



"The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know."  
—Albert Einstein

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## Deep Thinkers

After the contested 2000 presidential election, an article in a respected American magazine attempted to explain the now well-known "red and blue map" that shows—geographically, at least—more of America supported the Republican candidate than the Democrat. The author pointed out that inhabitants of the red zones are more Christian and less educated than those in the blue ones. When we strip away all the twaddle, we realize the author implies that Christians are not very intelligent!

Christianity has an unfortunate reputation of being a religion for the simple. In this vein, the apostle Paul's comments in [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](#) are often misunderstood and misapplied:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But [God](#) has chosen the foolish things of [the world](#) to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

In a sense, Paul's words are a snapshot in time; they only describe the reality of the situation when God calls us. Moreover, they are generalities—the norm—to which there are always exceptions. Paul himself was undoubtedly no intellectual lightweight. Early Christian history has several traditions of converts among the Emperor's court, senators' families, and various high-born houses in Judea, Rome, and abroad. Still, God generally calls His potential children from the middle to lower classes of the great mass of humanity.

Since such are our likely origins, our question must then be: "Does God want us to remain foolish, weak, base, despised, and nothing?" No! He desires us to be humble and think of ourselves as nothing, but He does not want us to remain in the condition from which He has called us. He is working in us so that we can eventually become wise, mighty, noble, glorified, and something humanly incomprehensible.

Anyone reading the Bible should be able to realize that God's every instruction is designed to promote spiritual *growth* ([Malachi 4:2](#); [Ephesians 4:15-16](#); [II Peter 3:18](#); etc.). Stagnation and backsliding are anathema to God (for instance, Jeremiah 3; [Hebrews 6:4-8](#); [II Peter 2:20-22](#)). How often does God say something to the effect that those who do not grow and produce fruit will be pruned, and if they still do not produce, they will be cut down and burned in the fire ([John 15:1-8](#))? God creates and produces, and He wants to see His children do the same.

If God has made us in His likeness, and He is creating His Son's image in us, is it not reasonable to believe that God wants us to learn to think like His Son? In fact, Paul says in [I Corinthians 2:16](#) that we already have the mind of Christ! He means that by God's Spirit, given to us after [baptism](#), we can begin to think and evaluate as Christ does (see also [Philippians 2:5-8](#)). If God expects us to learn to think like Christ, a great deal of growth in our thinking ability must occur.

True Christianity is a thinking-person's religion! The doctrines of God may be simple in their fundamental principles, but they are almost inexhaustibly profound in their particulars and ramifications. Applying God's instruction to any situation requires careful and deliberate thought. Paul says, "[T]he Holy

Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation through [faith](#) which is in Christ [Jesus](#). . . . [They are given] that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" ([II Timothy 3:15](#), 17). Serious study, meditation, and prayer require deep thought.

Additionally, as Christ's return nears, only the truly thoughtful—the deep thinkers—will be able to see through the cloud of deception [Satan](#) and his agents will produce ([Matthew 24:24](#); [Revelation 12:9](#)). Thus, Peter warns us: "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers" ([I Peter 4:7](#)).

God gives Ezekiel an interesting vision in which water running from God's Temple is measured every thousand cubits. It is at first ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then waist-deep, and finally too deep to stand in ([Ezekiel 47:1-5](#)). Such is the knowledge of God. As we progress in understanding, the depth of God's revelation increases proportionately until we are literally swimming in the limitless expanse of God's mind! It can be overwhelming, but it is also exhilarating and mind-expanding that God has opened such knowledge, understanding, and [wisdom](#) to us.

No matter how deeply we have waded into the "water," more depth awaits. We can never plumb its bottom. But is it not satisfying—and rewarding—and right—to try?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Teaching Us to Think \(Part One\)](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

God is putting His children through a demanding educational program designed to teach godly values and impart spiritual maturity. Learning is at its core hard work, requiring immense and sustained discipline, dedication, and sacrifice, often the breaking of old habits and the formation of new ones, always the ability to admit one is wrong. God's education of His people

promotes a definite work ethic, a quality denigrated by Protestant anti-works theology. It takes intense work to mortify the flesh. If one realizes at the outset that God's way of living requires sacrifice, it will become easier to endure trials; they permit God to transform a carnal mind into one oriented to the spirit. God's people cannot learn spiritual lessons apart from God's Holy Spirit. The context of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is the apostle Paul's admonition to God's people that they vigorously put to death the desires of the flesh and walk according to the Spirit, bringing the mind under the control of the Spirit, that is, developing the mind of Christ.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Growing to Perfection](#)**

by Charles Whitaker

Charles Whitaker shows that spiritual growth mimics our physical growth to maturity. If we continue in the process, we will "grow into" our potential as God's children.

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