

T h e

S e c r e t

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E v e r y t h i n g

The
Secret
to
Everything

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Author of Pocket Full of Quarters



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Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

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ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-985-1 (Print)
978-1-63232-986-8 (ePub)
978-1-63232-987-5 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2009901049

This book is lovingly dedicated to the men in my life. My godly grandfather, Von Vera Mosely, demonstrated what a Christian husband is and made me willing to settle for no less. My heroic daddy, Cecil Milligan, is the kind of father every little girl wants, and because of him, I've found it easy to call God "Father." My uncle, Robert Herrington, also calls me daughter, so I've been twice blessed by godly father figures. My brother, Vaughan Milligan, has stayed my friend and playmate throughout my life. I love my brilliant, interesting, and supportive husband, Bob Touchton (RoBob), more today than the day I married him. The next generation of men, our son, son-in-law, nephews, and grandson are already living up to the standards set by their role models. It is easy to love God and people when the men around me demonstrate that principle daily. I thank God every day for wise women who chose such amazing men as husbands.

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Other Books by Cheryle M. Touchton

Pocket Full of Quarters—5 Steps to Loving God

Pocket Full of Christmas—Having a Purpose Filled Christmas

Girl Gab (co-authored with Gail Golden and Barbara Gobbs)

The Secret to Dealing With Chronic Pain and Related Depression

Preparation



I'M STARTING TO feel my body again," Judy said. "I've just been numb." She'd had two close friends to die in one week. That, combined with a series of annoying medical procedures and intense work pressures, had caused her to shut down mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

Fortunately, my friend and mentor knew a secret. When things became overwhelming, she retreated, focused her energy on God, and made use of her strong support systems. By doing that, she was able to pass through her difficult season.

When things start falling apart, growing stressful, or getting tense, the temptation is to frantically work on meeting every new challenge. The problem is that when many challenges bombard us at once, we find ourselves spiraling out of control in a frenzy of fruitless frustration. There is a better way.

Are you ready to discover *The Secret to Everything*? It will take hard work, but the ancient secret that has enlightened people for centuries can be yours if you want it. You can learn how to deal with those mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical stressors that drain your energy and try to ruin your life.

The Secret to Everything

This book is for personal study with a spiritual mentor or a small group study. Begin by telling your family you will be spending thirty minutes alone every day for the next five weeks. Find a private place where you can concentrate without interruption. Get a journal. Start or join a small accountability group or ask a trustworthy person to act as your spiritual mentor and confidant. Read the *Promise* and proceed to each *Step*. Spend one week on each *Step*. Answer the questions in the *Parley* and use them for weekly group discussions or time with your mentor.

This book has a five-step progression to the treasure everyone seeks:

- Step 1: Mind Matters
- Step 2: Heart Helps
- Step 3: Soul Soothers
- Step 4: Strength Solutions
- Step 5: Neighbor Needs

Each Step has seven Ps:

- Primary Principle: The overriding spiritual principle behind the step
- Purpose: The purpose for the step
- Promise: The promise of the step
- Process: How to climb the step
- Problems: Typical hurdles and excuses we encounter when climbing the step
- Practical Applications: Stories and examples that demonstrate how the step can apply to your life
- Points to Ponder: Final thoughts about the step

When you finish, you will have just begun your adventure. Read the section entitled “*Perseverance*,” and let your new life unfold—one day at a time.

Preparation

Below are daily and weekly suggestions for the next five weeks. If you embrace this secret weapon against every evil, disappointment, and frustration, you will soar as if you are riding on the wings of eagles.

DAILY SUGGESTIONS

Meditation (3–5 Minutes)

Meditate on the Greatest Commandment (Luke 10:27) and related scriptures.

Prayer (3–5 Minutes)

- Ask God to give you knowledge of His will for you and the power to carry it out.
- Pray and journal the five Ps.
 - Plan—Ask God for wisdom and list your plans for the day.
 - Praise—List your blessings and joys.
 - Pain—Tell God your problems, what hurts, and your concerns.
 - Petition—Ask God for the desires of your heart.
 - Profession—Confess your mistakes, unholy desires, and wayward thoughts from the day before, and make your commitments for the new day.

Bible Study: (10–15 Minutes)

- Steps: There are five of them, so study one per week.
- Ps: Each step has seven Ps.
 - Read and absorb one to two Ps per day.
 - Look up the Scripture references and study the context of the scriptures.
 - Memorize the scriptures marked for memory.

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Application (5–10 Minutes)

The most important part of any book is personal application. Personal application can include personal responsibility, confession, change, and action. Spend a few minutes each day journaling what you discover and answering the questions in the *Parley* related to the point you are studying. Take action immediately.

WEEKLY SUGGESTIONS

The section labeled *Parley* contains directions and questions for use with a small accountability group or a personal mentor. Plan a time each week to discuss these questions and make commitments.

Promise



No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

—1 Corinthians 2:9

AS I SAT in the Intensive Care waiting room, I didn't think I could stand it. Our family was still recovering from the brutal murder of my husband's great-aunt Jamie, and now my beloved grandfather was in the ICU with a severely damaged heart. As I stared at my grandmother, who was sitting across from me, I wondered if she understood how seriously ill her husband was.

My grandparents had the kind of marriage everyone wanted. They still held hands when they walked. They cuddled when they sat. For sixty years they'd been together almost continually, and before this heart attack, I'd seen little sign of aging. Throughout their lives, they ran businesses together, raised four daughters, and directed music for churches. I was terrified that they were about to be separated.

The ICU only allowed visitors every two hours. The time in between stretched like an eternity, leaving too much time to think. I examined my own life. I was twenty-seven, and so far, I

The Secret to Everything

felt like I had wasted it. I was a Christian, but for some reason, it wasn't enough to satisfy the emptiness in my soul. Things were tense with my own husband. Until just a year before, I'd been bedridden with obesity-related health problems, and everyone had taken care of me. On January 19, 1979, I cried out to God and asked for the sin of gluttony to be removed. I felt God gently promising that if I ate healthy foods in moderate quantities and avoided all foods that had become false gods, He would remove my desire to kill myself with food. I'd spent the last year working on my physical health and was already reaping the rewards.

When it was finally time to visit, I tiptoed into the sterile hospital room. I took a deep breath and felt dizzy from the strong smell of medicine and sickness. I looked at the wires attached to my grandfather and found the hum of the monitors comforting. He looked at me and smiled warmly, "Gal, you've got your school girl figure back." Those were to be the last words he ever spoke to me.

I did indeed look and feel better physically but wondered why I was still so miserable. What was missing? I worried about everything. My husband was often away from home on business, and I resented him because of it. I wanted to do more than I was doing, but fear kept me from trying new things. I called myself a "stay at home mom," but I was really a couch potato, spending my days watching soap operas. I believed the promise that I could do all things through Christ who strengthened me, but for some reason, I just couldn't seem to apply that to my life.

That is the beginning of my story and what motivated me to seek a change. I'll bet you have a story of your own. What if there were an ancient, secret formula—one that was centuries old? Assume for a moment that this formula contained the secret to finding everything we seek for a fulfilled life. While each generation had passed this formula to the next, not all generations had recognized its value or applied its worth. Suppose it was your turn to have this mysterious formula and your research

Promise

indicated those generations that embraced this secret formula soared as if on “eagle’s wings” and the generations who ignored it crashed and burned into the ground. What would you do?

You might write a book called *The Secret to Everything*. The secret formula I’m talking about is called the *Sh’ma* (pronounced *Shuh mah*), which is a Hebrew word that means “to hear.” The *Sh’ma* is actually the first two words of a section of the Torah and considered by many to be the most important prayer of the Jewish faith. We see it multiple places throughout the Old and New Testaments, and Jesus told us it was the *most* important commandment. What part of *most* do we not understand? The *Sh’ma*, or the Greatest Commandment as the New Testament calls it, is the ancient secret to everything.

It is:

- The secret formula for balance, success, and well-being.
- The secret weapon against every evil, disappointment, and frustration.
- The secret sauce that spices up our lives.

The Secret to Everything: The *Sh’ma*

**(New Testament Name:
The Greatest Commandment)**

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself.
(Luke 10:27)*

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The secret is to love God with all you think, feel, and do. The rest of this book is going to show you how to do that. You can't imagine what God has planned for you once you decide to do nothing but love Him more. The answer to *everything* in life is to stop working on *every* problem, issue, challenge, annoyance, disappointment, hurdle, or frustration and start using all your energy to love God more. If you love God with your *entire* mind, heart, soul, and strength, you will automatically love your neighbors as yourself. When you fully love God and your neighbors, your desires and dreams will have metamorphosed into full alignment with God's will for your life. You will have that perfect, promised peace that is beyond any earthly explanation. You will have discovered the secret to everything.

PROGRESSION

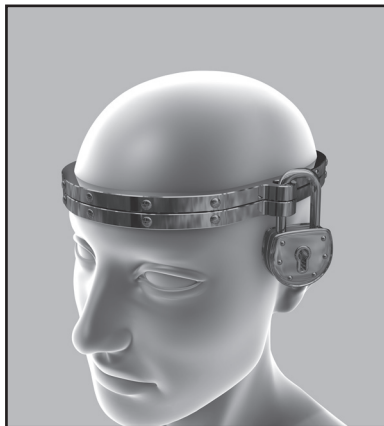
Progress to— Mind Matters



And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.

—Mark 12:30 (KJV)

MIND



MY CHURCH KNEW our family was going through a difficult time. While I was waiting for news on my grandfather, one of our pastors visited the ICU and asked what he could do.

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“We need quarters,” I’d said. This was before cell phones, and everything took quarters. There was a phone booth right outside the ICU waiting room, and we needed quarters to call and give medical updates to concerned family and friends. When we grew hungry or thirsty in the middle of the night, we needed quarters for vending machines.

The next time this pastor came, he brought a roll of quarters. Up until that point, I’d sat isolated in the corner of the hospital waiting room. My only dialogue with the families of other patients had revolved around asking others if they had quarters. For some reason, when my pastor brought that roll of quarters, I opened it and put the quarters on the table. When people needed quarters, they took them. When they had extra quarters, they put them in the pile. For the rest of the stay, we all had enough quarters.

Sharing those quarters caused me to start talking with the people around me. We shared our medical news and our concerns. Mary, a young woman about my age, and I grew friendly. Mary’s daddy was in the ICU, and she was terrified just like I was. We were both Christians and wondered where the promised peace that passes all understanding was hiding.

I thought about my grandparents’ lives. Their lives hadn’t been easy and yet they were happy. Two of their daughters suffered from chronic mental illness. I can remember my grandmother saying, “Von and I would sit at the piano singing hymns, crying, and praying for our girls.” How could they be happy in the middle of so much sorrow? I knew the answer lay in the fact that they aligned their mind with the mind of Christ. I wondered how they did that.

I knew the Bible promised we could have the mind of Christ. That process starts with inviting Jesus into our lives. As a young child, I’d believed in Jesus, confessed my sin, and asked Him to become a part of my life. I knew I was a Christian and that if I died, I’d go to heaven. However, I was a long way from having the mind of Christ.

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The secret to making good decisions is to love God with your entire mind.

More than once in my life, I've taken an ill-advised action and later asked myself the question, *What was I thinking?* The truthful answer is that while I was doing a lot of obsessing about what I wanted or needed, I was doing little thinking about loving God with my entire mind. Ever since I finally had that simple concept drilled into my seemingly concrete head—the notion that every decision and thought should be about loving God with my mind—my life has gone much better. I discovered that *the secret to making good decisions is to love God with my entire mind.*

Step 1 unlocks our minds, freeing them from the thoughts that imprison our lives. The premise of this step is that almost everyone who finds himself or herself depressed, obsessed, overwhelmed, worried, or disappointed will find immediate relief if he or she focuses all of that energy on loving God with his or her entire mind. The spiritual principle of Step 1 is that we can have the mind of Christ. In order to have that mind, we must first become His disciples and study God's Word, the Bible. Once we have the mind of Christ, we gain true knowledge, knowledge of Christ and of what is best for us. The secret to this step is that having the mind of Christ unlocks every other secret.

PRIMARY PRINCIPLE: YOU CAN HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST

Memory Verse:

But we have the mind of Christ.

—1 Corinthians 2:16

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I was angry about Bob's great aunt Jamie being murdered. A traveling serial killer had broken into her home and killed her. I grieved and lived in terror for weeks that the same thing would happen to me. In one of my study groups, I asked, "How could God have let this happen? I'm so mad. Aunt Jamie was a sweet, elderly Christian woman. The man that did this should be drawn and quartered."

A woman about five feet tall stood up, pointed her finger at me, and shouted, "Honey, your aunt is in heaven. Your job is to love and forgive the man who did this. That is what Jesus did. He died for murderers too. God will deal with that man the way He sees fit."

I was shocked. *How could she be so insensitive to my pain?* Then, God answered. The mind of Christ offered grace to sinners, and I could have that mind. The mind of Christ forgave those who murdered Him, before they repented. When I let the grace offered by the mind of Christ wash over me, I was able to forgive a murderer who tore my family apart. When I forgave him, I felt the first peace I'd felt in weeks.

*If you invite Jesus to participate in your life journey, become His disciple, and study the Word of God, over time, you can have the mind of Christ! Think about that for a moment. How could one possibly suffer from low self-esteem, obsession, or depression with the mind of Christ? The mind of Christ is perfection. The secret to having His mind is to study and apply the Bible. How could you fail to succeed with the mind of Christ? The Bible says you can do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13). As you study the rest of this step, let this overriding spiritual principle guide you. You *can* have the mind of Christ.*

PURPOSE: DISCIPLESHIP

The purpose of loving God with your mind is to become a disciple of Jesus. Becoming a disciple is more than just becoming

Progress to—Mind Matters

a Christian. Think back to the original twelve disciples. They were Jewish men taught to love God. A brilliant teacher and impressive Rabbi walked up and invited them to follow. We do not know much about how those young men, probably teenagers most of them,¹ made the intellectual decision to follow Jesus, but one has to wonder if their mothers shouted, “*Are you crazy?*” Imagine leaving jobs and loved ones to follow someone many actually considered crazy. The disciples certainly did not have all the answers and could not have dreamed what would be in front of them. Their journeys toward love started with becoming a disciple of Jesus. Being His disciple became their purpose in life, their reason for living, and eventually their reason for dying.

I accepted Christ as my personal Savior at age eight, but as you have heard, I did not understand what it meant to become His disciple until years later. Now, my Shetland Sheepdog, Belle, and I travel the streets of America several months a year as missionaries. I get up in the morning and ask God where to go. I get in my tiny camper van, Halleluiaah, and stop anywhere I see people. God prepares the hearts of the people He sends my way. I am thrilled when I get to be with someone who prays to receive Jesus for the first time, but I know that joyous event is just the beginning of a long journey.

One overwhelming observation I have made as I travel is how many troubled Christians there are. Many Christians are still hopelessly battling and losing their own personal wars to control their earthly circumstances. When they fail, they blame themselves or others and become as bitter as the rind of a lemon.

What if after you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior you truly stopped whining, studied your Bible, bore your crosses, and ran after Jesus? To “bear a cross” means to accept unpleasant circumstances that you cannot change. What if Christians accepted the heavy burden of earthly circumstances and turned their minds towards learning everything there was to learn from Jesus? I know what would happen; the same thing

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that happened to the disciples. Crosses would feel weightless. The Bible says it and I've personally experienced it. Jesus' yoke is easy and the burden of those crosses becomes light. The circumstances might or might not improve, but Christians would find rest for their souls.

Keys to Discipleship

1. **Say "Yes" to Salvation.**
2. **Bear Your Crosses.**
3. **Learn From the Word of God.**

Say "Yes" to Salvation

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

—John 3:16 (KJV)

Salvation is the secret to eternal life with God and the first key to discipleship. God loved you so much that He sent His Son to earth to be your Savior and Teacher. Jesus was born to a virgin, died on a cross, and rose from the dead. He was fully man and fully God. When you accept the facts of His birth, death, and resurrection; confess your need for Him and your sins to Him; and invite Him to be your Savior and the Shepherd of your soul, God saves you for all eternity.

Bear Your Crosses

Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

—Luke 14:27 (KJV)

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“I want to come home,” I wailed over the phone. I was 2,000 miles away, broken down beside the road, wet, and cold.

“I know, Baby,” Bob said, already looking for someone to repair Halleluiah. We both knew I wouldn’t come home. What I would do was get Halleluiah fixed and watch for the special evangelical assignment that came out of the latest adventure.

Bob and I have a call to the streets of America. Bob’s call is to help support my journeys, navigate, pray for me, edit my writing, and help get me out of jams. His crosses are to feel helpless when he can’t help me and do without his wife for months at a time. I’m a missionary. My call is to travel three to four months per year, evangelizing, exhorting, exorcising, educating, encouraging, and easing burdens. My crosses are to get lost, break down, be lonely, and stay tired. This call is a joyous one, but it does come with crosses to bear.

Bearing your crosses is the second key to discipleship and forms the bridge between your salvation and ability to learn. The term comes from Jesus willingly dying on the cross. He did not let the fear of horrendous pain that would lead to a slow, agonizing death keep Him from being obedient. To bear your crosses means you accept your earthly circumstances and your calling from God, and you allow God to use them and you.

I meet people who remind me of a wild, bucking bronco as they desperately try to toss the weight of their crosses from their backs. Those crosses cling to their backs, and the effort of all that jumping, bending, and tossing wears out even the sturdiest of wild horses.

When you accept the burdens and follow Christ, bent back and all, you begin to find peace. Wonder of wonders, instead of the crosses distracting you, they strengthen you.

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Learn

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

—Matthew 11:29–30 (KJV)

The final key to discipleship and the secret to loving God with all your mind is to take His yoke and learn. You learn by listening to God, reading your Bible, sitting in Bible studies, going to church, accepting your responsibilities, and carrying your crosses. As your mind merges with the mind of Christ, those burdens grow light and chains fall away. You will have unlocked your mind.

PROMISE: KNOWLEDGE

Memory Verse:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge.

—2 Peter 1:5

Faith → Goodness → Knowledge

For most of my life, I've been a student of the Bible. I read it, even when I couldn't seem to apply much of it to my life. Step 1 is about gaining knowledge, but that is only the beginning. When my heart, soul, and strength finally caught up with my mind, my life started working.

The promise of loving God with your mind is knowledge. The Bible says *to study and show yourself approved unto God* (2 Timothy 2:15). When you decide to follow Jesus and stop complaining, fretting, debating, or rationalizing, there is room in your head for knowledge. The energy spent on these intellectual

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struggles and debates transforms into a desire to know how to improve. After all, if you are not going to improve your self-esteem by rationalizing, you need to learn how to handle those unruly thoughts playing tug-of-war in your head. The journey starts with faith. Faith begins when you accept Jesus as your Savior. Goodness follows faith as you take up your cross (which means to stop whining, fretting, debating, or rationalizing) and follow Jesus' example.

Goodness then leads to knowledge as you study God's Word, the Bible, and learn. By reading the Bible, you learn simple secrets like:

- Think about what is lovely (Philippians 4:8).
- Stop debating and arguing (Job 15:2–5).
- Study (2 Timothy 2:15).
- Ignore distractions (Proverbs 4:25 The Message).

Gaining knowledge begins with the study of the Bible, but it does not stop there. When you have the mind of Christ, you discover what role Christ wants you to fulfill in the world. Accepting your assignments and fulfilling them to Christ's standards may take additional study.

For example, at one time, Christ called me to run a business. One of the ways I gained knowledge about how to run a business was to get a Masters of Business Administration. No one would want to use a doctor, electrician, or trash collector who did not have the appropriate knowledge to practice his or her trade. When God calls us to fulfill an earthly role, He expects and will make a way for us to get the appropriate education.

Life also offers opportunities for gaining knowledge. I was a better parent with my third child than with my first because I'd learned more. Part of our responsibility as we travel our journey through life is to learn from our circumstances and apply that knowledge to our futures. The Bible tells us to be *workmen that*

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need never be ashamed (2 Timothy 2:15) and to *work as if all work is for God* (Colossians 3:23).

PROCESS

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.

—Ephesians 4:22–24

So, how do you change your attitudes? How do you begin loving God with your entire mind? The answer is simple. Ephesians 4:22–24 clearly spells it out.

Putting On New Attitudes

- 1. Put off your old self.**
- 2. Let God make you new in the attitude of your mind.**
- 3. Put on your new self.**

First, you put off your nasty old self, the one who worries, whines, blames, and/or pouts. You simply stomp your feet at Satan and say, “No more!”

Second, you let Jesus make you new in the attitude of your mind. You confess sin and ask Him to forgive you. You beg Him to teach you and give you His mind.

Third, you study your Bible, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, you put on your brand new shiny self, and become someone who:

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- Disciplines your thoughts.
- Thinks about what is lovely.
- Studies everything you need to know, spiritually and personally, so you are approved by God.
- Has the wondrous, intelligent, creative, mind-blowing mind of Christ.

PROBLEMS: YES, BUT...

At this point you may be arguing, “Yes, but I already know everything you’ve written. *Why* am I not practicing it?” If you are a mature Christian who regularly studies the Bible, often you know what to do. However, actually doing it is another matter entirely.

Jesus said, “...the spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Matthew 26:41). The apostle Paul admitted he found himself doing what he didn’t want to do (Romans 7:15). If you feel the same way, you are in good company; but that is no excuse for inaction. One clue that you might be about to give into weak flesh is hearing yourself say the perilous words, “Yes, but.” Those two tiny words negate every good thing you have thought, read, or heard. They become the excuse for why godly wisdom does not apply to you and allow you to begin slipping and sliding down the slimy slope of disobedience, disappointment, and despair. This section includes some of the more common “Yes, buts” that relate to each step.

Yes, But Unruly Thoughts Continue to Taunt Me

Unruly thoughts can ruin your days and life. When one of my girlfriends allows circumstances to overwhelm and confuse her, she says, “My mind is spaghetti.” If you allow them, unruly thoughts will taunt and terrorize you, turning your mind into slippery, dripping spaghetti that refuses to wind around a fork

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and ends up dripping greasy stains onto your clothes. The Bible is clear about how to handle those bossy nuisances:

- Take your thoughts captive: “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5–6).
- Whatever is lovely, think on these things: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8 KJV).

Yes, But I Like Debating

If you were truly wise, would you sound so much like a windbag, belching hot air? Would you talk nonsense in the middle of a serious argument, babbling baloney? Look at you! You trivialize religion, turn spiritual conversation into empty gossip. It’s your sin that taught you to talk this way.

—Job 15:2–5 (The Message)

Debating is a favorite American pastime. No matter how good you are at debating, there will always be someone better. Debates may start out fun, but they usually turn sour. They have no winners. Yes, you may score points and briefly get ahead, but a worthy opponent will gather more information and strike when you are most vulnerable. When it comes to eternal, spiritual matters, debating is wrong. So:

- Stop belching hot air.
- Stop turning spiritual conversation into empty gossip.

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- Memorize the phrase: “You may be right.” (“Be completely humble and gentle...” [Ephesians 4:2]).
- State your position once and leave it alone.

Yes, But I’m Disappointed With My Educational Achievements

Study to show thyself approved unto God.

—2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

If you hear yourself apologizing for your lack of education, it may be because you need more education to fulfill God’s call on your life.

- It is never too late to be the person God wants you to be today.
- Ask God what He wants you to do.
- Do what you have been longing to do, as long as it is not contrary to Scripture.
- Be faithful to study—after all, you have the mind of Christ.

Yes, But I’m Not Smart Enough

Were you not listening? You can have the mind of Christ! If that is not smart enough for you, you have a bigger problem than we can talk about in this point. Here’s what I suggest:

- Rebuke negative thoughts about yourself.
- Remind yourself that you can have the mind of Christ!

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

So how might all of this apply to your daily life? Let me offer some practical applications from my life and the lives of people

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I have met on the streets of America. Perhaps you can think of a few of your own and write them in a journal.

Family Wars

Does your family play the action-packed, high-energy game of *Family Wars*? You know the game. It starts with pontificating about religion, politics, or the family past. Everyone starts talking at once, and the volume rises. You know you are about to score a point when the children run and hide. Mix a little alcohol in, and it can get downright dangerous.

Gender bashing is a popular round in *Family Wars*. Men are famous for their “wife jokes,” and women love to get together and entertain each other with the Neanderthal antics of their hapless husbands. Teenage behavior offers the perfect temptation for parents to gossip about their children by telling stories that are perhaps amusing to the adults but humiliating to the objects of the stories. Personally, I wish someone had warned me when I had small children that *everything* I said and did would be fair game for public dinnertime conversation for the *rest* of my life.

The game of *Family Wars* begins in the mind. The problem with *Family Wars* is that the seemingly harmless fun hurls our minds down the slippery slope of negativity. Once we start playing this exciting game of *Family Wars*, it is hard to stop. If you are addicted to *Family Wars*, take heart; the mind of Christ offers grace. We can do all things through Christ. We can stop focusing on what is wrong with our poor relatives and start thinking about all the lovely things they do and say... *even if the list is short*. Life might not be as exciting, but when you see your relatives through the grace-giving mind of Christ, you will like them much better.

Curiosity Usually Doesn't Kill Cats

People use the popular expression “curiosity killed the cat” to warn children venturing into dangerous territory. The fact is, curiosity

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is a good thing and does not usually kill cats. Curiosity is at the heart of scientific progress and our spiritual growth and should never be discouraged in children.

During my missionary journeys, I've visited every state in the nation. I've sat on beach blankets with young mothers and their children, watching the mothers struggle to put sunscreen on their wriggling imps. I've hiked National Parks alongside young families doing their best to keep their precious darlings from leaping off the side of a cliff. I've helped a father disentangle his curious two-year old from a briar patch.

Sometimes I am appalled by what I hear parents say to their children. Knowing that *what* we say is a result of what we *think*, I have to wonder what is going on in their minds about their children. I shudder when I hear parents laughing and calling their children self-esteem-destroying words like “nosey,” “bad,” “fat,” “chubby,” or “bossy.” *Why would they spend even a moment thinking those thoughts about the precious little ones they love so much?* I was hurt by the name calling of other children when I was a child, and when I see parents taunting their own children, I remember the pain of humiliating words.

I watched a young father holding his curious daughter. This bright-eyed, three-month-old wonder was watching everything. Her tiny eyes darted back and forth as she watched in awe.

“Look at her,” I trilled. “She’s amazing. She is watching everything.”

“Yes,” the father said. “She’s nosey all right.”

I wondered what would make him think such a thing. *Could a baby even be nosey?* “Don’t say that,” I bluntly snapped before I could stop myself. “Your beautiful infant isn’t nosey. She is delightfully curious.” I regretted not taking the time to pray before I spoke and was fortunate this father didn’t turn his negative vocabulary on me.

Name-calling, even in jest, does damage. Just ask my girlfriend Janice Sullivan. She is an intelligent, curious bright