

What to Ponder, What to Practise

Philippians 4:8-9

Theme: Christians are to continually ponder what is excellent or praiseworthy and to continually practise Godliness.

We are told that we are what we eat.

Similarly, we are what we think!

Paul addresses the issue of thinking and behaviour in one long sentence – 4:8-9.

A Command on what to Ponder (4:8)

The command is to *continually think*.

It means to *ponder, let the mind dwell on*.

Paul then lists six virtues summarised
by *if anything is excellent or
praiseworthy.*

The list bears resemblance to lists of
virtues held high in Greek culture.

Paul seems to be saying *Appreciate the
things in your surrounding culture that
are not at variance with the Gospel.*

true - all that is true

noble - whatever evokes respect;
not vulgar

right - *just*; upholding the norms of
behaviour making for a well-
ordered society

pure - morally blameless

lovely - pleasing, agreeable

admirable - whatever is
commendable

Consider aspects of our culture.

Are these virtues present in: What you watch? What you read? What you listen to?

Principle 1—Christians are to ponder what is excellent or praiseworthy in their culture but refuse to ponder what is not.

A Command on what to Practise (4:9a)

Paul moves on in this sentence from the realm of *thought* to the realm of *practice ...*

... and from 4:8 virtues in Greco-Roman culture to 4:8 virtues in Christianity.

One word encapsulates this verse:
Godliness or Christ-likeness.

The six adjectives and two nouns of
4:8 describe Jesus Christ ...

... and, therefore, what is to
characterise the Christian.

Principle 2—Christians are to continually practise Godliness. Are you practising Godliness?

Principle 3—Christian leaders are to continually be an example of Godliness to other Christians. Christian leaders, can we say to those we teach—4:9a?

The Presence of the God of Peace (4:9b)

4:9b is a wonderful encouragement to
obedience!

When the God of peace is present in
this sense, the peace of God is
present, *cf.* 4:7.

Conclusion—Food for Thought

There is much food for thought here!

What do we ponder?

Do we need a spiritual detox of our
minds?

What is our behaviour like? Are we Christ-like in our attitudes and behaviour?

Are those of us in positions of influence setting a Godly example for others to follow?

God grant that we may be obedient to
Philippians 4:8-9a!