

## **Expository Essay: Christian Living** (NIV based)

The principles for Christian living as seen in the epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon can be divided into five categories which influence mental thought: spiritual, rational (or intellectual), emotional, volitional (or will), and relational (Anderson pp.230-231). Explanation of these categories and principles will help to disclose their application to life's situations. However, there is some overlapping integration among categories. But, all have the common capacities to effect and/or control a person's thoughts, words, and actions towards God, others, and oneself in both a positive (righteous) and negative (sinful) way.

**SPIRITUAL:** The "spiritual" category is the part of a person's composition that contains (or lacks for unbelievers) the Person of the Holy Spirit and His corresponding relationship / attributes / gifts, such as walking in, guided by, and living by the Spirit (ex. Galatians 5:16,18,25), and being continually transformed into Christ's likeness (ex. Philippians 3:10). Through the Holy Spirit, the holiness, righteousness, justification, sanctification, and salvation that believers receive from the Godhead are accomplished by having access to God's power (ex. Philippians 3:21). This power is available for the believer to draw strength from the Lord to endure and protect himself from sinful ways (ex. Ephesians 6:10), to maintain a right standing with God (ex. Philippians 3:9), and to produce the dynamic behind sharing God's message with others (ex. Ephesians 3:2).

In the apostle Paul's epistles, he mentions the negative consequences from having an un-reconciled relationship with God as being alienated, estranged or self-banished from a life of God (ex. Ephesians 4:18). The consequences of an unhealthy relationship may grieve, offend, vex, or sadden the Spirit (ex. Ephesians 4:30) or may give the devil a foothold or opportunity in the believer's life (ex. Ephesians 4:27).

All people need the positive aspects of this "spiritual" category to obtain a healthy reconciled relationship with God. By listing these principles of Christian living, Paul has reinforced the importance of understanding the power dynamic of the Holy Spirit so that the believer can draw upon Him for assurance and help, especially when life's struggles and problems are overwhelming.

**RATIONAL:** A broad definition of the "rational" or intellectual category is the center for information processing to form a person's world view, which Paul describes as seeing the whole or future picture (ex. Philippians 1:14). Fundamental to the "rational" category are dedication, determination, convictions, standards, memory, logical thinking, ethics, beliefs, knowledge, motives, and "comprehensive discernment" (ex. Philippians 1:9), which is determining truth from lies (*AMP*). The "rational" category contains aspects of faith, confidence, and hope in the Lord through knowing His will and Word (ex. Colossians 1:4,5,9) and involves adhering to, relying on, and trusting in God (ex. Philippians 1:29). The believer needs to use sensible, intelligent, and wise thinking (ex. Ephesians 5:15) to fully know the love of Christ (ex. Ephesians 3:19) so that he will be able to share God's message with others (ex. Ephesians 3:2). This requires a believer to be aware of who the real enemy is and keep alert for spiritual problems (ex. Ephesians 6:12,18). "Rational" thinking embraces observation, investigation, understanding, reasoning, planning, and learning. Paul also suggests that remembering one's past separation from God or sinful

state (ex. Ephesians 2:12), and knowing that a reward awaits believers (ex. Ephesians 6:8) are crucial to correct "rational" thinking.

Paul warns against foolish, ignorant, and false thinking (ex. Ephesians 4:17,18,25), which will produce heresies (ex. Galatians 5:20) and give birth to the bondage of observing the law (ex. Galatians 6:2) or following human traditions / doctrines (ex. Colossians 2:22). In this "rational" category, the focus is on a believer's correct thinking based on God's truth which leads to holiness, rather than errant thinking based on human understanding which leads to sin and bondage. Believers need to comprehend this in order to avoid religious dogma and traditions, which debilitate their maintaining a close, personal relationship with the Lord and exercising their spiritual gifts effectively.

**EMOTIONAL:** A person's attitudes, feelings, desires, and emotions comprise the "emotional" category. Paul mentions meekness, humility, and thankfulness (ex. Galatians 5:23; Ephesians 5:4), which are critically essential for a believer to communicate with God. Seemingly simple, this complex "emotional" dimension of a person harbors incredible potentials of power to affect or overrule all other categories, even to the point of complete bondage or submission to sinfulness. Paul identifies many potentially enslaving emotions such as: fear, vanity, apathy, greed, lust, anger, wrath, fury, exasperation, indignation, bitterness, rage, bad temper, resentment, animosity, spite, and covetousness (ex. Ephesians 4:17,18,19,22,26,31; 5:5). In addition, believers are not to indulge in selfish ambition, grumbling, doubt, faultfinding, enmity, jealousy, anger, selfishness, vain gloriousness (boastfulness), self-conceit, and envy (ex. Philippians 1:28; 2:3,14; Galatians 5:20,26; 6:3). Obviously, these sins can quickly and effectively nullify a believer's testimony or ministry to the church and the unsaved world. Paul wants believers to maintain a healthy emotional thought-life so that they will not grow weary and lose heart in doing good for God and others (ex. Galatians 6:9).

**VOLITIONAL:** The "volitional" or 'will' category contains a person's activity to exercise free-will or power of choice. Paul states that believers need to crucify the flesh with its appetites, and desires (ex. Galatians 5:24) so that they can magnify, glorify, praise, exalt, obey, serve, and please the Lord (ex. Philippians 1:20; 3:17; Ephesians 4:1; 5:10). Believers should be imitators of God, copying and following Christ's example (ex. Ephesians 5:1) as well as fulfilling and observing the law of Christ (ex. Galatians 6:2) in order to bear fruit (ex. Colossians 1:6) for the kingdom of God. Obviously, this involves submission, loyalty, good habits, and discipline behavior, which Paul characterizes as putting on and obeying a new nature of righteousness and holiness (ex. Ephesians 4:24).

Paul cautions believers not to lose sight of righteous living by being involved in foul language, filthiness, impurity, and recklessness (ex. Ephesians 4:19,29; 5:3,4). Believers need to guard their "volitional" thought-life to prevent developing destructive or compulsive habits, and to cultivate healthy, nurturing behavior that fosters Christ-likeness.

**RELATIONAL:** The "relational" category encompasses the interpersonal and social relationships in which loving and serving others is paramount (ex. Galatians 5:13,14). Relating Biblically involves: sharing, contributing, and doing commendable things for others (ex. Galatians 6:4,6); tolerating and living in harmony and peace with others (ex.

Ephesians 4:2,3); walking in love, esteeming, and giving beneficial speech to others (ex. Ephesians 5:2; 4:29); encouraging and building up others (ex. Philippians 1:5); and being tenderhearted, compassionate, useful, helpful, and subject to others (ex. Ephesians 4:32; 5:19). Carrying and enduring the burdens of others (ex. Galatians 6:2), as well as restoring and reinstating others who have fallen (ex. Galatians 6:1) are integral to godly relationships or fellowship. Basically, believers are to extend brotherly love to everyone.

Obversely, Paul cautions against stealing, quarreling, brawling, clamor, slander, malice, foolish talk, or the deeds of darkness (ex. Ephesians 4:28,31; 5:4,11). He admonishes believers not to provoke, irritate, challenge, impress, compel, oppress, or accuse others (ex. Galatians 5:26; 6:12,13,17); not to cause strife, divisions, or factions (ex. Galatians 5:20); and not to be involved with immorality, idolatry, sorcery, drunkenness, carousing, or competitiveness (ex Galatians 5:19,20,21,26). Instead, believers are to forgive and accept others to promote unity and harmony, thereby identifying themselves with Christ (ex. Philemon 6) so that the world will know them by there love.

In conclusion, these principles of Christian living that Paul has written about pertain to all categories of thinking which affects believer's speech and deeds. To be Christ-like requires transformation in all areas of thought, words, and actions.

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