



LOGIC AND THE WAY OF JESUS

Thinking Critically and Christianly

TRAVIS DICKINSON

Foreword by PAUL COPAN

“Those of us who teach logic and critical thinking in Christian universities, colleges, and seminaries have long dreamt of a book like this. Travis Dickinson’s *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is the new gold standard in the field. There is no close second. Not only does it teach the fundamentals of logic in remarkably clear and practical terms; it demonstrates how a basic grasp of critical thinking skills is essential to loving God with our minds, forming a consistent Christian worldview, and following Jesus—our Lord and the preeminent Logician. This book is required reading for all who would ‘contend for the faith’ in our spiritually confused, post-Christian generation!”

—**Richard Brian Davis**, professor of philosophy,
Tyndale University

“*Logic and the Way of Jesus* is an incisive, thoughtful, and carefully designed look at what it means to think Christianly about all aspects of life. In this outstanding book, Travis Dickinson brilliantly and insightfully connects intellectual curiosity, an understanding of logic, critical thinking, the place of faith and reason, and the importance of developing a Christian worldview. In doing so, he winsomely and persuasively invites Christ followers to think and live in a renewed and holistic way in order to change lives, strengthen churches, enhance Christian entities, advance the gospel, and bring glory to the one, true, and living God. Heartily recommended!”

—**David S. Dockery**, president, International Alliance
for Christian Education, and distinguished professor of
theology, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Brilliant! This is the book I’ve been waiting for: a clarion call to reject anti-intellectualism and love God with all our minds. Dickinson’s *Logic and the Way of Jesus* is one part inspiring and one part practical: a perfect blend, showing the brilliance of Jesus, the Master Logician, and the call of his followers to think critically and Christianly in a world gone mad.”

—**Paul M. Gould**, associate professor of philosophy
of religion, Palm Beach Atlantic University

“*Logic and the Way of Jesus* is an accessible guide that helps equip followers of the Way to cultivate a more responsible, intellectually virtuous character, one that is modeled by Christ himself and rooted and nourished in the life-giving reality of the triune God. Dickinson reminds us that the intellectual pursuit of God is to be understood primarily in the context of the first and greatest commandment: to love the Lord our God with every aspect of our being. This is no ordinary introduction to logic textbook! Dickinson is a seasoned, pastoral guide to the logical and moral dimensions of a well-ordered, Christ-shaped mind.”

—**Ross D. Inman**, associate professor of philosophy,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The call to Christlikeness is a call to love God with a well-ordered and virtuous mind. *Logic and the Way of Jesus* brilliantly equips readers to answer this call. Appealing throughout to the example of Jesus, Travis Dickinson shows us—with patience born of true expertise—the way to recover the intellect as central to Christian discipleship. Dickinson’s engaging readability and skillful explanations guarantee that *Logic and the Way of Jesus* will serve equally well in classical schools or college classrooms, small groups, and personal studies.”

—**R. Keith Loftin**, headmaster, Kingdom Preparatory Academy

“There has been a need for this book for a long time. *Logic and the Way of Jesus* explains why critical thinking is important for Christians and offers a practical road map for how to think like Jesus. This is now my top recommendation for a book of its kind.”

—**Sean McDowell**, associate professor of Christian apologetics, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“The incarnation of the Son of God saliently revealed the ground of logic and love, of rationality and hospitality. It is no less true to say, ‘God is logic’

than it is to say, ‘God is love.’ Of course, God is more than those characteristics, but certainly not less. It also explains why the university and hospital movements arose predominantly in the Christian West. In *Logic and the Way of Jesus*, Dickinson helps us see the good of training our minds and how to do so. Moreover, he helps us see why, as Christians, loving God with our heads in addition to [our] hands and hearts is essential to Christian discipleship in pursuing the good life. This is a good resource for individuals, small groups, and classrooms.”

—**Corey Miller**, president and CEO, Ratio Christi

“Travis Dickinson is a Christian scholar with a pastor’s heart of equipping believers for ministry and maturity. *Logic in the Way of Jesus* brings all of this together in a readable way. The real importance of the book lies in the way Dickinson depicts, explains, and illustrates crucial concepts as aspects of Christian discipleship: worldview, rationality, inductive and deductive logic, truth, and much, much more. This book is crucial reading for pastors, students, and everyday Christians. I highly recommend it.”

—**JP Moreland**, distinguished professor of philosophy,
Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“Some tell us we should think well, and that is important. Others teach us how to think well, and that is also important. This is a book that gives the why and how: a white swan event. Whether teaching basic logic in a Christian context or hoping to learn how to be a better reasoner, this is an outstanding resource.”

—**John Mark Reynolds**, president and professor of
philosophy, The Saint Constantine School



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And the most special thanks are due to my wife, Shari, who patiently endured many off-the-clock writing hours and carried the parenting load with excellence. Thanks also to our kids, Kaelia, Delaney, Emery, and Kade, for providing many opportunities to do more important things all along the way. I love you all very much.

It is my sincere hope that this book is an encouragement to the church, is used in high school and college classes, and is read by any who love Jesus and desire to think more carefully and Christianly.

FOREWORD

The apostle Paul writes in the book of Colossians that Jesus Christ is “the head of the body, the church” (1:18). He continues his description of the preeminent Christ—the one in whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). In that same chapter, Paul reminds his readers not to become caught up in false, human-generated worship; while it may appear full of piety and “holy” self-denial, he says, such religiosity is in fact a departure from Christ. The person who does so has “lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow” (2:19 NIV).

Travis Dickinson has written an important book reminding us of how many professing believers in the church have, in various ways, “lost connection with the head”—with Jesus Christ. They have failed to see Jesus as the most brilliant thinker ever—a master logician and the wisdom of God in human form. They have been slipshod in their thinking, and they have not shown interest in loving God with all their minds. Because many in the church have not seen the value of thinking Christianly—of having a thoughtful, well-informed faith—they have not viewed Jesus rightly, and they therefore do not represent him well. And most church leaders don’t seem interested in remedying this problem.

Whether in our worship or in our theology or our view of the world, failing to be thoughtful, soundly reasoning Christians will be detrimental to our spiritual lives and our witness in the world. We will have a blurrier vision of God and how to worship him “in truth” (John 4:23–24); we will probably not view the Christian faith as a serious knowledge tradition (Luke 1:1–4); we will be unable to give reasons for the hope within us in our witness (1 Peter 3:15); and we will fail the next generation of believers because we have not properly equipped them to proclaim and defend the gospel in the marketplace of ideas.

Dickinson’s book takes important steps forward to remedy this problem. Dickinson makes a solid case for grounding rationality in God himself and that we as his image bearers can better represent and reflect and honor God by being more thoughtful Christians. He shows how Jesus is the ultimate logician, the wisdom of God incarnate, and that we can learn from his example. This book also furnishes us with tools to help us become more clear-minded, careful reasoners who are not tossed about by false doctrines or pseudophilosophies or fallacious logic.

Because the mind is like a muscle, the more we exercise it, the better thinkers we’ll become. While it takes effort to read thoughtfully and then to apply the tools in this book to sharpen our thinking, the rewards will be great in every way—assuming we are humble learners who aren’t puffed up in the process. So take up this book, and read it with care—and, by God’s grace, become a wiser, more thoughtful worshipper of God and disciple of Christ and more effective Spirit-empowered witness in the world.

Paul Copan
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The Intellectual Pursuit of God

Our world, today, is post-Christian. What this means is that Christianity deeply influenced our culture here in the globalized West,¹ but the culture has moved on. The culture has embraced a broadly secular worldview. This has been a sweeping change. There are, of course, still remnants of a Christian culture including many churches and Christians. But the cultural influencers in the globalized West do not today express a Christian worldview.

¹ The “globalized West” refers to the culture that started in Christian Europe in the Middle Ages and then spread to many parts of the world, with the United States being one of the more influential. Today this culture and way of thinking has truly become global, affecting people in all parts of the world, with the advent of mass communications and mass media. There are certainly places that are still largely unaffected by Western culture, but there are many countries in the East (such as Japan) where it is firmly established.

Losing Our Minds

An early pioneer of Christian rock music once asked, “Why should the devil have all the good music?”² The line of this 1970s song laments the fact that Christians produced none of the popular music at the time. The “good” rock music was to be found only in secular bands. Well, we might also ask why the devil should have the whole culture. Why are Christian beliefs and values so diminished in the world around us?

Again, it hasn’t always been this way. There was once a time when Christians indeed had good music. The church also had good art, philosophy, literature, science, and so on, and occasionally Christians produced culture-shifting masterpieces.

We could note many examples. Take sixth-century Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius as an example. Along with being a member of the Roman senate, Boethius was a devout Christian and wrote a variety of influential philosophical works. But he also wrote works in music theory, geometry, and arithmetic. His manual for music theory and composition lasted as a central text for centuries of scholars. In the fourteenth century, we have the Italian poet Dante Alighieri. His epic poem, *The Divine Comedy*, which is an allegorical vision of the Christian life, is regarded as one of the world’s greatest works of literature. In the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many of the primary figures were devout Christians, including Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Johannes Kepler, and Isaac Newton. Finally, there is the eighteenth-century songwriter Isaac Watts, who wrote such classic hymns as “Joy to the World” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” Watts also wrote a textbook on logic, the full title of which is *Logick: or, the Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry after Truth, with a Variety of Rules to Guard Against Error, in the Affairs of Religion and Human Life, as well as in the Sciences*. This book had not only an impressive title but was the standard

² Larry Norman, “Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music,” track 9 on *Only Visiting This Planet*, Verve, 1972, vinyl LP.

logic textbook at universities all over the Western world for nearly 200 years. This is only a sampling of the long and varied tradition of Christians who saw their Christian faith as not only consistent with influencing and producing culture but also motivating this cultural work.

Consider also that Christians founded most of the world's greatest universities, with overt Christian teaching as a primary part of the curriculum. This includes Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia universities, as well as many others throughout Europe and the United States. Christian thought dominated the idea centers of the culture. For better or worse, it was sometimes difficult to be successful in areas of scholarship and the arts without being a Christian.

To be clear, the church's deep influence on the culture sometimes led to abuses of power. When Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) became convinced the earth orbited the sun, he was served a sentence of life imprisonment because this idea was taken to be in conflict with the idea of a fixed and immovable earth in the Bible.³ Even though there were abuses of power, the point is that Christianity was a major player in the creation of the culture of what is today the globalized Western world.

Sadly, today, Christianity has lost much of its cultural influence. Not only is the Christian worldview no longer dominant in the universities, the arts, science, philosophy, literature, and so forth, it doesn't always even get a hearing. When Christians are too public and enthusiastic about their Christian faith, especially in scholarship or art, they are met with suspicion and sometimes scorn. This is the modern world in which we live. Where are the Christian artists, musicians, writers, and thinkers who are producing culture-shifting masterpieces that express a Christian worldview? There are some who are doing good and faithful work, to be sure, and we need

³ As one translation of Ps 93:1 says, "Thou hast fixed the earth immovable and firm" (NEB). Galileo was also at odds with the scientific community, so his troubles were not purely theological.

lots more of these. But things have shifted and, in this shift, the Christian impact on culture has greatly diminished.

How Did We Get Here?

Why has our impact on culture become so paltry?

It's certainly not because we lack the numbers to have an impact. In the United States, as of 2015, evangelical Christians alone made up around 25 percent of the population.⁴ Combining all other broadly Christian views (Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, etc.), the percentage jumps up to around 70 percent of the US population. That means one out of four people in this country is an evangelical, and close to three out of four are broadly Christian. That is a large majority of the population, yet Christian values and beliefs are radically underrepresented in culturally important areas.

In his insightful book *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, J. P. Moreland explains how the culture has shifted to a post-Christian one. He, along with others,⁵ identifies a major shift in the church that occurred in a variety of revivals and awakenings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in America. The shift was to an emphasis on a more emotional and experience-based conversion rather than one with a reflective and intellectual emphasis. One came to Christ on the basis of momentary feelings of conviction rather than on the basis of a deep consideration of the truth of Christianity. Though tremendous good came from these spiritual awakenings, this marked a distinct change in how people came to be Christians and has had a deep impact on the church today.

⁴ *America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline as Share of U.S. Population; Other Faiths and the Unaffiliated Are Growing*, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.

⁵ See most notably Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Let's be clear: coming to faith in Christ in repentance is going to be an emotional experience. This is to be expected. Emotions, however, are fickle things, and they are not—by themselves—a good way to determine truth and maintain belief and commitment. Emotional moments may cause us to change our minds and make commitments, but they do not necessarily entail a lasting commitment. In big emotional moments we may not even know to what we are committing. As we are swept up in the emotions of a movement, we have to stop and ask whether it is a good idea. It is noteworthy that two of what are now worldwide religious movements, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, came out of a certain area that was, in effect, ground zero of the Second Great Awakening, called the "burned over district" in upstate New York. Many recent converts to Christianity, in turn, converted to these alternative Christian views. It seems they didn't have the theological depth to understand the differences between these views and traditional Christianity.

The point is that when it is all about emotion and fervor, then we fail to have a guide to truth. Emotions simply are not good indicators of truth. And if you can be emotionally drawn into joining Christianity, you can be drawn into another community with similar emotional appeal perhaps without even realizing you've made a change. Even all those converts who remained in Christian communities didn't necessarily remain because they had good reasons to believe Christianity was true. For many, the commitment had nothing to do with having good reasons for belief, let alone a foundation of deep knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrine. It was, at bottom, an emotional and sentimental commitment they didn't want to give up.

Therefore, the church, though having grown in number, became dominated by a less intellectually grounded faith. This became especially problematic because the church was unable to meet the significant intellectual challenges it inevitably came to face from a world that looked to throw off previous eras' shackles of religious dogma. There were, for example, a variety of scholarly attacks on the historicity of the Bible (focused especially on miracles and supernatural events). Though these were scholarly and there were

difficult challenges along the way, the critiques were often extremely speculative. For example, one eighteenth-century German scholar, Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, denied Jesus's resurrection and instead proposed an elaborate conspiracy. Bahrdt claimed that Jesus only pretended to die, having been given medication from Luke, who was a physician, to withstand the pain of the crucifixion. Shortly thereafter, Joseph of Arimathea resuscitated Jesus to pull off the ruse that he rose from the dead.⁶ Now, this is a theory that's hard to take seriously, but Christians weren't in the game to offer a response to claims such as this and a defense of the claims of Scripture.⁷

The world attacked, and most Christians weren't ready for it. In this situation, the church, it seems, had three options. First, it could have attempted to intellectually face down the challenges. Second, it could have simply conceded that Christianity is false on the basis of these challenges. Neither of the first two options were tenable for the church. As we've said, a new popular majority wasn't prepared to face down the challenges, and of course the church was not interested in conceding that Christianity was false. There was only one option left if the church was to survive. The third option is to detach faith from reason. Here one would be saying the challenges don't matter because faith has nothing to do with intellectual reasons. With this view of faith, intellectual pursuits are not only unnecessary for Christians, but they may even be harmful. After all, this is where all the challenges are.

The church may have survived but this had devastating effects. The problem is that if faith is detached from reason, then, by definition, people do not have a reason to consider what Christians have to say. There is no

⁶ See Douglas Shantz, "Karl Friedrich Bahrdt (1740–92): Pietism, Enlightenment, and the Autonomous Self in Early Modern Germany," *Canadian Society of Church History* (2012): 53–68.

⁷ For a defense of the reliability of the Bible, see Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs* (Nashville: B&H, 2016); and Paul M. Gould, Travis Dickinson, and R. Keith Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel* (Nashville: B&H, 2018), chap. 5.

point to (rationally) engage something that's disconnected from reason. And so, with this popular majority way of thinking of faith, the church becomes more and more marginalized. As Moreland puts it, "this shift itself expresses a growing anti-intellectualism in the church, resulting in the marginalization of Christianity in society—its lack of saltiness, if you will—and the emergence of the most secular culture the world has ever seen."⁸ The diagnosis here is Christians have ceased to emphasize and value a Christian intellect. We have, in a way, lost our minds. Mark Noll, in his influential book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, famously says, "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind."⁹ That is, we have failed to think critically about life, and consequently we fail to think Christianly about our world. A wide majority of Christians do not even know what constitutes the basic doctrines of Christianity, and this is a big problem with big consequences. If a typical Christian cannot spell out what it is to be a Christian, then he or she will only be a Christian accidentally, if at all. For most, they are Christian in slogan and in certain practices (such as occasionally attending a Sunday morning service) but fail to fully live out the Christian life. How will we impact our culture with Christian beliefs and values if Christians themselves do not even know what those are?

What does this post-Christian society look like? It, too, has become devoid of intellectual depth. Moreland describes it:

Our society has replaced heroes with celebrities, the quest for a well-informed character with the search for flat abs, substance and depth with image and personality. In the political process, the makeup man is more important than the speech writer, and we approach the voting booth, not on the basis of a well-developed philosophy of what the state should be, but with a heart full of images, emotions, and slogans all packed into thirty-second sound bites. The

⁸ J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 15.

⁹ Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 3.

mind-numbing, irrational tripe that fills TV talk shows is digested by millions of bored, lonely Americans hungry for that sort of stuff.¹⁰

Rather than setting the pace for the culture and being the antidote for this loneliness and anxiety, the church has come to reflect the secular worldview. We have, for example, the phenomena of celebrity pastors who often seem to prioritize Christian image over being biblical (and faithful!). People often join a church on the basis of the production and enjoyment value of its weekly services rather than a considered review of its doctrine and mission. The values of a church often look no different from secular enterprises. Many churches aim to give people a great experience and then grow, grow, grow. This is no different from the basic model of Disney or Starbucks. But churches can't do it as well as Disney or Starbucks. Consequently, biblical Christianity creates little more than a slight disturbance among the broader culture.

This shift from an intellectual faith to a faith of experience and emotions is a serious problem in the church, and it has had catastrophic consequences for our impact on our culture. To stem this tide, we must, as Christians, recover two things. We must learn to think critically and to think Christianly about all of life.

Thinking Critically

The reason, historically, people didn't become Christians merely on the basis of emotional appeals is that churches were once intellectual centers. The pastor, often the most educated person in town, was an intellectual as much as he was a spiritual adviser. It was often the pastor who educated school-age children in a variety of subjects. That was part of his job in addition to providing deep theological education. People didn't separate faith and reason precisely because Christianity provided the most reasonable worldview for understanding and getting around in the world.

¹⁰ Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, 14.

John Wesley was an eighteenth-century evangelist and theologian who, along with his brother Charles, founded Methodism. He once gave an address to clergy on what qualities and abilities every minister should possess. We should make note of his emphasis on the intellectual qualities. For Wesley, ministers must have a thorough “knowledge of all the Scriptures,” which, for him, meant being able to read Greek and Hebrew.¹¹ But Wesley also urges ministers to have some knowledge of “the sciences.” By this, Wesley does not necessarily mean only what is learned in a typical science class today. The term *sciences* had a much broader application. In fact, the two examples he gives of the sciences are logic and philosophy.

He says of logic, “For what is [logic], if rightly understood, but the art of good sense? of apprehending things clearly, judging truly and reasoning conclusively? . . . What is there, then, in the whole compass of science, to be desired in comparison of it?”¹² Wesley sees no conflict in being a Christian and becoming adept at using the principles of logic. In fact, he thinks there is no intellectual pursuit in the sciences more important for a minister. Think about it. Shouldn’t a minister be able to judge truly and reason conclusively? Isn’t this relevant to having good theology and being able to rightly divide the Word of God (2 Tim 2:15)? It’s a great tragedy that so many Christians think the principles of logic and critical thinking are irrelevant to and even opposed to being a faithful minister.

Wesley goes on to say:

Should not a Minister be acquainted too with at least the general grounds of natural philosophy? Is not this a great help to the accurate understanding several passages of Scripture? Assisted by this, he may himself comprehend, and on proper occasions explain to others, how the invisible things of God are seen from the creation of the world; how “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the

¹¹ John Wesley, “An Address to Clergy,” in *The Christian Reader*, ed. Mary Gerhart and Fabian Udoh (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), 108.

¹² Wesley, 109.

firmament showeth his handiwork”; till they cry out, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.”¹³

Notice how the study of what he calls “natural philosophy” (or what is sometimes called “natural theology” today) is connected to understanding Scripture and evangelism. It helps make the case to others about the reality of God through what can be seen in creation. Shouldn’t the minister be able to show someone how God can be seen in creation (Ps 19:1; Rom 1:19–20)?

If this wasn’t enough, Wesley goes on to say that ministers should have some knowledge of geometry. What reason could Wesley have for recommending a general knowledge of geometry for Christian ministry? He says that this is valuable because a knowledge of geometry gives one a “clearness of apprehension, and an habit of thinking closely and connectedly.”¹⁴ In short, a knowledge of geometry cultivates the habit of thinking well. If one can think carefully and connectedly with geometric theorems, then one will likely be able to think carefully and connectedly when it comes to Scripture and theology. A lot of students struggle to see why studying higher-level mathematics is relevant to their life. But if studying mathematics helps us to think well, then this seems of great value to the minister.

Notice the general thrust of what Wesley is urging: he implores ministers to be intellectuals for greater ministerial effectiveness. Christianity provides answers to life’s most difficult challenges. But to understand and articulate these things, as a minister, one needs well-developed intellectual abilities. There are two ways in which intellectual ability is required. First, he says we will have a greater depth in our own Christian worldview. Wesley leaves no doubt that this begins with knowledge of the Bible. But, if one were to only memorize copious amounts of Bible verses, Wesley thinks one will not be equipped to minister effectively. We must first of all understand what these verses say (which is not always easy), but a minister should also be able

¹³ Wesley, 109.

¹⁴ Wesley, 109.

to see how they connect and fit into a broader theological picture. To do this well, we must understand the principles of Bible study and interpretation (sometimes called hermeneutics) and areas like biblical and systematic theology. These are all well-worked-out fields of inquiry. As any first-year seminary student will tell you, learning biblical languages, the principles of Bible interpretation, and theology can be intellectually overwhelming. What underlies all of this is a significant exercise of critical thinking. Thus, to be well equipped as a minister in our knowledge of the Bible and theology, we have to be well equipped intellectually. But this shouldn't stop with only Bible and theology. Wesley envisions being equipped broadly.

The second reason there will be greater ministerial effectiveness is because we can provide rational grounds for the Christian faith. Wesley seems to allude to Rom 1:19–20, which says that God's invisible attributes can be "clearly seen" in the world around us. He also has in mind King David's claim, "The heavens declare the glory of God. . . . Day after day they pour out speech" (Ps 19:1–2). The idea is we can look at the world and see obvious ways it points to the reality of God. This is perhaps best exemplified by Paul's ministry in Athens (Acts 17:16–34). Paul presented a case for the gospel grounded in "some of [their] own poets" (v. 28) and the Greek philosophical thought familiar to the Athenians. Paul's familiarity with Greek philosophy and poetry made him effective in Athens. All of this requires significant and well-honed intellectual skills. Without developing the critical thinking skills necessary for believing and living out Christianity, our cultural engagement runs the risk of ringing hollow. We are not all going to go into formal ministry. But because we are all called to impact the culture for Christ, being intellectual and thinking critically about our faith is not optional.

Thinking Christianly

We must not simply think critically. If we are to have a positive impact on our culture, we must also think *Christianly*.

Consider how you would answer the question, What is Christianity? Many would respond with a rehearsal of some Christian doctrines and beliefs (e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity or a statement of the gospel, etc.). This is, of course, a crucial part of what Christianity is. But Christianity is not merely a certain set of beliefs. What kind of a thing is Christianity? Well, you might say, it is a religion. This is also true, but defining the term *religion* is notoriously difficult. Religions all have certain beliefs and religious practices or rituals, but so do people who play golf, say, every Sunday morning. If you believe Christian doctrines and gather on Sunday mornings, is that all there is to Christianity? Surely there is more to it than just that.

What we have to understand is that Christianity is a whole way of life. It is a worldview in the fullest sense of that term. There is a Christian way of seeing the world and understanding your place in it, and this gives meaning to every aspect of the world for the Christian. Let's try a thought experiment. Suppose you decided to pretend to be an atheist for a week. You will act for one week as if God does not exist. How much would your week have to change? If your week would virtually remain the same, then it's likely you haven't understood Christ's call on our life: "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt 16:24). Jesus explains discipleship by analogy to a death sentence! Dietrich Bonhoeffer agreed: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."¹⁵ This is certainly extreme, and that's the point. Following Christ is a whole life commitment.

Let's say you want to decide what you will do as a career. If you simply look for a profession that pays the best and is the most enjoyable, then you are not thinking Christianly about your future career. Money and the enjoyment of life are not unimportant things, but they certainly aren't what life is all about, on the Christian view. Our career choice should be determined by what Christ has called us to do. We should then do our job in service to

¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 99.

Christ's kingdom, no matter where and no matter what that is. In short, we should do our careers Christianly.

Your career is a big decision. But having a Christian worldview should also impact what you do with your day today. You make an enormous number of decisions in a twenty-four-hour period, and these often add up in big and consequential ways. Indeed, they begin to constitute the general direction of your life. It's the innumerable small decisions where one's character really shows. The point is that Jesus should be a part of those small, everyday decisions too. When we do this, Jesus is part of the general flow of our lives. If we were to pretend to be an atheist for a week, this would require radical change.

The problem is that we often compartmentalize our lives. We have our spiritual pursuits on the one hand, and our career pursuits (or education or hobbies or relationships, etc.) on the other. But Jesus, if he is Lord, must be Lord over all. The Christian worldview applies to how we live out our days in the big and momentous things as well as the mundane. Much more than being part of a Sunday morning club, we are to think and live Christianly as it relates to all parts of life.

Curiosity

Engaging the culture for Christ is not the only reason for intellectual pursuits. The Bible presents a picture of humans as created to be intellectual. Being intellectually curious is part of God's design.

The great philosopher Aristotle recognized a fundamental drive in every human being. He famously begins one of his most important books by saying, "All men by nature desire to know."¹⁶ His thought is that all people naturally *seek after* knowledge with an intrinsic desire to understand the world around us. Christian philosopher John Mark Reynolds says, "In one of the most

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *Aristotle Selected Works*, 3rd ed., trans. and ed. Hippocrates Apostle (Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic, 1991), 980a21.

powerful opening sentences ever written, Aristotle presumes that human beings as human beings are mentally restless. Human curiosity knows no limits, and humans can be defined as a species that wants to know *more*.¹⁷ This desire can no doubt be stifled by boredom or laziness, or it can be cultivated and fed. The point is the God-given desire is there in all of us to some degree.

This isn't, of course, to say we all desire academic learning. Formal academic pursuits are only one way we pursue knowledge. Some folks may have no formal academic training but can throw out sports statistics until your head spins. Others regularly research and know everything there is to know about fashion styles. Still others are brilliant when it comes to the trades even if they never went to college or even finished high school. These individuals are not often seen as intellectuals in the traditional sense, but they certainly are engaged in exercising their minds and have in-depth knowledge in relevant areas.

We can see this natural desire most obviously when people are young. Children are typically extremely curious about life. Anyone who works with kids will tell you that they never have to teach children to be curious. Kids just naturally wonder how the world works and consequently ask amazing questions. We all start out this way, but, as we get older, we have a tendency to get bored with the world, and we stop asking questions about a world filled with mystery and intrigue. But our natural state is one of wonder and curiosity.

This natural curiosity is part of the original purpose for which humankind was created. In Gen 1:28, God gives to Adam and Eve what's known as the "creation mandate." God says, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." The Hebrew word for "subdue" has a specifically gentle and nonviolent connotation. In other words, we are not to burn nature to the ground, but we are to shape it and control it for good purposes. Using trees for lumber or iron ore to make steel is not evil and, in fact, fulfills

¹⁷ John Mark Reynolds, *When Athens Met Jerusalem: An Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 194; emphasis in original.

this mandate as we do it responsibly as stewards of these resources. But, here's the thing: to use these resources requires knowledge. And to use these resources responsibly often requires knowledge and extreme innovation. As a result, fulfilling this mandate requires us to investigate and unlock the mysteries of the world around us.

We should notice this mandate in Gen 1:28 comes immediately after the creation of humans. There's a striking difference in the creation of humans that makes us unique from all the rest of the created order. The preceding verse says:

So God created man
in his own image;
he created him in the image of God;
he created them male and female. (Gen 1:27)

God created humanity in his image. This is an extremely rich theological claim, and unfortunately we don't have the space to thoroughly explore it here. But the picture we see in Genesis 1 is God creates the world, and this world is good. He creates humans to be God-like in that we are to reflect his creative image to care for and subdue the world. Animals, who are not made in the image of God, have the cognitive abilities to merely survive the world. It is only humans, in God's design, who are made to seek understanding and knowledge. So part of the reason we are put on this planet, according to the creation mandate, is to discover, understand, and create (craft and build) things with the world as we find it. We were never meant to be passive onlookers and mere receivers regarding the world. God's intention for humans is to actively discover and be creative.

The point is that developing the intellectual skills needed to know the world is part of a biblical picture of our design. Some discoveries along the way have happened by accident. But to understand the discovery and to be able to use it (i.e., to subdue it) takes careful thinking and significant intellectual skill. Thus, to appropriately live out this mandate, we must value our intellectual lives. This is quite literally the design of God.

Loving and Knowing God with All of Our Minds

We were designed to be intellectually curious, but not all objects of knowledge are equally satisfying. The ultimate object of knowledge is God himself. Our ultimate purpose is to know God, and without this knowledge we are left wanting. Blaise Pascal once said:

What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.¹⁸

We will naturally seek to know many things, but it is not until we have true knowledge of God that we find wholeness and peace. This is far more than simply having intellectual knowledge of God, but it is certainly not less than an intellectual knowledge.

Jesus commands us to pursue God intellectually. In fact, this is part of the greatest and most important of the commands in all of Scripture.

There's a point in Jesus's ministry during which elite religious leaders and scholars of his day repeatedly challenged him (Matthew 22). We will have a lot more to say about these challenges later in the book. However, for now we should notice that Jesus was pressed with some serious intellectual challenges. Jesus, with stunning intellectual grace and ability, refuted them to the point that the top intellectuals of the day were left speechless.

After a number of failed attempts to challenge Jesus, an expert in the Hebrew law asked, "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?" (Matt 22:36). Now, this passage might be a bit too removed from its original

¹⁸ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 45.

context for us to appreciate how difficult this question really is. If one knows anything about the Old Testament, one likely knows that the Jews had *a lot* of laws, and in Jesus's day, the Jews had added a whole new layer of extra laws just to ensure no one breaks the actual laws. So Jesus was tasked with having to pick the greatest law out of all the Jewish laws.

Jesus was up to the intellectual task, however, and responded seemingly without hesitation: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command" (Matt 22:37–38). Even though he was asked only for the greatest, Jesus did the religious expert one better. He gave as the second greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself" and then said, "All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands" (vv. 39–40). What's extraordinary here is that Jesus gave not only the two greatest commandments but justified their greatness by pointing to them as the basis of all the laws and all of God's word to humankind given to the prophets. The expert in Hebrew law had no response. Jesus's logic was unassailable.

So we, as Christ followers, should take careful note. Jesus just told us, of all the things to do, this is most important. We are commanded to love God with all of who we are: our hearts, our souls, and *our minds*. I think we have some handle on what it means to love God with all of our hearts and our souls. This, among other things, means we should love God emotionally and with the deep parts of who we are. But Jesus also commanded us to love God with all of our minds.

Now, what does it even mean to love God with all of our minds? I'd like to suggest that the command here is to pursue God intellectually. This means we should intellectually seek after God in love and in our relationship with him in order to know him in a deep and full way.

To help us understand this idea, let's imagine a young couple who have fallen head over heels for each other. In those first few months of young love, the couple can't bear to be apart for more than a few moments. They walk everywhere together, sit together, study together, eat together, and simply stare at each other as much as humanly possible. There is an intense (almost

sickening, for the rest of us) curiosity. They tell each other *everything*. They ask each other *everything*.

Couples in the early stages of love seek eagerly to know everything there is to know about each other. Part of this pursuit is knowing and expressing their thoughts, ideas, and deepest beliefs—that is, a big part of this pursuit is intellectual. Unfortunately, as time goes by, the interest and curiosity can wane, and older couples can sometimes lose their curiosity for each other. If a married couple has lost all their curiosity toward each other, the marriage is in serious trouble. A healthy marriage is one in which the curiosity has moved on to a greater depth. But in these early stages, when we fall deeply in love, we certainly love emotionally, but we also love with a deep intellectual curiosity. We love with our minds.

In a similar way, we ought to love God with all of our minds. This means we are called to pursue God intellectually as we love him and seek to know him. What does this look like? It starts with being curious about God, his Word, and his world. When we are curious and pursue someone intellectually, we ask questions. Some of these will be deep and difficult questions: Why, if God exists, is there so much evil and suffering in the world? Why isn't God more obvious? Why is there so much killing and violence in the Old Testament?

There is a certain attitude and posture with which we should ask the deep and difficult questions about God. We shouldn't, for example, ask questions simply to gain head knowledge. Again, two people deeply in love aren't just learning facts about each other; they want to know the *whole person* whom they love. Those in love also do not ask questions to be a nuisance or to attempt to trip each other up. We should approach God genuinely seeking to know him in a deeper way; we should ask these questions precisely because we want to know and love God more fully.

There is, to be sure, a skeptical and cynical way to approach God. What I have in mind here is someone who is asking questions but not really looking for answers. Kids often ask, "Why?" Sometimes they are not curious and not really looking for an answer. Suppose I tell my daughter that it is bedtime. She asks, "Why do I have to go to bed?" I explain that it is a

school night. But then she asks, “Why do I have to go to bed early on school nights?” I answer that she needs her rest for school, and she questions this as well. And this goes on for a series of “why” questions for every answer I give. When something like this happens, she’s not really asking to get an answer. She just doesn’t want to go to bed (and, as it turns out, has successfully forestalled going to bed for at least a few minutes). Similarly, it is sometimes the case that when people ask questions of God they are not actually seeking truth. They don’t really want an answer in that they are already opposed to any possible answer you are going to give. This is decidedly not what it means to love God with your mind.

Instead, we should ask questions and seek knowledge of God to know him deeply and intimately. This is part of being in love with God: pursuing with intellectual curiosity an intimate knowledge of God.

Faith and Reason

Now, it is sometimes thought that we are called to a life of faith and that this is something different from an intellectual life. A long history of debate exists about the roles of reason and faith. Many Christians are suspicious of any account that highlights the role of reason, thinking that this is dangerous for faith. But much of this suspicion amounts to a misunderstanding of the concepts of faith and reason.

What, first of all, is faith? Faith is quite an important concept for us as Christians, and yet it is not often defined carefully.¹⁹ I suggest we understand faith as “ventured trust.” The thought is that we have faith when we risk

¹⁹ Like many terms, there are a few uses of the term *faith* in the Bible. It sometimes uses the term *faith* to mean the collection of our Christian beliefs. For example, Jude urges his readers “to contend for *the faith* that was delivered to the saints once for all” (1:3, italics added). Jude is calling for his readers to fight against false doctrine that had crept into the church and fight for true doctrine, i.e., the faith. Notice how different this is from the use in 2 Cor 5:7 where Paul says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The point of this passage is we shouldn’t walk and do

ourselves in dependence on someone or something. We can stand at a distance and believe that, say, an airplane is safe and reliable. This may be some form of trust, but it isn't faith. It's faith when we board the airplane. It's a ventured trust in that we *venture* ourselves on a person or thing. Faith is not just trusting from a distance but entrusting ourselves. We can have faith in big or small ways. We can place our faith in a friend for a ride home. We would be depending on this person, but there's not much at stake if the person does not come through for us. By contrast, there's a whole lot that can go wrong when we take off in an airplane. We really entrust our whole lives to the plane (and the pilot, the mechanics, the designers, etc.) when we get on board.

Another great example is the faith between two people when they join themselves in marriage. The Bible often compares our relationship with God to a marriage relationship between a husband and wife. Notice that each spouse ventures themselves and their well-being on the other. The happiness and general well-being of the spouses is deeply wrapped up in how well they can mutually depend upon and trust the other.

This brings us to the role of reason. How does one know whether it's a good idea to get on an airplane? If the airplane is rusted out, leaking fluids, and parts are falling off, then we shouldn't place our faith in that craft. How does a spouse gain trust? One will need varied experiences of fidelity. If a potential spouse always blows it, then one should not place one's faith in that person.

Now, it's clear one could get on an airplane in an irrational way. One can also get married to someone who clearly is not trustworthy. We've all had moments when we've trusted without any good reason. Take, for example, the slick door-to-door salesperson who is selling a useless product. The salesperson comes to your door and tells you why your life is not complete without purchasing this product, and, before you know it, you own it. We so often regret these sorts of high-pressure sales decisions. We later wonder what we were thinking and why we didn't just say no. The point is we *can*

life beholden to our present circumstances—i.e., just what we see—but we should walk *trusting* Christ.

place our faith in people or things without sufficiently good reason; however, we shouldn't. Faith without reason is a really bad idea!

How does one know who or what should be trusted? We are going to have to use our reason. What other options do we have? How else, other than using reason, can we know who and what to trust? Now we need to be clear. I'm using the term *reason* in quite a broad sense. I'm not using it in a technical, academic sense. We don't use science experiments or formalize arguments to figure out whether your love interest is the person you should marry. But we definitely use (or should use) reason. If you are wondering whether to place your faith in a person in marriage, then the fact that this person has cared for you even at your low points suggests that he or she is worth depending on. You have a very good reason.

Though we can always improve our reasoning, we all use reason to decide where to place our trust. I suggest that all of us came to faith on the basis of *some* reasons. Perhaps someone preached on the tortures of hell, and it sounded so horrible you made a decision to give your life to Christ. Though a fear of hell is probably not the best reason to believe, it is a reason. For many of us, we heard a testimony of how Jesus changed a person's life when that person came to faith, and this was a primary reason for coming to faith. Hearing a testimony like this, it seems, is a pretty good reason for coming to or at least being interested in faith. Most of us, as we grow in Christ, hear many such testimonies, have our own experiences, meet with God through the words of Scripture, consider apologetic arguments, and otherwise get confronted with the reality of God and the truth of the gospel in coming to faith. These have compelled us to venture our trust in Christ.

Objection 1: Doesn't This Put Reason over Faith?

While it may seem obvious that we have some reasons for coming to faith, it is sometimes objected that developing an intellectual faith dangerously makes reason an authority over faith and the dictates of Scripture. Consider, for example, Abraham offering up Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22:1–19). The

thought is often that Abraham had all the reason in the world not to go through with the sacrifice but nevertheless chose to place faith in God. He put faith over reason. Or did he? Is it correct to say that Abraham put faith *over* reason? It seems to me that Abraham made a *very* rational choice.

How was Abraham's choice rational? We should keep in mind that, in the story, God spoke verbally to Abraham (give that one a second) and told him to sacrifice his son. By this time, Abraham had come to believe (for good reasons) that God is the one and only almighty God. It wasn't so long before this event that Abraham's wife, Sarah, had had Isaac. God had made promises about what he would do through Abraham and his offspring.²⁰ The problem was that Abraham and Sarah were childless and, at this point, elderly. The birth of Isaac was a *miracle*—imagine how impactful this was on Abraham's understanding of God. It undoubtedly expanded his understanding that God is steadfastly faithful and able to fulfill his covenant promise, even if doing so takes a miracle.

With all of this as backdrop, when the almighty and steadfastly faithful God of the universe shakes the sound waves and tells you to do something, it is eminently rational to act accordingly. Abraham surely didn't understand how this all fits in with the overall plan. Isaac was, after all, the promised child through whom God would fulfill his covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; 26:2–5). Hebrews even tells us that “Abraham *reasoned* that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again” (11:19 NLT, italics added). It's true that Abraham had competing reasons that suggested sacrificing his only son was not a good idea. But when we step back and consider Abraham's overall intellectual situation, these competing reasons pale in comparison to the reasons he had for going through with what God asked him to do. If Abraham wasn't utterly convinced that God was speaking to him, it seems unlikely (again, for intellectual reasons) he would go up to sacrifice his son. So it's not that faith won out over reason. It's that Abraham had his reason properly ordered and thus acted in faith. Abraham believed God.

²⁰ See Gen 17:19.

Another example we may consider is Peter's experience on the Sea of Galilee (Matt 14:25–32). For a moment Peter walked on the water. This was an amazing act of faith. But then he started looking around and saw some compelling reasons that suggested walking on the water in a violent storm was not such a good idea. Matthew says, "But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (vv. 30–31). Peter quickly ceded his trust away from Christ and began to sink. He failed to trust Christ. Did Peter put reason over faith? No! It is not as if Peter lacked reasons for trusting Christ. In fact, Peter had all the reason in the world for faith given all he had seen and come to believe about Jesus at this point in Jesus's ministry. Jesus clearly had the power to enable Peter to walk on water, and he should not have given in to these competing reasons. Unlike Abraham, Peter failed to trust despite the good reasons he possessed. But it was his doubt that was the irrational choice.

Here's the reality: as Christians, we always have more reasons to trust God when he has called us to something. It may be difficult, at times, to discern what God has called us to, but venturing our trust in God will always be the rational choice.

The struggle Christians have with reason and intellectual pursuits is most often a matter of misunderstanding its role. Reason plays an important but limited role. It tells us where to place our faith, and that's it. We still have to exercise faith, and we can, like Peter, all too easily ignore what reason is telling us is true. We should be like Abraham and believe God. We shouldn't be like Peter and irrationally doubt. As we pursue God intellectually, our faith in him should only grow deeper and more mature.

Objection 2: I've More Important Things to Do

Some people believe that intellectual pursuits are a waste of time compared to doing something "useful" with our lives. Pragmatism, the view that usefulness is the primary value, is deeply embedded in our culture. We should

be out there actually getting something done or building something or helping people. Some even think that it is selfish to sit around bettering ourselves intellectually.

This pragmatist outlook has a spiritual version as well. Here the thought is we should all be out on the streets sharing the gospel and not wasting our time in a classroom learning how to think. All we need is the Holy Spirit, perhaps some practical ministry training, and we should be good to go. The rest is distraction.

There are many problems with this line of thinking. The most obvious problem is that it violates the commands of Scripture. We've already looked at what Jesus calls the greatest commandment—to love God with all of our hearts, souls, and minds (Matt 22:37). Pursuing God intellectually is not optional.

In another passage, the apostle Peter tells us to be “ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). Notice he didn't say we should get out there and just start doing work. The primary force of the passage is to *be ready*. Of course, one shouldn't read this to mean we never need to get out there and do the ministerial work. The context of 1 Peter 3 is how to live in a hostile world. It is implied in the passage you are going to need this readiness because challenge is coming your way.

The term *defense* is a legal term similar to what a contemporary lawyer would do in defending a client. Imagine you are on trial, having been charged with a crime for which you are innocent. How would you feel if your lawyer came in without any kind of deep knowledge of your case but assures you that he has done this many times and has some great practical strategies for convincing juries? I'm not sure any of us would be comfortable with this. In a trial, someone's life and well-being hangs in the balance. Similarly, when it comes to evangelism, someone's eternal soul hangs in the balance. Thus, spending time being prepared intellectually to make a defense for the truth of the gospel is not wasted time.

Objection 3: But I'm Not Cut Out for the Intellectual Life

I often hear people say they lack intelligence and the smarts required to pursue academic subjects. “I’m just not an intellectual,” it is sometimes said. Well, it may be that you don’t have the intellectual resources to become a world-class scholar. Join the club! Most of us will not reach that rarefied air, but my experience with teaching students for more than twenty years is that most can do far more than they think.

Here’s a typical situation. A student comes into a class and begins to hear unfamiliar terminology. Other students in the class seem to know these words, but, to this student, it sounds like everyone is speaking a different language. The student feels completely overwhelmed. Our culture of immediate gratification doesn’t help us here, as the student begins to look for the nearest exit.

Here’s the reality. It may be that a student doesn’t get metaphysics or organic chemistry or econometrics immediately. Again, join the club. These are difficult subjects. Everyone who walks into a brand-new subject feels this way at some point—even the world-class scholars did early on in their careers. If a student will just stick it out and simply work hard at understanding the terminology and concepts, these things will begin to feel familiar. It is going to take hard work, but this will set a student up to do well.

The call, in this chapter, is not necessarily to be an academic scholar. Academic pursuits are important, and it is my hope this book will inspire some to pursue the highest levels of academia. That calling, however, is not for everyone. Having an intellectual faith is pursuing a deep knowledge of God. Again, academic study of the Bible and theology in formal settings truly can be helpful, but they certainly are not necessary. One can ask the deep and difficult questions about the faith and pursue answers no matter whether one is a professional academic or lacking any formal education. Most of us will find ourselves somewhere in between these two. What’s

important is we take our background at whatever level we are and strive to know and love God as deeply as we can.

How to Have an Intellectual Faith

So, how does one develop an intellectual faith?

Unfortunately, there's no magic bullet here. Though this is going to sound obvious, it's worth saying: to develop an intellectual faith requires one to develop oneself intellectually. We will turn to doing exactly this in the coming chapters. We will spend a considerable amount of time looking at how to reason well and think critically. We need to be careful that we have good arguments for our beliefs and are able to evaluate the objections and counterarguments that pose problems for our beliefs.

However, only developing ourselves intellectually will not necessarily give us an intellectual faith. We must also develop ourselves to think Christianly about the world. How do we do this? The first thing I suggest is taking our faith and pursuit of knowing God seriously. We should make it a first priority to dig into understanding who God is. Just like the couple in youthful love, we have to prioritize our relationship with God. This should involve gaining a knowledge of the Bible and general theology. God has revealed himself specifically in Scripture. We can't know him intimately without knowing him through our devotional study of the Bible. As noted earlier, this knowledge of God and Christian belief is crucial because we can't be intentional Christians if we don't even know what Christianity is. We will only be Christians accidentally if Christians at all.

Taking faith seriously should also involve asking the deep and difficult questions about the faith. As we begin to have a greater familiarity with Christian beliefs, I suggest we develop the habit of asking, "Why think this Christian belief is true?" This can be difficult, but again, tremendous resources are out there that address the deepest and most difficult questions about the faith. We should remember these are lifelong pursuits. We will never figure it all out. The point is to keep pursuing

these things as a way to know God deeply and develop our Christian worldviews.

My second suggestion for developing an intellectual faith is to develop and follow *your* interests. You are a unique creation of God with specific interests. What one person is captivated by is possibly of little interest to another. And that's okay. Some things interest me that you would likely find rather mind-numbing. Other areas enjoyed by many don't pique my interest, even though they may be valuable areas of study. As you pursue God with all of your mind, ultimately you will discover certain things that really interest you. You should follow these interests.

There is freedom here. It wouldn't be good if we all were experts in one area, say, philosophy or science. One benefit of following your interests is that you are better able to sustain your efforts. As mentioned, intellectual work is difficult and laborious. This is exponentially harder when you have lost all interest in the topic. But when you are working in an area of great interest, you are better able to sustain your efforts as you go.

Now, it's a big world, and there are many distinct disciplines and areas of study. You really won't know if something is an interest until you get your feet wet with it. You should get exposure to a wide variety of topics and see what piques your interest. I have known many people who found themselves completely surprised to fall in love with a topic. It can even happen that they have had a bad experience in a certain class or topic previously, but then, at some point, they give it another shot and become deeply interested. It also happens in the other direction. You may realize you are not all that interested in something you thought you would be. You really never know until you try. As a result, looking at a variety of topics (perhaps taking classes in these areas, if you are a student), reading widely, and speaking with people from a variety of areas of thought will greatly help you discover your interests.

My third suggestion is to be patient and take your time because the intellectual life is a lifestyle, not a destination. You will not get everything figured out overnight, and it will often feel like you have a long way to go.

Once again, join the club. We all have a long way to go because there is not some destination where we will, at some point, finally arrive. We can make progress on this journey, but we never arrive. So if you are a student, don't be in a big rush to get done with your studies. In a rush to get to the next thing in life, we often sacrifice the current thing. This was my story, actually. I saw college as a way to get a diploma and get on to "real life." If I'm honest, I wasn't after the knowledge—I was after the slip of paper that said I was a college graduate—and I missed out on learning and cultivating a more intellectual faith. Thankfully, in graduate school, I realized this error, and I slowed down to learn. If you are currently in college, I suggest you take full advantage of all the intellectual challenges around you right where you are.

In developing an intellectual faith, we should value the deep, difficult, and sometimes boring study of the fundamental areas of our Christian faith and realize this takes considerable time. If you do this in a formal setting, then choose the school, do the major, and take the elective courses that will be most beneficial for your development as an intellectual. Take your time and focus on developing your intellect and knowledge.

A final suggestion is to find a community of like-minded folks with whom you can develop intellectually. It is important to find people who are like-minded in desiring to develop themselves intellectually. You need people who are on a similar journey so that you can discuss and work out the ideas you are wrestling with. Though you can do quite a bit on your own, it is far more effective to develop yourself intellectually with a group of like-minded people.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that we have lost our impact on the culture because we have neglected the development of an intellectual faith. I have claimed that faith and reason are perfectly compatible since reason is a tool that tells us where to place our faith. Thus, we, as Christians seeking to know God in a deep and full way and to engage the culture for Christ,

should develop ourselves intellectually. In the coming chapters, we will provide a further ground for seeing this pursuit as thoroughly Christian. We will look at how Jesus, as a brilliant thinker, regularly astonished crowds with his intellectual abilities. In this, he modeled for us how we should live. We will then look at the concept of worldview. We will see how the Christian worldview makes good sense of logic that, in turn, constitutes an argument for Christian theism.

Are you ready for this? Do you want to have a positive impact for Christ on the culture around you? Then you must become a Christian who thinks both critically and Christianly. In short, you must have an intellectual Christian faith.