

The Good Story

CONNECT *BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING*

- What do you enjoy day dreaming about?
- What kind of activity or environment helps you think clearly
- What kind of activity or environment makes it difficult for you to think clearly?

TRUTH *UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING*

READ: Philippians 4:8-9

In The Good Story series we have been looking at how our inner realities are changed by the good news of Jesus. We've already looked at words and attitudes. Now, in this passage Paul is going to address our thoughts. Being a Christian in Philippi was difficult and dangerous, and Paul was no stranger to it. And yet, he says that they can have peace in the middle of the difficulty and danger. How? By occupying their minds with what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable.

Whatever is True, Whatever is Honorable, Whatever is Just

READ: Philippians 4:8

DISCUSS: Pick one of these three words—true, honorable, just—and describe what it looks like to occupy your mind with a thought.

Paul starts out by telling us to think of what is true. But he doesn't just mean cold, hard facts. We should occupy our minds with what is true as well as excellent and praiseworthy. He wants us to think of truths that are viewed from the perspective of the good story. He then instructs us to think on what is honorable and just. Both of these words speak to action or conduct. Thinking about conduct in others' lives and our own that is excellent and praiseworthy. With all three of these, Paul isn't telling us to stick our head in the sand and ignore what is difficult, but instead he's calling us to set our minds on things that are going to focus us on Christ and carrying out his will.

Whatever is Pure, Whatever is Lovely

DISCUSS: Describe something you think about that brings you delight.

Purity is about a person's heart motivation. God cares deeply about the motivation of our hearts, and he wants it to be a focus of our mind. There's a lot outside of our control, but we can always deal with what's going on in our heart. Next Paul says to think about what's lovely—patterns of thought that bring pleasure or delight. This can be a really helpful diagnostic for how we're doing at thinking gospel thoughts. Non-gospel-shaped thoughts produce disdain and distraction, but gospel thoughts produce delight.

Whatever is Commendable

Commendable actions have to do with relationships. When you navigate a relational issue with sensitivity and wisdom, it's commendable. We've all rehearsed arguments in our minds, reveling in what it would feel like to give someone a piece of our mind and look good doing it. That doesn't open the door to peace. Rather, we should think about navigating relationships with care and wisdom. That opens the door to peace.

GRACE *SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS*

It can be hard to feel at peace, especially when the circumstances of our life are particularly difficult or aren't going the way we planned. The wonderful thing is that the God of peace gives us his peace through Jesus. Jesus went to the cross and lost peace so that we could have it. The one who only set his mind on the Father's will and carried it out perfectly went to the cross, not because he deserved to be without peace, but because he wanted us to be able to experience that peace as well. Because of what Jesus has done, the God of peace is with us.

CHANGE *APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS*

There are three things we must do if we're going to grow in the practice of thinking gospel thoughts: 1) Learn the truth to know the lie; 2) Use your mouth to guide your mind; 3) Welcome in the God of peace.

- Of the six characteristics Paul lists, which do you struggle with the most?
 - In what areas of your thought life do you need to be more intentional about thinking gospel thoughts?
 - What does it look like for you to rely more on the God of peace?
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PRAYER *RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER*

- Spend time thanking Jesus for losing peace so that we could have it.
- Pray that everyone in the group would be able to practice gospel thoughts.

Discipleship Check-In

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?