

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

A LOVER OF WHAT IS GOOD

Titus 1:8 ... a lover of what is good...

The phrase translates the single Greek word *philagathos*. *Philos* is friend and *agathos* is benevolent. You are to be the friend of benevolence, of doing good. It is both loving and then performing what is good.

How do you love what is good? Philippians 4:8 might be a good place to start. It is sort of a commentary on how to train our hearts and minds towards that which is good.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.

God expects our active cooperation in guiding our thoughts. Whenever you find your thoughts wandering down questionable paths, you must step in and discipline your mind.

These are the things you can guide your mind to think about:

- “Whatever is true.” Dr. Walter Cavert reported a survey on worry that indicated only 8% of the things people worried about were legitimate matters of concern. The other 92% were either imaginary, or involved matters over which you had no control. You need to fill your mind with truth - God's truth - as the absolute foundation of right thinking. So many of our emotional and spiritual problems stem from false thoughts, especially about God and His love for us.
- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever is noble.” This means “worthy of respect.” Today there is a preoccupation with base things; just review the

topics on the daily talk shows! You should rather occupy your thoughts with things worthy of respect.

- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever things are just.” “Just” comes from the root word for right. Many things are not just, they are not right. They tend to lead you towards thoughts of retaliation and revenge, especially if you are the victim of wrongful treatment. But look at Paul: When mistreated in Philippi, he thought about the Lord, and sang hymns at midnight. If he had brooded over all of the wrongs done to him, he would have become bitter - and useless in the service of the Lord.
- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever things are pure.” This is a timely word. Society has given free reign to pornography and perversion in all the media. You must endeavor to exclude as much of the impure as possible. If not, these images will be lodged in your mind, lurking there until making their presence known at the weirdest times - during worship or an otherwise innocent conversation. Author John Phillips says,

If a person once lets his thoughts wander down some impure path, hidden legions joyfully emerge and stampede, pushing the mind into all kinds of sin.

- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever things are lovely.” These are things that are gracious and kind. First Corinthians 13 tells you that “love believes all things.” That is, love gives the benefit of the doubt and thinks graciously of others.
- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever things are of good report.” Have edifying conversations; use words that build-up rather than break down.
- Guide your thoughts towards “whatever things are virtuous and praiseworthy.” These words are a kind of general summary of what we've been discussing. In other words, don't waste your time thinking about anything that isn't morally virtuous and worth commending to others in order to build them up in the Lord.

“Meditate on these things.” You must make deliberate choices to guide your mind. Your mind will not automatically think on these things. Because of the fall, because of indwelling sin, you have a bias towards the base and degenerate. But the indwelling Spirit can assist you in guiding your thoughts.

With this mental discipline you are ready to “love what is good.” To begin with, certain **things** are “good.” One commentator listed these things:

“prayer, preaching, reading, spiritual conversation, and every religious exercise.” Spiritual things are good.

Our hearts ought to strongly desire doing these things and the many other things that accompany the Christian life. Sadly we can get to a place where we still love them but only in part or parts. By that I mean we can start to compartmentalize our lives. We do certain spiritual things but we also get involved in many carnal things. We can be one thing at church and something entirely different in the world.

It can spill over into our fellowship with other believers as well. We can get together and almost banish any spiritual suggestions such as prayer and godly conversation.

A lover of what is good constantly and consistently loves spiritual things. They are always a part of his life and lifestyle.

Some translations render this phrase we’re discussing as “a lover of good men.” I get two things from this:

1. First, you desire to be around good men, godly men, who will both cherish and challenge you.
2. Second, you will desire to see other men grow in their godliness.

You need therefore to be both being disciplined and to be a discipler.

Discipleship takes many forms. The classic understanding seems to be that you choose someone to sort of pour your life into and hang around with them as much as possible. Nothing wrong with that - but it’s not the only method.

Look at the example of Jesus. True, He called the twelve and then they all hung out together for three and one half years. But in that group He had some He was closer to than others. It tells us that the dynamics of discipleship aren’t so simple as just getting one-one-one with someone.

Every time you hear the Word taught it’s a form of discipleship. You can be discipling others on a more random basis - whenever you’re around them with no set schedule.

Again, I am not against classic one-on-one discipleship. But we need to broaden our thinking.

And if you've been a Christian for any length of time you need to start considering yourself a discipler of other men. Pick someone to disciple if you want; or get a group of guys together and go through a book or some other material.

But mostly start thinking on what is good and then applying it in all your contacts and conversations with others.