

CONVERSATION GUIDE:

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What kinds of thoughts tend to occupy your mind throughout the day?
- Which of the virtues Paul lists do you find most challenging to think about consistently?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How does our culture define virtues differently than how Paul defines them through the Gospel?
- Paul contrasts cultural definitions with Gospel definitions (like how love is defined). In what areas do you see the biggest differences between cultural values and Biblical values today?
- How does focusing our thoughts on what is "true" impact our daily decisions and attitudes?
- What's the difference between trying to follow these virtues as rules versus seeing them as a description of Jesus?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- Choose one of the six virtues from Philippians 4:8 that you find most challenging. Each day, intentionally seek out something that exemplifies this virtue and spend time reflecting on it.
For example, if "whatever is pure" challenges you, find media, conversations, or activities that are wholesome and life-giving.

GROUP FOCUS:

- Highlight one of Paul's virtues and share specific ways you've seen it demonstrated in your life or your community's life.

PRAYER FOCUS:

- Pray that God would transform our thought life to reflect these virtues. Ask Him to reveal areas where your thinking has been shaped more by culture than by the Gospel.



WEEK 29 THINKING ABOUT THINGS WORTHY OF PRAISE (PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9)

TODAY'S VERSES:

Philippians 4:8-9
John 18:38
John 14:6
John 8:32

Proverbs 8:6-7
Habakkuk 2:3-4
Philippians 1:7
James 2:14

Ephesians 2:8-9
1 Timothy 4:15

AUGUST 17, 2025

WEEK 29

THINKING ABOUT THINGS WORTHY OF PRAISE

Paul's instruction in Philippians 4:8-9 challenges believers to carefully examine what occupies their thoughts. Rather than simply adopting cultural values, Paul takes six Hellenistic virtues and reframes them through the lens of the Gospel. He is relating truth to those who knew and understood their culture in a way that shows all truth is God's truth.

Whatever is true. The word "true" means that which is reliable and faithful as opposed to what is false or a lie. Christianity holds there to be absolute truth, and it is found in Jesus. Our culture believes that an absolute truth is the enemy of freedom, but only by living in the truth will we ever actually *have* freedom.

At some point, there must be a truth that we believe. It is not the truth claim per se that leads to loss of freedom; it is *what's in* the truth claim. As followers of Jesus, our "fundamental" is the Gospel: Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Everything that is true is from God because all truth is God's truth. We can see Jesus and how the Gospel rationally engages His creation, rejects irrational thinking, and speaks the truth.

Whatever is honorable. Honorable is also translated as "noble." It means one who is willing to help for the good of others in a gracious way. Proverbs 16 speaks about gracious words that are pure in God's eyes (eyes not on self, but outward...dignified, lofty, elevated, etc.). Paul is encouraging us to set our thoughts on things that are elevated above what is simply common.

Whatever is just. We use this word in its longer form for justification, but it means right or a "righteousness." This is a virtue rooted in God's character and God's salvation; it will eventually shape a believer's reality and actions.

Whatever is pure. Pure has a moral and a ritual connotation. Paul will remind us that the church, the people themselves, are the temple of the living God (individually and corporately). Paul keeps reminding them to think about how Jesus is the one who purifies us and makes us the dwelling place for God's Spirit.

Whatever is lovely. This is a word that tells us to enjoy what is beautiful in an aesthetic type of way. Hills, oceans, art, music, paintings...it conveys the idea that God is a creator and creative and His people are meant to enjoy that beauty.

Whatever is commendable. This is also a word that refers to: "Whatever is of good repute." Whatever is well spoken of or highly regarded by God.

If there is any excellence. "Excellence" means mental virtue.

Anything worthy of praise. What is applauded in the presence of God.

Practice these things. When Paul talks about these virtues it doesn't mean "do this list." We need a righteousness that is greater than our own...that righteousness comes from Jesus. Paul is not arguing that works must be added to faith, but rather he is saying that if we want to live out a genuine Biblical faith, there are things our minds should gravitate toward, and then it will inevitably be characterized by how we live.

...and the God of peace will be with you. It is God who works, wills, and grows us as we live and walk with Him.

God is an inexhaustible well. There is always something else to marvel at, always something else we are just now starting to understand. Let our relationship with Him lead to lives that honor Him as a result of the Gospel.
