of and what one thinks of can be what one becomes. We shared and compared how much time of the day is spent in hearing worldly matters and the wisdom of God.

In terms of critical questioning, they went through certain heart questions and shared their thoughts. Leaders were hesitant to share their put-offs at first, but enjoyed the time when a leader opened up his conversation with his habit of frequently being late for his appointments. We realized once again that we can start with a small thing in our daily lives. The leader said, “Our deep thoughts sometimes never make our life easy. Think simple.”

Phase 3

Phase 3 included the post-test on critical thinking. The leaders were tested on the definition of critical thinking and the significance and techniques of critical thinking. They were also given the questionnaire for their initial practices of critical thinking. They were given two weeks, but during the two-week period they were to answer the questionnaire only once.

One week after the fourth session, the small group leaders took the post-test on critical thinking. The questions were the same as in the pre-test, but an additional category asked (1) if the curriculum would be helpful for their critical thinking, (2) if there are any recommendations to modify the curriculum, and (3) if they would like to encourage their small group members to take the classes.

The small group leaders were able to articulate their answers better in the post-test than in the pre-test. They were able to explain what it means to think critically as Christians, describe the significance of thinking in their own words, and came up with Bible verses. Some of the verses provided for their answers were Romans 6:11, 12:2, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 12:2, and Proverbs 3:5. Specifically, Romans 6:11 was the verse that they based their thinking on. Sincere trust in the truth of the verse, they said, would direct their lives in thinking right and critical. They stated that they do not want other factors to control their minds. They truly accepted the fact that to love God with their

minds is to think according to the Word of God. Hence, they all agreed that they need proclaim this verse to themselves every day.

The leaders uttered that they need to be humble and diligent in order to take the responsibility to hear the Word. One leader said that he had been lazy listening to Him, spending time watching television and listening to rumors among the Korean community. He confessed that such time had affected and distracted his mind away from God. Another leader mentioned the importance of the dialogical relationship of the Triune God reflected in Christians. He told us that he had not thought about such an aspect of the image of God.

The leaders agreed that critical thinking is important because their minds are the control tower of their words and actions. They claimed that they should continually work to renew their minds for their Christian journey. They mentioned that to cease the process of renewing their minds means to stop fighting the good fight.

The result of post-test was quite successful. All the leaders scored a 3 or above in all questions in all the categories. Their statements were clear and understandable, and they used related terms to the issue of the curriculum. There were considerable differences before and after the program. As mentioned, during the pre-test, they even had a hard time understanding the questions, and I had to give further instructions and illustrations. However, during the post-test, they were able to provide satisfactory answers, demonstrating a higher level of comprehension of thinking through the classes.

After the post-test, the leaders were given the questionnaire and its instructions. The questionnaire was to help the leaders practice what they learned during the class. In the questionnaire, the leaders were to pick up a thought in process or an ongoing life event. I requested that they perform this practice of critical thinking at least once out of two chances in the following two weeks. Questions probed their assumptions on a certain life events or a thought in process.

The small group leaders completed their questionnaire on the following week, and we shared experiences. I planned to interview each individual in case they wanted their sharing to be confidential. However, the leaders agreed that they would share their experiences together. Each leader chose a challenge that they could open up to others. As mentioned, one of the leaders worked on his being late for appointments. The verse he came up with was Philippians 2:3. He concluded that he was not respecting others' time. He confessed that he intercepted others' time, and therefore, ignored fellow men, created in the image of God. God loves our fellow brothers and sisters. He was not supposed to waste the time that God has given for them. He suggested a simple action plan, that is, to use his mobile phone as an alarm clock, setting several times for each appointment. He was also reminded of how others feel about late comers through other leaders sharing.

A second leader talked about his mild temperamental personality. He usually gets frustrated with his hot tempter. He shared Ephesians 4:26-27, saying that he had been working on resembling the attitudes of Jesus, especially humility and patience. He regretted that he was giving the devil a foothold and he wanted to challenge himself to find why others had to say and behave such ways. He decided to work on understanding others more and better. However, at the same time, he made a resolution to search why God put those people in his life. He made a list of positive reasons that God put a certain neighbor in his life. One reason he shared with us was that patience is one of the good fights that he needs to keep on fighting.

The third leader briefly told us that he had been physically abused by his parent when he was a teenager. For a year, his family had financial problems, and he knew that his father went through hard times when he physically abused him. After three decades passed, he thought he had overcome his hard feelings, but while taking the critical thinking program, he realized that he had not. He kept thinking of the false behaviors that Satan tempted his parent to do. He confessed that His parent's wrongdoing remained in his mind, even if his parent never did it again after that year. He read to us Mark 12:30

and shared what it means to love God with all his mind. He claimed that he should love God with his thinking, knowing that God crushed the iniquities of humankind through the blood of His only Son and gave him freedom even in his thoughts. The leader also stated that he would not recall the sins of his father that he had already forgiven. He said that he would pray to change his long-time and unconsciously patterned thought that bothered him.

The fourth leader said that he is a negative thinker. He shared Philippians 4:8. He said that he should have worked on his own thinking, and this program gave him a chance to think about his own thinking. He put Philippians 4:8 on the door and in the bathroom. He confessed that he had a trust issue. In the midst of troubles, his negativity got worse, and he began to complain about his life. He did not come up with an action plan, but he told us that he would continue to pray, launch regular Bible reading, and get involved in volunteering to help handicapped children every Saturday. He regretted that he did not have much time recently for his personal relationship with God and did not invest his life in others.

After they shared stories, I asked if they would recommend this questionnaire to their small group members. One leader said, “I want them to enjoy not only being image bearers, but also image-sharers.” He stated that the church members should support one another by stories that God put in their lives. Another leader mentioned that we should not forget to keep working on replacing our stories with God’s story as well.

Conclusion

Many Christians struggle in their faith journey to find the will of God for their specific lives. However, the truth is that Christians, first of all, need to do the will of God, which is generally and clearly stated in the Bible and applicable to all. The Bible says, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33).

I hoped that the leaders of Cornerstone Church would want to be conscious of how well they were doing in their faith journey in this regard. It was important for them to start by changing their thinking pattern and actions. I wanted them to have biblical practices in their thinking and action process. The program was not intended to totally change their thinking over just a couple of months. However, they had an opportunity to understand how critical thinking may look by practicing with the questionnaire.

I introduced the leaders to the importance of thinking, as Christians, through the curriculum. I helped them to think about the wise and the foolish in the Bible and the pride of the Pharisees claiming that they can “see.” Thus, I wanted to challenge the leaders to think about the renewal of their minds. In addition, I provided a questionnaire with which they can initiate their critical thinking practice. Specifically, I wanted them to tackle real life situations while completing this program. I did not want them to stay where they were in terms of their thinking, but instead to search first what was in their hearts through thinking about questions in the questionnaire. In the practice of critical thinking, I challenged them to see the unbiblical thinking and actions in their daily lives and encouraged them to make plans for change.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The project was designed to help small group leaders live out their faith through critical thinking. Cornerstone Presbyterian Church desires for church members to actively engage themselves not only in serving one another in church, but also thinking consciously about their thinking and actions according to the wisdom of God. Accordingly, the project focused on a critical thinking program by which the leaders of the church think about, first of all, what is in their hearts. Specifically, they were directed to think critically about how sinful their thoughts could be according to the Word of God.

Then, the small group leaders had an opportunity to think about past life events that influenced their current pattern of their thinking. They looked into their corrupted hearts and how they had been influenced by this fallen world. However, they were told to think biblically by re-learning what the gospel is and what the gospel can do to their hearts. They were reminded of the power of the gospel. The small group leaders mediated on the meaning of Romans 6:11, and grasped on the importance of repeating and proclaiming the verse to their hearts every day.

In addition, the small group leaders had an opportunity to practice what they learned during the classes. They were given a questionnaire to think about their unbiblical behaviors. They were guided to find their false assumptions and search biblically alternative thoughts to those assumptions. They were also told to seek advice from other fellow believers if necessary. They also made an action plan to actualize what they believed to be true.

For this process to occur, this project sought to meet four goals: (1) to develop a four-week class that covered the biblical basis for the significance of critical thinking in

Christian lives and explained critical thinking techniques; (2) to develop a critical thinking questionnaire to help one's initial practice of critical thinking; (3) to increase the knowledge of the importance of critical thinking during the four-week class; and (4) to facilitate the initial practice of critical thinking through the critical thinking questionnaire.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The first goal of the project was to develop a four-week class that covered the basis for the significance of critical thinking in Christian lives and explained critical thinking techniques. The classes in the curriculum were developed based on the research from chapters 2 and 3 of this project. The desire of this project was to help the leaders consider what they are thinking; how much they are likely to think biblically, and what they can do in response to the biblical requirement of the renewal of their minds.

The first lesson was designed to help the leaders understand the corruption of and grasp over certain characteristics of man's heart. The first lesson also encouraged them to contrast thinking between the wise and foolish, and finally led them to thinking of their own hearts. In dealing with man's heart, the hearts of the Israelites from the book of Jeremiah were presented. Specifically, the questions in the lesson gave a chance for leaders to think about selfish and idolatrous hearts of the Israelites. Subsequently, the foolish and the wise from Proverbs 28:26 were discussed before the leaders thought of their hearts of their own.

The second lesson presented the typical stereotypical people, the Pharisees, who never invested in critical thinking in response to Jesus' questions in Matthew 15. After the discussion of the stereotype, the lesson dealt with the meaning of the renewing of one's mind. The leaders were then led to writing the meaning of renewing the mind in their own words. Once they brushed up on the meaning of renewing of the mind, they were introduced with the concept and the significance of *Logizomai*. By comprehending of the word *Logizomai*, the leaders came to realize how powerful their reckoning of the gospel verse could affect their own thinking.

The third class introduced significant factors in critical thinking: contextual awareness and self-concept. Even if much of the lesson time dealt with the leaders' contextual awareness, the lesson focused more on their identity in Christ.

The fourth class presented the importance of the reflection of the Triune God's dialogical relationship in the lives of believers. To think critically, believers have to interact in love and trust. Specifically, the leaders needed to know certain questions that can lead others to think critically as Jesus did in his ministry. After discussion of the facilitation of critical thinking by questions, the leaders were given the questionnaire for their initial practices of critical thinking.

The second goal of the project was to develop a critical thinking questionnaire to help one's initial critical thinking practice. The order of questions were in accordance with the contents of the curriculum so that the leaders could recall what they learned in the class. The questions led the leaders to first pick up a thought/decision or a habit that they needed to change in their current lives. With their choice, they were to answer the questions in order. The questions helped them think about how influential their thought/habit was to their current lives, the assumptions where the thought were derived from, and the origin of their assumptions. The questions also encouraged them to think about their redeemed selves in that thought/decision or habit, how God's glory was replaced, what to put off, and biblically correct thinking. Finally, they were asked to create a plan in order to develop a new thought/decision or habit.

The third goal of the project was to increase the knowledge and the importance of critical thinking during the four-week class. The leaders considerably increased the knowledge of the concept of critical thinking and the significance of critical thinking in their faith journey. All the leaders had score 1 before the classes, which means they were not able to answer the questions at all or stated unrelated answers to the questions. In fact, they had no idea of the term *critical thinking*. They wondered how relevant critical thinking could be to their faith. The concept of critical thinking was a difficult phrase for

the leaders to understand at first. The word “critical” sounded “criticizing” or “logical” to some leaders. To others, critical thinking was understood as an orderly thinking or an improved way of thinking that may help them better understand what the Bible says.

After the four classes, the leaders’ scores were above 3, which means that they gave clear statements to the issue of critical thinking. They were able to explain what it means to think critically as believers. They also illustrated well enough the significance of their thinking in their faith journeys. All the leaders claimed that the lessons introduced a clear concept of renewing one’s mind.

The small group leaders found it interesting to learn the concept of dialogue expressed as the Triune God. The introduction of the Triune God’s dialogical relationship gave the leaders another approach in understanding what it means to be God’s image bearer. In other words, they learned how sincerely and faithfully they are to communicate with other believers. Specifically, they stated the significance of the responsibility of hearing in humility. They concluded that humility is a pivotal attitude in critical thinking because it would help them humbly hear the wisdom of God and also the voice of others.

The fourth goal of the project was to facilitate the initial practice of critical thinking with the critical thinking questionnaire. This practice gave the leaders a chance to not only recall the lessons, but to also think about their unbiblical thought/decision or habit in their real lives. They were given a two-week period in which to go through all the questions one time and come up with answers to those questions. All the leaders were able to come up with old habits and also shared their stories openly to one another.

However, the leaders had a hard time in making action plans. The plans were vague in that their plans were not effective enough to continue. They suggested that I should introduce certain books to find some practical tips to change old habits. Moreover, follow-ups were another challenge to consider; they need encouragement or support in order to continue working on their challenges. One of the leaders said that the whole group could brainstorm together to make an action plan for each member.

Analysis of Pre- and Post-Tests

As discussed in chapter 4, during the pre-test, the leaders had many questions in order to answer the first question. For instance, the first question that asked them to define the meaning of critical thinking as Christians was a challenge for them. They had no idea what critical thinking meant. They did not even know why they had to answer such a question for a Bible study program. Hence, I had to simplify the word, “critical thinking” to “right thinking.”

They were also confused on the pre-test on the question concerning the techniques to facilitate critical thinking. However, during the post-test, their attitudes were totally different. One leader uttered, “Your intention created a big production.” Overall, answers for the pre-test were not at all satisfactory. They all scored “1” on the scale of 1 to 4. Most questions needed revising so that the participants would not be embarrassed with no correct answers. One small group leader suggested that I provide an introductory paragraph with a story to challenge one’s own thinking or its significance in one’s faith journey. The story may give a clue to what the participant would be expected to do in the test and in the further steps in the program.

The post-test, which was the same as the pre-test, included additional questions. The additional questions were, if the curriculum was helpful for their thinking, if there were suggestions for revision of the curriculum, and if they would like others to join the program. Regarding the second question, the leaders asserted that something should be done in order for students not to feel the big gap before and after the curriculum. Since there was a substantial change in scores before and after the four-week classes, the program is considered successful. However, as an educator, I need to think about their learning process in regard to emotional status. The confusion may have caused emotional stress in classes.

Strengths of the Project

First, the project gave the small group leaders an opportunity to think about their own thinking, specifically how and why they think in the way that they do. They confessed that they had confined themselves to their own thinking and its pattern until they completed the curriculum. Through the project, the leaders looked back on their lives and came up with their unbiblical assumptions that affected their Christian lives. They said that they “freed” themselves to indulge worldly pattern of thinking and did not consciously work on their own thinking. They all stated that they had learned the significance of their thinking and realized weaknesses in their thinking.

Specifically, the small group leaders clearly understood what it meant to love God with all their minds. They hoped to consistently remove the foothold of the devil in their minds and change to what God commands them to think and act. The leaders uttered how important it was to lean on the wisdom of God. People know and possess their own logic in their thinking. They have knowledge upon which they can make plans for their lives. They have had ways of solving problems in their lives. All these ways and experiences have been patterned for a certain period in life. Some have changed and others have remained for all their lives. Pharisees had their own patterns, ways, and culture, but they failed to think critically on what Jesus claimed to be true. The small group leaders asserted that truly loving God entailed obeying God. Total submission of their thinking to the Word is one of the Christians’ first and foremost responsibilities. They may face difficulties in understanding what is going on in their lives, yet the leaders consented that every thought has to be taken captive to Christ first.

The leaders agreed that a biblical approach was powerful. They realized that the Word of God is sufficient in their lives. Some believe that the Bible is irrelevant to today. Even Christians think that the Word of God should stay in church; they fail to connect the Word of God to their daily lives. However, the leaders mentioned that the curriculum was an eye opener to the practicality of the wisdom of God. One leader confessed, “I think I got an idea of how to apply the Word of God to my life. The Word

can truly touch every detail of our life.” The small group leaders stressed that they need to search the Word of God deeper and find out every way possible to apply it to their Christian journeys.

Second, the project helped leaders to share their lives. In their sharing, they were conscious of what is biblical and unbiblical. Each individual leader pointed out certain unbiblical decisions he made in the past. Through their sharing, they were able to sense, deeper and clearly, how God had worked in their lives as well as how resistant their thinking was against the Word. The leaders confessed that God held onto their lives in the midst of their uncritical thinking and decisions. Hence, their sharing revealed not only their foolish thinking and actions, but also the love of God in the Word who wants them to lead their lives in biblical ways.

The leaders claimed that they were able to engage themselves in “Christianly” conversations. One of the leaders stated that Cornerstone Church members’ conversation should be reoriented as the Word says, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph 4:29). During their fellowship times on Sundays or other days, church members need encouragement from leaders so that their conversations may become Christian talk. In relation, the small group leaders emphasized once again the significance of their thinking since the Bible says, “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45b).

Third, the project was a conduit for leaders to reconfirm their identity in Christ. All believers need to consciously and continuously hold to the solid foundation of who they are in Christ. However, the rapidly changing world blurs the minds of believers, and from time to time, they fail to construct their lives upon the truthfulness of their identity in Christ. Revisiting and mediating on Romans 6:11 in the curriculum was of great help for the small group leaders to delve into the depth of the gospel.

One leader professed that he had remained guilty before he mediated on Romans 6:11 in the class. He questioned, “How many of us among believers would continue to fight good fight with this verse in mind and how often could they be able to hold onto this truth in every day of their lives?” His question was not skeptical, but he was glad that he reaffirmed his faith in Christ. He assured us with his firm understanding of the freedom and the peace that God has given to believers. Then, we read Galatians 5:13, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

Weaknesses of the Project

The project included a broad spectrum of dealing with one’s thinking. It contained a theoretical part that discussed dialogue and critical questioning. However, in reality, many need help in thinking about real steps to follow in actualizing right behaviors and developing them into habits. The project cannot consistently assist the participants to work on such matters. Participants in the program may need counselors after the program to support them with ideas of how to manifest critical thinking in accordance with the Word. The participants still need to seek ways to continue putting their critical ideas into practice.

Second, it is true that critical thinkers as Christians should have humble attitudes in order to continue to be arduous critical thinkers according to the Word; however, they still need the basics of Christianity upon which they may initially think as true believers of the Lord. The project did not provide such basics of Christianity. Beginners in their faith journeys may have a hard time following questions in the questionnaire. In other words, participants need a minimum content through which they can initiate Christian thinking to examine their actions and thoughts. Thus, participation may have certain requirements to their own to practice critical thinking. For instance, they could take a class for the basic knowledge of Christian lives.

Third, in order to continue working on critical thinking, one needs an accountable partner. At a certain point or place in the curriculum, the facilitator can emphasize the importance of accountable partnerships or can offer a time to seek a partner in order to further critical thinking practice in the lives of the participants after the project. One aspect of the Triune of God is plurality in the image, and so is the dialogical relationship of man. Yet the program does not provide a chance for the participants in regard to how to find an accountability partner and does not help them to seek one either. Perhaps the program could suggest that the participant bring an accountability partner to the class and they could complete the curriculum together in order to work on critical thinking even after the program. In this way, the participant could continue working on the process of his critical thinking.

Proposed Modifications

In presenting the class, the length of the curriculum had its own challenge. Each class took more than an hour. Instead of four classes, it could have been better to extend to six classes. While the class had many long conversations, the reason for the long class time was because each lesson had many subtopics. For instance, the second lesson included two heavy topics: renewing the mind and *logizomai*. The concept of *logizomai* was new to leaders, and they appreciated learning the Greek word and shared many thoughts during the discussion of this word.

The third class was also long. The lessons on understanding context and the self would be better as two separate classes. The leaders were interested in one another's past stories and gained a deeper understanding toward one another by sharing their stories. However, there was not a clear cut between their stories and the self because those two also could not be separate entities.

Accordingly, the curriculum can be divided into six classes (1) The Heart of Man, (2) The Stereotype, (3) *Logizomai*, (4) Contextual Awareness, (5) Self-Awareness, and (6) Facilitating Critical Thinking.

Second, I may replace the phrase “critical thinking” with the phrase “biblical thinking.” As mentioned, the leaders who took the pre-test had a difficult time in understanding the phrase “critical thinking.” Even if they understood the phrase in the end, I had a hard time making myself clear with the concept of critical thinking. Some people are familiar with “critical thinking” in terms of their faith journey; however, as stated, this phrase may sound “criticizing” to some or “logical” to others. The replacement of the phrase “critical thinking” with “biblical thinking” would be preferably accepted and understood for any other participants in the future.

Implications from the Project

In order to help leaders continue in effective critical thinking in their lives, the church needs experts in certain areas regarding daily challenges. The four small group leaders came up with problems while practicing critical thinking. For instance, one leader mentioned abuse by his parents. He will definitely gain insight and principles from the Word, but for a practical point of view, the church can invite experts who may be able to give concrete strategies for parental abuse. The expertise can be of great help for the leader to overcome his challenge better and sooner.

Second, this project was implemented to first generation Koreans who were raised and educated in Korea. They did not know the term *critical thinking*. During the pre-test, time had to be taken to explain what *critical thinking* meant. However, if the participants were young or had been educated in American schools, they would not have had a hard time understanding my explanation of *critical thinking*. Accordingly, the modifications of the project may vary unlike what is mentioned in the previous section.

Third, in implementing this critical thinking program in the future, I will need to study “the participants.” Knowledge of the participants may be helpful in facilitating the tests, delivering the content of the curriculum, and assisting their initial practice of critical thinking. For instance, the four small group leaders were from Confucian-influenced background. Thus, I dealt with the banking mode of education. However, if

the participants were younger, aged 25 to 35, I would have to understand certain traits of millennials to better communicate with them. The purpose of the program is to help people change their thinking patterns, so I would need to understand the participants' current general thinking patterns.

Theological Reflection

God wants believers' thoughts to be captive to Jesus (2 Cor 3:5). Many times they let their minds to be filled with worldly concerns. They fight "worldly fights" in order to produce a worldly defined successful life during their lives on earth. In doing so, they do not live a godly life. However, the Bible says, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Col 3:2), and, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Cor 7:10). Believers are to fight good fights in the Lord. In order to fight good fights, they are to think of what is in their minds.

In Genesis 11, people built a city and a tower. They invested their time and energy to establish a kingdom of their own. As a symbol of their power and authority, they put up a tower and sought blessings of their own. They thought they could push through their own plans and reckoned their desires to come into reality. Then, God intervened and scattered them because their thoughts were rebellious against God from the very beginning.

Thinking of their own can be dangerous and evil. Believers' thinking has to be connected and dependent on the wisdom of God. The Bible says, "Every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil all the time" (Gen 6:5b). Satan continues to work to deceive man. If believers are not in the constant process of critical thinking in accordance with the Word, their thoughts and actions cannot be right before the eyes of the Lord.

Jesus was dependent on the Holy Spirit. He was not at all resistant to the Spirit of God. He was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit (Matt 4:1), drove out demons

with the power of the Spirit (Matt 12:28), and was offered as atoning sacrifice through the Spirit of God (Heb 9:14). Christians are followers of Jesus. They must be dependent on the Spirit of God. Especially, they have to entrust their lives to the Spirit of God. God has promised to help believers through His Spirit: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). Believers’ thinking needs to rely on what God reminds them in every moment of their lives. God speaks, and the children of God should listen to what their Father says.

Personal Reflection

One’s thinking is important in his faith journey. The implementation of the project gave an opportunity to small group leaders to critically think about what they currently think. Moreover, they had an opportunity to retrospect their lives in the past. This project helped them realize that they have built a false reality in their lives. As mentioned, helping small group leaders understand the meaning of critical thinking was difficulty in the first meeting, but it was worth implementing the project since people started to think. The small group leaders made a joke for some time when they saw me in the church, “I am thinking.” By their saying, I believe that they were struggling to think right in line with the Word.

Man wastes his lifetime when deceived by Satan. Satan wants him to believe lies and construct his life patterns upon those lies. If used in the future, I hope that this project will help teach believers not to waste their lifetime. The small group leaders appreciated the classes spent together. They learned what it means to be a true thinker. In human history, there were great thinkers; however, they were just building basic principles of the world and deceptive philosophy based on human traditions (Col 2:8). We shared how many people in this world are soaked into such lies and how highly they consider those deceptions.

In search of the meaning of critical thinking, I found many descriptions of

critical thinking in social science literature. It could be related to one's assumptions in general, but also to understanding other's thoughts as well. However, I learned that the secular meaning of critical thinking can be only a circular thinking without any final and absolute answers. No human being can offer a final answer to their realities. Their answers are temporary and understandable on their own. Their answers can be humanitarian, but not holy before the Creator.

This project helped me to think what I am thinking. Now, I am constantly thinking what I am thinking. In thinking of my thoughts, I mirror my thinking to the Word of God. I ask where my assumptions are from. I also ask myself if my thoughts are godly. I tell church members in other Bible classes to ask themselves the same questions. If we stop asking these questions, we cannot say that we are spiritually battling.

I am thankful to and encouraged by my supervisor, who instructed me to focus on *Logizomai*. I did not think deeply about Romans 6:11 before the project. I realized how powerful that gospel verse is and will be to myself and my fellow brothers and sisters. Believing in and reckoning the verse itself and with the help of the Spirit, we can rethink of who and how we are in Christ. The word is so powerful that it penetrates, occupies, and changes one's mind. The verse offers a base on which one builds up how and why his thinking has to be.

Conclusion

Many Christians fail to think about the gap between their convictions and actions. They think that they truly believe in Him, but their actions do not reflect that. In fact, they do not show what they believe in their real lives. James 2:17 says, "Faith without deeds is dead." One of the main reasons why they fail to put faith into practice is because of their wrong thinking; they do not seriously think about what they are doing. They do not think deeply about how unfaithful their thinking is. They do not notice that their thinking is stagnant and does nothing to affect their Christian lives. They may seek the Word, but they do not know that they are just accumulating their wanted knowledge.

They seek for better taste to satisfy the intellectual realm of their mind. However, to build up a sturdy life before the Lord, they are commanded to put their faith into practice.

In regard to the matter of the practice of faith, Christians need to think about what went wrong from the very beginning. Pharisees were not critically thinking about their thoughts. They were self-centered in their thinking and neglected examining their thinking. They resisted truths in order to protect the beliefs that they believed right. Christians have to think about what prevents them from manifesting faith in their daily lives. Could that be an old belief or a conventional way of thinking, just like the Pharisees? Could that be an evil thought that they would not be likely to remove right away because they have been enjoying it? Could that be an old habit that has formed over a long period? God wants believers believe what is true; they are alive to God in Christ. Reckoning this truth, believers need to change their thinking and experience the power of the Word by actively expressing it in their lives. In doing so, believers can construct and expand the reality of the truthfulness, the kingdom of God.

APPENDIX 1
CRITICAL THINKING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRICS

This tool was used to evaluate the critical thinking curriculum for content/biblical faithfulness, structure/logical flow, length, helpfulness, and applicability.

Critical Thinking Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The lesson meets its objectives.			3		
2. The lesson is biblically based.			3		
3. The lesson includes relevant Bible passages.			3		
4. The lesson logically flows.			3		
5. The lesson is lengthy enough for an hour class.			3		Some lessons may be too long
6. The lesson is practical and applicable.			3		
7. The lesson is motivational.				4	
8. The lesson is clear overall.			3		

*Evaluated by the Supervisor

Critical Thinking Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The lesson meets its objectives.				4	
2. The lesson is biblically based.				4	
3. The lesson includes relevant Bible passages.				4	
4. The lesson logically flows.				4	
5. The lesson is lengthy enough for an hour class.		2			Lessons are too long
6. The lesson is practical and applicable.			3		
7. The lesson is motivational.				4	
8. The lesson is clear overall.			3		

*Evaluated by the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Church

APPENDIX 2

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONNAIRE EVALUATION RUBRICS

This rubric was used to evaluate the critical thinking questionnaire for clarity, logical flow, length, practicality, and applicability.

Critical Thinking Questionnaire Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The instructions for using the questionnaire are clear.			3		
2. Questions are clearly stated.			3		These are clear to this reaser- one will have to ascertain whether that is the case for the participants <i>in context</i> .
3. Questions logically flow from one to the next.			3		
4. Question(s) can help to probe one's assumptions.			3		
5. Question(s) can help to probe the weaknesses and limitations in one's thinking.			3		From whose perspective? This will depend entirely on the participant. But yes they "can."
6. Question(s) can lead to alternative way(s) of thinking.			3		
7. Questions can guide one to think biblically.			3		
8. Question(s) can lead to practices at a certain point.			3		
9. Questions are workable overall.			3		
10. Questions are helpful overall for critical thinking.			3		

*Evaluated by the Supervisor

Critical Thinking Questionnaire Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
1. The instructions for using the questionnaire are clear.			3		
2. Questions are clearly stated.				4	
3. Questions logically flow from one to the next.			3		
4. Question(s) can help to probe one's assumptions.			3		
5. Question(s) can help to probe the weaknesses and limitations in one's thinking.			3		
6. Question(s) can lead to alternative way(s) of thinking.			3		Participants may still need help with biblical passages.
7. Questions can guide one to think biblically.		2			Participants may need some basic knowledge on the Word.
8. Question(s) can lead to practices at a certain point.			3		Participants may need some expertise for their biblical habits.
9. Questions are workable overall.			3		
10. Questions are helpful overall for critical thinking.			3		

*Evaluated by the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Church

APPENDIX 3
GRADING RUBRIC

This rubric was used to gauge the participants' comprehension of critical thinking, its meaning, its significance, its factors and its techniques before and after the critical thinking class.

GRADING RUBRIC

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your understanding of critical thinking in the Christian life. Sin Yong Park is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Grading Rubric						
1 – no idea (no answer or statements unrelated to the issue or far from the issue)						
2 – low (unclear statements, but possibly a few terms related to the issue)						
3 – average (clear and understandable statements with terms related to the issue)						
4 – high (well-articulated statements even and/or with examples applying to the issue)						
Test Questions		1	2	3	4	Comments
Definition of Critical Thinking	1. What would “think critically” mean in the Christian context?					
Significance of Critical Thinking	1. What is the purpose of your thinking? For what purpose do you think we need to use our thinking ability?					
	2. Where would you point in the Bible to emphasize the importance of thinking?					
	3. In what ways would critical thinking be helpful in the Christian life?					
Significant Factors in Critical Thinking	1. What are the factors you think that would affect your thinking process in general?					
	2. What are the truths in the Bible that you think you need to consider in your critical thinking?					
Critical Thinking Techniques	1. What are the ways you think that help believers critically think in their thought process or in their daily decision making?					
	2. What are the attitudes you think that would help believers critically think in their thought process or in their daily decision making?					

Grading Rubric(Continued)										
1 – no idea (no answer or statements unrelated to the issue or far from the issue)										
2 – low (unclear statements, but possibly a few related terms to the issue)										
3 – average (clear and understandable statements with related terms to the issue)										
4 – high (well-articulated statements even and/or with applied examples with the issue)										
Test Questions					1	2	3	4	Comments	
Critical Thinking Application Level	1. To what degree (when, frequency, and seriousness), do you think believers need to engage themselves in thinking critically?									
*Additional Questions only after the Four-Week Class	1. Overall, how has the four-week class been helpful for your thinking?									
	2. What recommendations would you give in order to develop the four-week class?									
	3. Would you be willing to encourage your small group members to think critically in their daily Christian journey? How and why?									

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW

This interview was used to probe how the participants have used the critical thinking questionnaire.

INTERVIEW

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your understanding of critical thinking in the Christian life. Sin Yong Park is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

1. Did you complete the questionnaire? Yes No (Circle one)
2. Explain how you have used the critical thinking questionnaire.
 - a. For what life event or thought process have you used the questionnaire?
 - b. How has the questionnaire been helpful for your critical thinking process?
 - Regarding assumptions, weaknesses and limitations in your thinking
 - Regarding alternative ways of thinking
 - Others
 - c. How would you differently deal with your thought process or your life event without the questionnaire?
3. Would you be willing to help other church members to critically think in their Christian journey? If yes, how?

Results of the Interviews and Post-Test

There are big differences before and after the test. In the pre-test, participants were unable to make clear statements since the term *critical thinking* was new to them. As a result, they all scored 1, which means that they had no answer or gave statements unrelated to the issue. The participants grasped the concept of critical thinking, its significance, and techniques during the classes. According to the grading rubric on a scale of 1 to 4, the four small group leaders scored 3 in the post-test, which means that they mentioned clear and understandable statements with terms related to the issue. Table A1 illustrates how the four small group leaders performed in the post-test.

	Leader 1	Leader 2	Leader 3	Leader 3
Definition of Critical Thinking	used terms, perspective changes, putting off and putting analogy	mentioned alternative ways of thinking by the Word	mentioned about finding unbiblical assumptions	described old habits and new habits in his own case
Importance of Critical Thinking	Described renewing the minds and the foolish and the wise	talked about the foolish and importance of leaning on the wisdom of God	wanted to replace wrong assumptions with biblical assumptions	mentioned ungodly patterns of the world and the wise
Significant Factors in Critical Thinking	explained his own context and self-understanding	explained about his identity in Christ and Logizomai	talked about thinking about the gospel Romans 6:11	talked about self-understanding and identity in Christ
Critical Thinking Techniques	talked about questioning	talked about dialogical relationship of the Triune God	talked about relationship in dialogue	talked about being a subject of thinking seeking the wisdom of God
Critical Thinking Application Levels	checked on 4 strongly agree	checked on 4 strongly agree	checked on 4 strongly agree	checked on 4 strongly agree
Additional Questions	Satisfied with the class, willing to share with others	Satisfied with the class, sharing with his wife	Satisfied with class, willing to share with others	Satisfied with class, suggesting introductory paragraph in the pre-test

APPENDIX 5

LESSONS

Lesson 1: The Heart

Main Verses: Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 28:26

Objectives: Understanding the human heart – what is and what it does.

The heart can be plainly understood in the Bible as a physical organ (2 Sam 18:14; 2 Kgs 9:24). However, the primary point of most Bible texts where the word “heart” is used relates more to the relationship of the human individual to God the creator than to the structure of the person (1 Sam 16:7; 2 Chr 19:3). The Bible tells us that God looks at man’s heart and values and judges according to what is in the heart. This speaks to us that knowing and understanding our hearts is very important in our relationships with Him. In this lesson, we will look into man's heart; what is and what it does. Then we may think of what we need to do with our hearts as we go on in our Christian life journey.

I. Describing the Heart

1. First of all, what can you say about human heart? What is the condition of human heart? Describe man's heart in your own words.
2. What does the Bible say about human heart? Refer to the following verses in your answers.

Genesis 6:5

Jeremiah 17:9

Proverbs 25:3

3. What kind of life does man produce with this kind of heart? How does man's heart impact his life?

Mark 7:21-23

II. Some Features of Man's Heart

The heart as a seat of emotions, thoughts, and wills, are unsearchable, self-deceptive, and incurable. This heart of man cannot lead him to the right path. The man that depends on such a heart will live a miserable life (Jer 17:5a). His decisions with this heart may seem right to him, but it will eventually lead him to death (Prov 14:12). The Bible gives certain features of this corrupted heart, and some of them are as follows;

1. Abandoning God

Read Jeremiah 16:10-11 and explain why the Israelites are experiencing a great disaster.

Read Romans 1:18-21 and describe what people do with this evil heart.

2. Selfishness

What do some Israelites do according to Jeremiah 17:11?

How does Johoiakim show his selfishness in Jeremiah 22:13?

3. Idolatry

Explain what happens in Jeremiah 17:2, 5-6.

What are the consequences of their idolatry? (Jeremiah 17:3-4)

Man's foolishness is addictive, meaning to say that he keeps on returning to sin against God. The Israelites are warned against idolatry, and yet they have kept turning back from God (See Deut 11:16, Ex 23:32-33). In other words, they have forsaken God with their selfish and idolatrous hearts. Then why are people tempted to do such actions above?

James 1:14-15

1 John 2:16

III. The Wise vs. The foolish

Man needs wisdom from God. He cannot be an independent leader of his own life because of his corrupted heart. The wise know that they should trust in the Creator, but the fools lean on their understanding. The fools believe that their thoughts are always right. They do not know that they are self-deceptive. But the wise humbly seek God's wisdom and walk in that wisdom.

Contrast the attitudes of the wise with those of the foolish

1. What are the attitudes of the foolish? Find out from the following verses.

Proverbs 12:15, 15:5, 23:9, 26:11

2. What are the attitudes of the wise? See the following verses and discuss them.

Proverbs 8:13, 22:9, Matthew 7:24-27, James 1:5, Ephesians 6:12

IV. Thinking of Your Own Heart

1. Describe Your Own Heart if you would, e.g. idolatrous heart.
2. What specific thinking or actions can be considered foolish in your current life? Why do you think or say so? Share if you would.
3. What is your thinking process on that folly? What leads you to such thinking or action? What has motivated you?
4. What could be wise thinking or actions against such a folly?
5. Where in the Bible would you find wisdom for that? You may help one another for the answer.
6. What would you do with the wisdom from the Bible in your actual life? Think about your short term or long term plan. Help one another to come up with a better plan.
7. Pray for one another.

Lesson 2: Prompting toward Critical Thinking

Main Verses: Matthew 15:1-20, Romans 6:11, 12:2

Objectives: Understanding the Importance of Critical Thinking

Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." It tells us how significant it is for man to critically consider his own thinking. One's own thinking determines perspectives and attitudes, and directs his own life. When he does not carefully choose his thoughts, he may live a foolish and miserable life. Thus, believers need to examine their own thinking, specifically if their thinking is in accordance with the Word of God.

I. The Stereotype

Read Matthew 15:1-20 and answer the following questions;

1. What is the main issue of the Pharisees according to Jesus (see verses 6-9)?
2. What must have motivated the Pharisees to do such ungodly things (see verses 17-21)? Think about the lesson from the last week.
3. What false thinking must the Pharisees have had to become such hypocrites? Share you thoughts.
4. What did Jesus want the Pharisees as well as his disciples to realize after all?

Believers should be critical thinkers, examining their own hearts, specifically their own thinking and subsequent actions. The Pharisees in Matthew 15 did not think deeply and genuinely about why they think they do their contemporary practices and failed to have authentic change in their lives. The Pharisees simply repeated their ungodly actions until those sinful behaviors become habitual and stay regular and traditional. They did not consider seriously their habits or traditions as detestable before God, and they got offended when questioned by Jesus. That is why the Bible commands us that we should renew our minds and be transformed (Romans 12:2).

II. Renewing the Mind

1. What does "renewing the mind" mean to you? (You may refer to Romans 12:2)
2. Why do we need to renew our minds according to Romans 12:2?
3. What other purposes do we have for renewing our minds?

Refer to the following verses: 1 Corinthians 10:31, 11:1, Ephesians 5:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:7

Man is totally depraved (Rom 3:9-18). He is born a sinner and subject to sinning. However, believers are able to resist their old habit not to conform to the present evil age by renewing their minds, and this renewal is possible because believers are redeemed from their sin. Believers are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) and have been given the authority to overcome all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). But renewing of the mind does not imply one's complete turn-over of his mind onto righteousness. One cannot remove all old perspectives in life and live a totally new life. The renewal of one's mind is a constant process in which he recognizes and internalizes new perspectives as he develops more biblical perspectives and sees his life with a better biblical worldview. He needs to give up anything that will hinder him from doing the will of God and follow the Example, the Provider, and Standard of all biblical perspectives. Moreover, the renewal of one's mind entails transformed actions in life. The development of biblical perspectives is not confined in his "head" only, but to be shown outwardly as a transformed life. As a result of renewing his mind, the new perspectives, should be concretized in his reality.

4. With your discussion and understanding so far, define "renewing the mind" in your own words.

III. *Logizomai* ("consider", "reckon", "evaluate", "count")

Believers in critical thinking have a foundation upon which they develop godly patterns or habits of thinking, speaking and actions thereof. The foundation for their thinking is the Word of God. However, Paul in Romans 6 urges his fellow Christians to keep anchoring their thinking in the reality that God has provided through Christ Jesus: believers' old selves were crucified with Christ so that they should no longer be slaves to sin (Rom 6:6). Specifically, Paul provides a core and working basis for believers'

thinking: “Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). In renewing our minds, we need this very truth as the pivotal source and power in our life-long faith journey.

Reflect on Romans 6:11 below for a while and answer the following questions;

“Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

1. How important would you say that believers "reckon" this verse? How would your reckoning of this verse influence your Christian journey?

The verb *logizesthe* in Romans 6:11 is present imperative. The word is used as a command disclosing believers' position in relation to sin and Christ Jesus. This verse, however, does not mean that believers are unable to sin. Rather it indicates that the “mastery and dominion” of sin has ended for those in Christ Jesus. Christians who have died with Christ are “reckoned” dead to sin. His death also led them to resurrection and new life, and they are “considered” as those who are alive to God.

2. What kind of thoughts or feelings do we have before, after or in the moment of falling into a temptation? How would the truth of Romans 6:11 help you in such a moment?
3. Describe how your reckoning of this verse could help in renewing your minds. Give specific examples if you would.

IV. Critical Thinking on Your Own Thinking and Actions

Having all the discussions above, answer the following questions as you think deeply about your current life habits that need to change.

1. What are your stereotypical behaviors or actions you think you need to change?
2. Why do you think you need to change them? What are your assumptions behind? What sin issues can be related to those behaviors?
3. How would reckoning Romans 6:11 help you in the process of change?

4. Give some biblical perspectives against those behaviors.
5. What specific thinking and actions could be suggested? What could be "new habits"?
6. What can you do specifically in order to change? What are some specific steps or actions that you can follow to prompt you towards change?

*Reflect on the following

Critical thinkers know they are not self-sufficient in their thinking process. Once they believe they are capable of thinking right on their own, they cease to be critical thinkers. Therefore, they humbly trust in the Lord, seeking to learn and walk in His wisdom.

Lesson 3: Significant Factors in Critical Thinking

Main Verses: Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Objectives: Understanding contextual and self awareness

Today's world is rapidly changing. The world has produced complex realities. People are bombarded with and swayed by information, divergent notions, and ideologies. This fast-changing world has continued to evolve into a spiral of evil, producing various forms of vice and attracting and confusing people into the depth of its chaos. The complexity of today's world has distracted believers from keeping a clear conscious and distinguishing what is biblically right and wrong. One way to help believers not to fall into this obscurity is to remind consistently of the biblical reality and their identity in Christ. Critical thinkers should discern the true reality and self from false ones created in this fallen world. In other words, they must establish the clear notions of their biblical reality and self in the Lord.

I. Contextual Awareness

Read the statement and answer the questions

It is essential to identify and understand one's own context in the process of critical thinking. It is because one's own context influences the shaping of his perceptions, understandings, and interpretations of the world.

1. Share your thoughts after reading the statement?
2. What influential worldviews do you see these days? How biblical or unbiblical are those worldviews?
3. How have those worldviews influenced our Christian lives?

It is true that we have been influenced by our contexts of this fallen world, and yet sometimes our outward focus fails us in seeing our inner propensity to sin. We may neglect the fact that our sinfulness is enough to cause our life problems and find excuses from external, not internal after we sin.

1. What do the following verses talk about?

Romans 3:9-18

Mark 7:21

2. Why do people make excuses? (You may refer to Genesis 2:9-10)
3. Give some excuses people make. What are the consequences of their making excuses?
4. What should Christians do then? Recall the previous lesson.

The context of believers is not confined to the present time on earth. Believers are to pioneer their present context in the hope that their reality is extensive to eternity because of the redemptive work of Christ. Believers should keep in mind that they do not live in a separated world from the eternity, but they live in the continuum of the present and the future. Believers in this belief should think and act differently. Read the following verses together and discuss how the eschatological view of life can be helpful for our Christian journey.

Matthew 25:31-46

Titus 2:13

II. Self-Image and Believers' duties

It is not only contextual awareness that helps people to think critically of their lives, but also their self-concept gives a considerable impact on their minds and behaviors. Let's think about the relationship between self-concept and a Christian life.

Think about the statement below and answer the questions

It is believed that self-image, self-understanding, and one's own thinking are interwoven. Therefore, we are not to settle with our current self-images or self-understanding; we are to continuously develop our self-images as our thinking is improved.

1. What does the statement suggest?
2. What self-image do you have and how does it affect your thinking and life?
3. How biblical or unbiblical can be the statement above? Explain.

Man is sinful in nature. It is surely possible for him to selfishly improve his own image because of his egocentricity. The focus of this fallen world on self image is deficient for believers unless there is the emphasis of their self identity in Christ. It is believers' identity in Christ that would lead them to better critical thinking not only for their lives, but also for others'. It is because in union with Christ, believers now have the ability to have fellowship with God. In other words, they are enabled to live in accordance with God.

1. The following verses talk about the status of believers. Take one verse for each of you and share your thoughts.

Ephesians 1:5

John 10:28

Romans 8:39

Galatians 3:27-28

2. Discuss the tension between what the world says about the necessity of the improvement of self-image and what the Bible says about who you are in Christ. How would our identity in Christ impact our faith journey?
3. Improving one's self image is not the answer, but the solid identity in Christ is the one that believers need to possess. In Christ only, they can finally be able to do their given responsibilities. Find out some commands that we are to obey from the following verses. How would you put them into practice in your current life. Give specific examples.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Colossians 3:1-3

Man seeks his own interest, but believers are to seek His kingdom and His righteousness. Improvement of self-image is self-seeking love, but believers' firm identity in Christ will surely help them to seek the Will of God.

III. Critical Thinking on Your Context and Self

1. What are the externals that you think have influenced and shaped your thinking and life?
2. What are your reactions to the externals influential to your thinking and life? Where have your hearts fallen into while being swayed by those externals?
3. What are the unbiblical patterns that you have followed in response to those externals?
4. Describe who you were in such situations and who you are in Christ.
5. How differently should you have acted according to your identity in Christ? Explain why.
6. What would you repent of after all?
7. What could be your better thinking and actions biblically then?

Lesson 4: Facilitating Critical Thinking

Main Verses: James 1:5, Ephesians 4:15

Objectives: Understanding ways to facilitate critical thinking

Critical thinking theorists assert that dialogue is an important tool to help people think critically. However, their strategies in dialogue are expressed only on horizontal relationships among men only. But the Bible stresses man's relationships with both God and his fellow men (Exod 20). Specifically, believers have to understand that their relationship with God is the foundation of all other relationships.

I. Response-ability to Hear

Believers in critical thinking are to be hearers of the Word of God. Their ability to hear Him has been restored through His Son. Man's wisdom is not sufficient for his life in this world because of his fallen nature. He needs the wisdom of God, and His wisdom is profusely given to those who humbly ask for it (James 1:5). The following verses command us to hear and follow the Word of God. Read them and share how responsible we should be in the hearing of the Word. How often do we hear the Word of God in your daily life? What do we do in order to hear the Word?

Deuteronomy 5:1

Proverbs 12:15

Matthew 7:24-27

Romans 10:17

1. What are some suggestions that you can make in order to help people to hear the Word? You may refer to Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, 1 Timothy 4:11

2. Read the following statement and share your thoughts.

Never be content with your current grasp of the gospel. The gospel is life-permeating, world-altering, universe-changing truth. It has more facets than any diamond. Its depths man will never exhaust.¹

¹C. J. Mahaney, *The Cross-Centered Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2002), 67.

II. Attitudes in Dialogue

In helping or facilitating one another to hear the Word in our church, we need to keep our dialogical relationship momentous and enjoyable. In order to have a better dialogical relationship, we, created in the image of God, can follow examples of the dialogical relationship of the Triune God. For instance, God is love. He wants us to build up one another, speaking the truth in love. Our dialogue has to be sincere and genuine in the love of God.

The following verses describe the Triune God's dialogical relationship. Find out some characteristics that believers need to take into consideration for our dialogical relationship.

Deuteronomy 6:4

Matt 3:16-17

John 14:6

1 Corinthians 12:3

1 John 4:8

The Triune God's dialogical relationship has to be reflected in believers' dialogical relationships with others. Discuss and give some ways we can implement in our small groups. Refer to certain principles found in Philippians 2:4, Ephesians 4:15

III. Critical Questioning

In dialogue, critical questioning is a powerful way to help or facilitate one's critical thinking. Mostly critical questioning is to elicit the assumptions underlying one's thoughts and actions. It is true that believers need to look into their thoughts if they have unbiblical assumptions that have led them to ungodly actions. However, there is also a deeper purpose in critical questioning for believers. See the following verses and find out the purpose.

Leviticus 19:4

1 John 5:21

Colossians 3:5

A purpose of critical thinking for believers is to examine their own hearts and to have clear consciences before Him. In the second lesson, we meditated on Matthew 15:1-20 where Jesus dealt with their heart issues of the Pharisees. He asked and said, "Why do

you break the command of God for the sake of their tradition? Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart..." Jesus questioned the Pharisees in order to lead them to critical thinking on their own hearts.

God looks at what is in the heart. Accordingly, believers always need to deal with their heart issues. Our mere action change cannot be a Christian life. A heart change is what God wants us to do, and a behavioral change thereof. The following questions below may help us to deal with our heart issues in our life. Pick a specific life situation in your current life and think critically on your heart issue as you go through the following questions. (You may pick a problem or a habit in general and go through the questions together.)

1. What is the lustful passion that is motivating your worship of a idol?
2. How is the glory of God being exchanged for the glory of man?
3. What sinful tools are being utilized?
4. What thinking patterns and behaviors must be put off?
5. What thinking patterns and attitudes must be renewed?
6. What new thinking patterns and behaviors must be put on?

(excerpted from "The Diagnoses and Treatment of Idols of the Heart," in Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling: Changing Lives with God's Changeless Truth by Howard Eyrich and Elyse Fitzpatrick, p 348)

IV. Practice of Critical Thinking with a Guided Questionnaire

Believers need to not only take their responsibility to hear Him, but also properly respond to Him. James says that our faith is made complete by what we do (James 2:22). Man as created by God is a being that can exist by obeying His commands and cease its life when it disobeys. Man's existence can be in a safe status when he lives a life as commanded. In this section, you are given a chance to practice what we have learned so far. See the instructions and be a doer of your learning.

Instructions: the following questionnaire may help you to go through a process of critical thinking. We will use this questionnaire and practice critical thinking in the real life situation. For this coming week, please follow the questions in the questionnaire, answer them, and bring your answers on the next meeting. We will share your findings. We will repeat this practice one more time for the following week (total 2 times).

1. Pick up a thought/decision or a habit that you think needs change in your current life.
2. How have the thought/decision or the habit affected you and others?

3. What are the assumptions underlying and keeping your thought/decision or habit in your current life?
4. What is the origin of your assumptions for the thought/decision or the habit?
5. Who have you worshiped in keeping the thought/decision or the practice of your habit? Where has God been in the situation?
6. Where has your redeemed self been in the situation? Please read Romans 6:1-14 and define yourself. Please pray at this point.
7. What does the Bible tell you relevant to the thought/decision or the habit? Why is the habit unnecessary or needs to be put off? (Please seek some help or advice if necessary and pray to seek God's wisdom and help)
8. What is biblically correct thinking against the thinking/decision or the habit? How should you have thought or done differently?
9. What are some ways that you can prevent yourself from keeping the thought/decision or the habit? How would you put the biblical thinking into practice? Write a specific plan.
10. What could be outcomes after you execute your plan? How can God be glorified?
11. Pray at any step and review the process if necessary.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAM FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS IN CORNERSTONE KOREAN CHURCH, ELGIN, ILLINOIS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
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The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a critical thinking program for small group leaders at Cornerstone Church in Elgin, Illinois. Chapter 1 provides the goals, context, rationale, and definitions for this ministry project. Chapter 2 presents the biblical foundations and the theological basis for critical thinking. The chapter discusses the significance of critical thinking in the church context. Chapter 3 focuses on theoretical and practical issues on critical thinking. The chapter critiques secular critical thinking theories on the basis of the Word. Chapter 4 describes the process of the implementation of the critical thinking program at Cornerstone Church in Elgin, Illinois. Chapter 5 evaluates the results of the project overall and reviews the importance of critical thinking in the church context.

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