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FROM OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

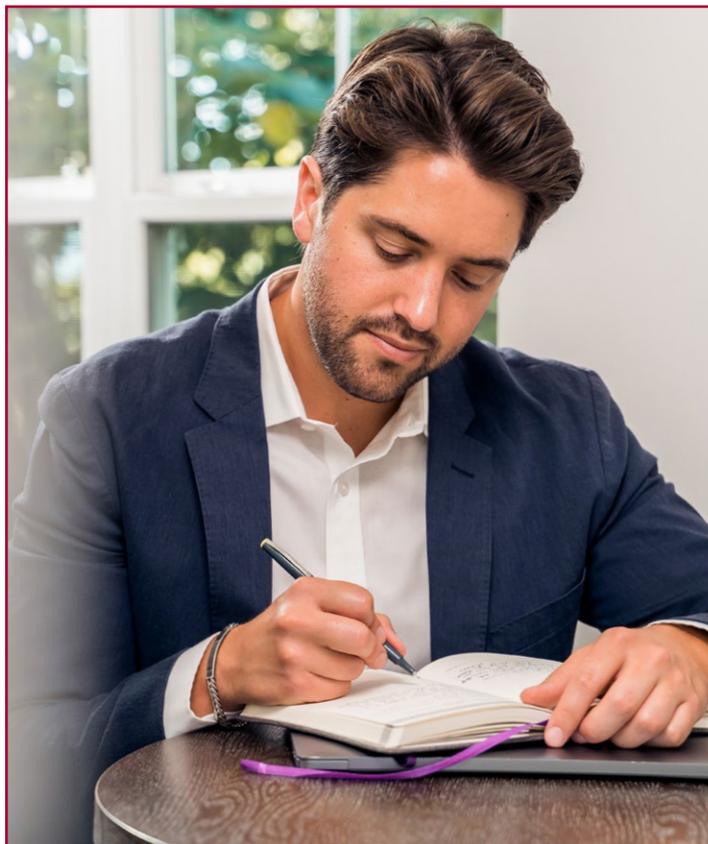
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ABOUT

Capitol Ministries® 8



Learning to Better Discipline Your Mind



Characteristic of the most effective public servants is a hugely disciplined mind. They are able to stay on point because they have learned to think (usually very quickly) before they speak. But even more fundamental than that is their habit of thinking about the right kind of things in the first place: they have learned to dwell on certain things and not allow their minds to dwell on the wrong things.

With that in mind, this week I would like to take a closer look at Philippians 4:8. This is a passage I have been meditating on for several years now and it has greatly helped me. I think it will help you too.

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff: Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.*
- Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.*
- House Members: Thursdays 8am, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.*

The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



Missouri: Revivals in the Rotunda

Two “Revivals in the Rotunda” were held at the Missouri State Capitol Building with dual objectives—to teach people about eternal salvation through Jesus Christ and the mission of Capitol Ministries to reach political leaders with God’s Word.



The “encouraging and uplifting” events were held on the first floor of the majestic Rotunda in the Missouri State Capitol Building in February and May this year. The hour-long programs included music, the Gospel message, and an invitation to all who attended to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The events were planned and launched by Pastor Matt Godsell, CapMin ministry leader to Missouri state public servants and lead pastor of the Ashland Baptist Church whose congregation is known for its commitment to fulfilling the Great

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It unlocks guidelines as to how we ought to discipline, manage, and care for our minds. How do godly people think? What should be going on in our minds? What habits should be forming in the maintenance of our minds? That organ inside our skulls is an incredible asset given to us by our Maker; it stands to reason that we should be good stewards of it. How we ought to care for and manage our minds is the subject of this passage and this week’s study.

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

Philippians 4:8 appears near the end of Paul’s epistle to the Church at Philippi, which is the first church he planted in Europe, more specifically Macedonia (now northern Greece). This is a letter characterized by joy. The letter is very practical and as well, it provides one of the most profound passages on the humanity and humility of Christ (chapter 2) as well as insights into false teachers (chapter 3). Overall, it is a love letter of praise and thanksgiving to one of Paul’s favorite churches. Repeatedly throughout my walk with the Savior I read this small epistle and find myself refreshed and encouraged as a result. I trust the same is true for you.

Let us now turn our attention to 4:8:

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

In closer context, this passage follows and contrasts Paul’s command to “*be anxious for nothing*” (v. 4:6). In place of *anxiety* (*merimnao*) (this Greek word is best understood as “unconscious blasphemy”) the Apostle in this previous passage delineates the manifestations of his and other’s spirituality: “*joy, prayer, thanksgiving, and peace.*” These four elements appear in chapter four just prior to the verse of study. For an individual in the capital to possess a strong spiritual maturity, a peace of mind, a Christ-empowered confidence, these elements must be present on a continual basis. How is that achieved? Primarily and *positionally* by one making and possessing peace with God through personal faith in Christ, and being richly filled with the Holy Spirit. But secondarily and *practically* it is achieved through the constant, repetitive training and disciplining of one’s mind. In the study of Satanology (all that the Bible has to say about Satan) the informed, mature believer realizes he is in a spiritual battle. More importantly, it is crit-



ical that he understand where the battleground lies: The believer is in a constant battle for the mind! States 1 Peter 5:8 in this regard:

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Ephesians 6:12 states stereophonically *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood ...”* In Mark 8:33 Satan’s battle for the mind is illustrated by what Jesus states relative to Peter’s misguided thinking: *“But turning around and seeing His disciples, He [Jesus] rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’”*

It follows from this analysis that the victorious Christian need possess a mind that is not only Spirit-controlled by God, but highly disciplined by self. What follows in 4:8 are eight of these qualities that the believer need *dwell* on—be highly mentally disciplined regarding. The main verb (an imperative verb meaning this is a command from God), i.e., the action required by God of the believer in this passage is specifically to *dwell* (*logizomai*) meaning, “to recon, consider, take into account, calculate” in an ongoing sense the eight virtues preceding the command.

But before examining each of the characteristics in detail, notice the succeeding context in 4:9; in fulfillment of 4:8 Paul immediately pleads for the Philippian believers to imitate him!

“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

4:8 and 4:9 are not disjointed comments. Mental disciplines—the virtues of godly, mature thinkers as listed in 4:8—are more caught than taught. Who in your life emulates the eight characteristics that flow from 4:8? I dare say their personal example is more of an impetus to your spiritual maturity than memorizing and meditating on the list that follows (as important as that is). Whereas Scripture didactically communicates, another’s personal life persuades and influences; a godly example is often more powerful in terms of another’s bringing about change versus what is read. That is why one should attend Bible studies and build close relationships with other mature believers. Choose today to build friendships with godly individuals because their virtues will rub off on you! (Proverbs 27:17; contr. 1 Corinthians 15:33.) One becomes like the friends he chooses. I might add that if you are a parent, you must choose your children’s friends for them.

In his commentary on Philippians, Lightfoot provides aiding insights into the order and relationship of this seeming random shopping list of eight virtues. He states:

Speaking roughly, the words may be said to be arranged in a descending scale. The first four describe the character of the actions themselves, the two former being absolute, the two

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”



That organ inside your skull is an incredible asset given to us by our Maker; it stands to reason that we should be good stewards of it!





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Commission. “The number one purpose was evangelism, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the representatives, senators, and all who work every day at the State Capitol Building,” said Pastor Goodsell. “We gave the gospel and an invitation to accept Christ right then and there. Second, the goal was to expose everyone to Capitol Ministries and the good work to share the Word of God with political leaders that is happening not only in Missouri, but across the United States and around the world.”

The scheduled speaker, Arkansas evangelist Sam Moore was unable to attend the first revival in February and so Pastor Goodsell addressed the gathering. Rep. Hannah Kelly, an accomplished pianist who also participates in Pastor Goodsell’s Capitol ministry, played hymns on the Rotunda’s grand piano. Heather Allen sang and played the guitar. In all, some 60 people, including senators, representatives, other public servants and staff, attended the God-centered event.

Many senators and representatives were unable to attend a second revival in May due to the session running over into the noon hour. Music at that event was provided by Sylvia Ferguson, Kathy Bommel, and Heather Allen. Pastor Moore preached the gospel and offered the invitation and three people who were visitors and had come to the Capitol specifically for the well-advertised revival made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Pastor Goodsell manned an information table where he offered gospel tracts, copies of the Bible studies he writes and distributes at the Capitol, and information

latter relative; the fifth and sixth point to the moral approbation which they conciliate; while the seventh and eighth in which the form of expression is changed are thrown in as an afterthought, that no motive may be omitted.¹

Take time to digest what Lightfoot is saying by going back over the passage. Make those relationships of the aforementioned in your mind not only now, preliminarily, but as you now study each of the eight that follow.

A. WHATEVER IS TRUE

Paul’s circumscription (def: “the property of having limitation in space as opposed to omnipresence or infiniteness”) and understanding of truth is that which is confined to God’s revelation in Holy Writ (cf. Romans 1:18). As a public servant you can rely on a poll or consensus for ascertaining public opinion; one can rely on science or psychological data, but be sure of this: sources of truth apart from the Scriptures possess varying levels of certitude: Keep in mind that polls change daily. Science once believed the world was flat. Shock treatments were once routinely administered. Bloodletting was thought to cure disease. Doctors used to perform frontal lobotomies. But the Bible is immutable and veracious because it is breathed by God Himself (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Wise is the leader who dwells on Scripture—who

possesses a lifelong hunger for its mighty fortress of always-reliable, always-certain truth.

The prophet Jeremiah bespeaks of his understanding of this, his manifest personal discipline, where in 15:16 of his book he states, “*Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.*” Have you been called by God to public office? Are His truths foremost in your mind and in your votes? John 17:17 is an apt summary of this mental orientation, this absolute presupposition relative to intellectual well-being and proper functionality. Jesus says in John 17:17, “*Sanctify them in truth; Your word is truth.*” What a tragic disconnect—a tragic testimony too I might add—when someone names the name of Christ in the Capitol, but His truths are not characteristic of his or her thinking or the way he or she acts or votes.

In the wisdom of Proverbs, in a largely verbal culture, truth had to do with true speech as opposed to a lie or deceptive speech (cf. Proverbs 22:21). This insight makes for another practical application point: Go to great lengths to discipline your speech in terms of truthfulness. Do not exaggerate, speculate, provide false impressions or mislead. Do not be disingenuous or opportunistic in your speech. Remember the definition of disingenuous: “lacking in candor;” also, “giving a false appearance of simple frankness.” In addition, do

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not talk too much (cf. James 1:19; 3:5). Conversely, “**GIRD YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**” (Ephesians 6:14). The only way I know of doing this is to develop a voracious appetite for God’s Word!

B. WHATEVER IS HONORABLE

This Greek word here for *honorable* is *semnos* and is found elsewhere only in the Pastoral Epistles where it is a descriptor essential to leaders. The idea of this virtue is for one to possess mental “seriousness, sublimity, and dignity.” It is the sister idea of worthiness. In context, one cannot allow his mind to *dwell* on things that are unworthy of his time and attention, or baser things beneath them. Avoid the profane and *dwell* on the sacred. Choose only high-protein items from the menu of a fallen world. Consume only dignified content versus junk-food weight-gainers like soap operas, gossip sessions, pornography, or sounds that are something other than music. Those things serve to rot one’s mind, not buoy it. Per the Lightfoot quote, these first two virtues are absolutes, the non-negotiable foundational aspects of sound mental discipline. In that 2 Timothy 1:7 promises believers a *sound mind* from God, *truth* and *honor* serve as absolutes to keep it that way! Choose this moment to upload into your computer only *truthful* and *honorable* content!

C. WHATEVER IS RIGHT

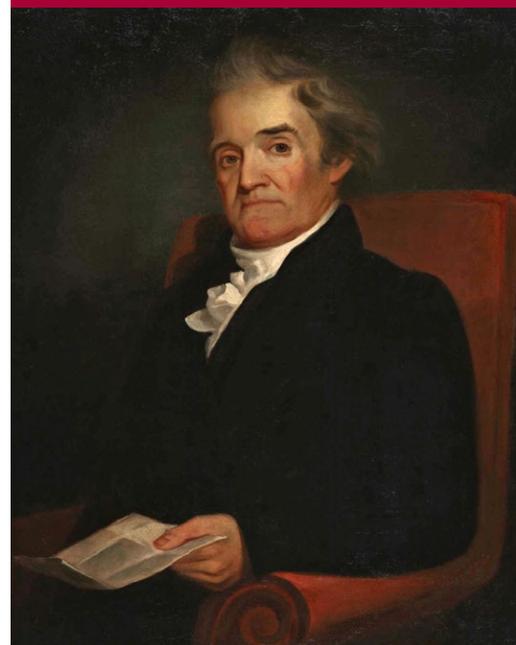
Given the bedrock mental commitments to scriptural truth, and being a

person of seriousness, sublimity, and dignity, what is the *right* or just thing that you should choose to *dwell* on? *Dikaios* carries the idea of thinking only on what is just and proper. Is your mind disciplined to think about and conclude to do the right thing when there is no one else watching, or to whom you are accountable? To illustrate, do you choose to vote pro-life because the Scripture says that is *right*? Or do you do what is wrong according to the truths of Scripture? This is a remarkable character quality of the treasurer of the board of the ministry I serve; I have known him for nearly 50 years, since my college days, and he consistently thinks and determines to do what is *right* based on the truths of Scripture. If one lacks the personal conviction to do what is *right* apart from accountability, then when in private he will sin. Do you possess a strong discipline to *dwell* on and do what is scripturally *right* no matter what the consequences? Therein is a virtue of a godly mind and a godly person. God always blesses that!

D. WHATEVER IS PURE

Pure (*hagnos*) means “holy, chaste.” In the Book of Proverbs (15:26) the equivalent Hebrew word (per the LXX [Greek Septuagint]) is *tahor*. The word stands in contrast to the thoughts of the wicked. Notice this here: “*Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD, but pleasant words are pure.*” Thus the idea of *dwelling* on *whatever is pure* has the connotation of focusing one’s mind on things that are not besmirched or tainted or in some way evil. Cease

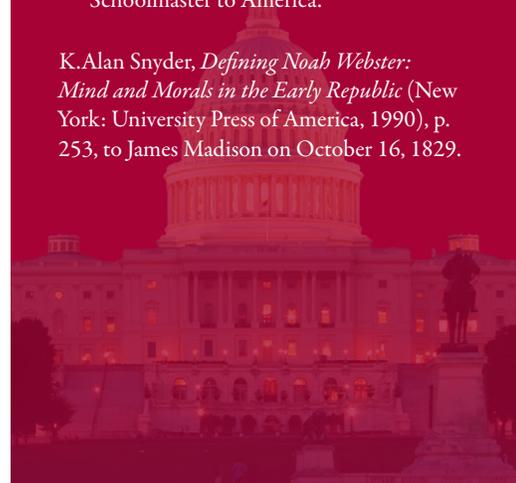
Noah Webster



“[T]he Christian religion ... is the basis, or rather the source, of all genuine freedom in government ... I am persuaded that no civil government of a republican form can exist and be durable in which the principles of Christianity have not a controlling influence.”

— War soldier, judge, legislator, educator, “Schoolmaster to America.”

K. Alan Snyder, *Defining Noah Webster: Mind and Morals in the Early Republic* (New York: University Press of America, 1990), p. 253, to James Madison on October 16, 1829.





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about Capitol Ministries including the book *Rebuilding America: The Biblical Blueprint* written by Ralph Drollinger, CapMin President and Founder. Sponsors of the events included The Pocket Testament League and the Fellowship of Missouri Baptist Evangelists.

The events were so successful that Pastor Goodsell is planning two Revivals in the Rotunda for 2022. Everyone will be welcome, but one will specifically be planned for Missouri representatives, senators, and staff.

The objective of the second revival will be to involve the local church in ministering to public servants on a regular basis.

“I think it is important to encourage pastors and local church congregations to become involved in ministry to public servants at the capitol and exposing them to how important that is,” Pastor Goodsell said. “First Timothy 2:1-4 says, *“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made ... for kings and all who are in authority.”*

“Like everyone, legislators need to know and understand Biblical truth. And there is so much untruth, lies, and deception out there. Our public servants need to hear biblical truth directly from the Word of God.”

The revivals are the latest in a number of methods Pastor Goodsell has employed in the weekly CapMin discipleship ministry he launched in 2019. In addition to other outreach, every week he visits the Capitol to distribute his written Bible studies to legislators and legislative aids in their offices where he also ministers to them and prays with them.

such mind-wandering ventures beloved public servant friends! Don’t go there; nip it in the bud!

In the Philippian epistle, *pure* stands in contrast to those whose motives and plans were impure so as to cause distress to the Apostle Paul (1:17). This is the habit of not *dwelling* on or devising evil toward another in one’s mind. Disciplined godly minds *dwell* on their presenting circumstances with a determination to do what is *right* and *pure* per scriptural principles.

Rather than think about the hurts of people from the past, choose to dwell on ideas about the future and what could be!

Very helpful to this, earlier on in the epistle, Paul gives us a powerful insight into his way of thinking: *“forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead”* (3:13). The disciplined mind occupies itself with big ideas in the future, versus small people in the past. It is sober to the reality that the past is finite and the future is infinite! Such thinking leads to much success and accomplishment relative to the hand one has been dealt in a fallen, often disappointing world. For sure people will fail and betray you, but how you respond is everything. The best way to get over past hurts is not to keep bringing them up in your mind; think about something else that is *pure*.

E. WHATEVER IS LOVELY

The NJB (New Jerusalem Bible)

captures the sense of meaning very well when it translates the above as *“everything that we love.”* Many commentators recognize that this is a broad, open statement, a big tent, versus addressing biblical morality only. Accordingly one’s mind should *dwell* on the things that are admirable by the world at large such as the works of Beethoven or Mother Teresa, a scientific invention or a medicinal breakthrough, be they accomplished or authored by believers or not. Such are lovely and admirable things and worthy of praise. Let your mind dwell also on these things! How many Christians do you know who are critical of everything, coming across as morally superior and condescending, offering little praise of others? Do you see the good in others, or in your mind is everyone else below your standards? Are you the only lovely thing in the world? Such a mentality is contrary to what this clause teaches. Believers should give praise where praise is due and celebrate the virtuous image and greatness of God as manifest in and through mankind, both regenerate and not. The excellence, achievements, and merits of all of mankind are praiseworthy because they illumine a responsible omniscient Creator who has left His imprimatur on all of mankind. Enjoying *whatever is lovely* is a biblically conciliatory approbation, an apt illustration of the breadth of mental outlook in an otherwise fallen world, said to be suitable by the Apostle.

At least two other passages reinforce this idea of positive attitudinal



breadth: Romans 12:15 states in general, *“Rejoice with those who rejoice.”* Galatians 6:10 states, *“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”* Are you given to mental and outward praise when you see something that is lovely? Don’t be one of those Evangelicals who is always angry.

F. WHATEVER IS OF GOOD REPUTE

This relates “to the kind of conduct that is worth considering because it is well spoken of by people in general.”² Akin to the broadness of *whatever is lovely* these are virtues generally respected in the virtuosities of God’s Creation, such as respect for others, manners, kindness, consideration, listening, etc. The mature believer need *dwell* on *“regard one another as more important than yourselves”* (Philippians 2:3). Is your mental outlook, speech and conduct symphonically pleasing in its overall demeanor?

G. IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE

Excellence (*arête*) “moral goodness” is a seldom used word by Paul imported by him from secular Greek moralizing culture. As used by him, this is the basis for mental disciplines expressing themselves in noble actions. O’Brien suggests that the better translation is therefore “moral excellence”³ providing a more codified meaning. I.e., the contextual meaning relates to one keeping with God’s overall goodness in his thinking. Goodness is an attribute of God

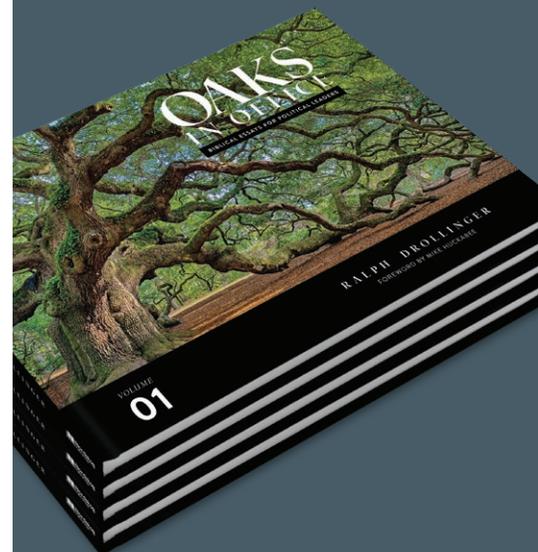
and a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Extending outwardly from the foundation of *truth* and *honor*, herein we find ourselves plumbing Paul’s multifaceted descriptors of the believer’s intended and ensuing radiant demeanor.

H. AND IF ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE

This word relates to the mental discipline of praising others in one’s mind and with one’s mouth. This is the kind of conduct that wins the respect of others; such a mentality is becoming of God and others—and it spells influence for the believing public servant. Those who name the name of Christ are to *“have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5).

II. CONCLUSION

In both Ephesians 5:2 and Philippians 4:18 believers with the aforementioned virtues are termed *“a fragrant aroma.”* This is beautiful summary terminology of the passage under study. Unfortunately for the cause of Christ and the advance of the kingdom, too many non-believers accurately refer to too many believers with the exact opposite phraseology. The virtues of a godly mind as described here are not only imbuing the attributes of God, but depict an overall proper attitude toward life. Herein described is not a critical, condescending, stuffy self-righteousness that proves to be such a stench to unbelievers. Keep in mind *“the kindness of God leads you to repentance”* (Romans 2:4).



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Philippians 1:10 adds regarding the believer's mental outlook, "so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." The Greek word for *sincere* (*eilikrines*) means "judged by sunlight, unalloyed, pure." More literally it can be translated as "without wax." The word was used of a potter whose pot cracks were not waxed over. Others could see the blemishes because they were unpainted. Paul is stating that believers who are a *fragrant aroma* are unpretentious and in possession of a breadth of mind that non-believers find genuine and attractive.

Do you have praise for things virtuous in believers and non-believers alike? The disciplined, godly mind of Philippians 4:8 depicts an attractive, real person who possesses a Christ-like spirit. May God grow us in this way.

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2. Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 418.
3. O'Brien, Peter T. *The Epistle to the Philippians, A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: Eerdmans, 1991), 506.