

The Mind of Christ

Renewing the Mind Part 1



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A ReVision Resource

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Mind of Christ

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The Mind of Christ

Welcome to *The Mind of Christ*

The Apostle Paul says we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16). Take a moment to contemplate that sublime idea.

What is the mind of Christ? How does it function? By what means? To what end? How can we gain more of the mind of Christ, so that, in effect, we can think His thoughts with Him?

The Mind of Christ is part 1 of a study on *Renewing the Mind*. The objective of a renewed mind is that we might see the world with the eyes of Jesus, think about it as He does, plan our approach to it using His priorities and vision, delight in the wonder and scope of His thoughts, and reflect on our experience in the world as He does, for the praise of the glory of God's grace.

The studies in this series will encourage and guide you to take a more active, purposeful, and satisfying approach to renewing your mind in the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Ours to Employ

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2.14-16

Latent capabilities

I’m always delighted to learn something new about computers, especially where the matter of word processing is concerned.

For years, the computer was just a different kind of typewriter for me. The hardest part was getting used to the green letters against a dark background, and remembering that I could go back in a document and edit without having to retype an entire page.

After a while, and several different computers later, I began to discover a few more things about the basic functions of this wonderful machine – like copy-and-paste, for example, and changing font sizes and styles. Pretty sophisticated stuff, no?

Gradually my computer was becoming much more interesting, and I began to be much more productive with it.

Over the years, friends and colleagues have clued me in to even more functions and capabilities. I’ve learned how to use PowerPoint, can do a mail merge for a monthly newsletter, and even know how to access my website’s back pages to post something on the site. I have become adept at downloading, uploading, web searching, webinar hosting, and online training – and all through the same computer. And I know I haven’t exhausted the possibilities of my current machine.

Probably none of this is a big deal for you, but discovering these latent capabilities, so long in my possession but only lately understood and used, has been for me a source of real satisfaction and increased productivity. Something like this is the case for every believer, for we all possess a power that, for most of us, is but little understood and grossly underused.

We have the mind of Christ!

I’m talking about the mind of Christ. Paul says that everyone who believes in Jesus possesses the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ spoke the world into being and upholds it day by day (Jn. 1.1, 2; Heb. 1.3). The mind of Christ saw Nathanael under the fig tree, turned water into wine, healed a servant at a distance, understood every jot and tittle of God’s Word, and peers into the heart of every person. The mind of Christ knows the will of the Father, and how that will is best accomplished to bless His people and glorify Him.

Whereas those who do not know the Lord can’t understand spiritual matters, can’t penetrate the mysteries of divine revelation and so discover the secret workings of the divine economy, this is not true for the followers of Jesus. We have the mind of Christ, and this means that we can understand the world as Jesus did, see God’s glory in the things He has made, plumb the depths of His Word, understand the times and what we must do, and draw on the power of His Spirit for transformed living in every area of our lives, increasingly day by day.

Doubtless many of us are already engaged in many of these areas; however, possessing the mind of Christ means that exceedingly abundantly *more* is available to us in terms of power to think God’s thoughts after

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Him and to understand and live out the privileges and promises of a Biblical worldview (Eph. 3.20).

We have the mind of Christ, and this is a resource for full and abundant life far more complex, promising, and potent than any computer.

So, where is it?

Over 50 years ago Harry Blamires wrote to decry the lack of a Christian mind among the followers of Christ in our generation (*The Christian Mind*). Most Christians in his day lived their faith only within a narrow band of spiritual experience. When it came to thinking like Christ in their day-to-day lives, well, there just wasn't much evidence of the mind of Christ at work in our secular age.

Thirty years after Harry Blamires wrote, theologian Mark Noll published *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, in which he explained that the scandal of the evangelical mind was that there *was no evangelical mind* in evidence, speaking to the social and cultural issues of the day. The situation has improved somewhat, but where the mind of Christ is concerned in our world today, Christians are hunting and pecking on a supercomputer, the proportions and potential of which we have scarcely begun to explore.

The mind of Christ is ours to employ and to enjoy. If we can understand the mind of Christ, how it works, what it's capable of, and how to access and engage it in our everyday lives, we may expect to see the reality of Christ in us, the hope of glory, becoming day by day more manifest and explicit.

We have the mind of Christ, and through His mind the realities of the unseen world and the deep truths of God are available to us in ways our unbelieving contemporaries cannot even begin to understand.

For reflection

1. What do you understand by "the mind of Christ"? In what sense do you possess this?
2. Should having the mind of Christ lead Christians to think differently about the world? Explain.
3. How can we tell when we're functioning with the mind of Christ and when we're not?

Next steps – Conversation: Ask a few of your Christian friends what they understand Paul to mean when he says we have the mind of Christ. Share today's ReVision with them, and encourage them to follow all the studies in this series.

2 Altogether New

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ... Ephesians 4.17-20

Embedded in old ways

There's the old joke about how you can tell if a computer belongs to an Irishman.

All the Wite-out™ on the screen.

During my early years of using a computer I was that Irishman. Oh, I didn't daub Wite-out™ on my screen, but I kept using the computer in many ways like a typewriter. If I wanted to add to a manuscript I was working on, I'd simply type the dumb thing over again, because I didn't know about *insert* or *copy-and-paste* for some time. Nor did I understand about saving manuscripts, and so, as you can imagine, there was a good deal of re-keying, not to mention losing of documents.

I had this powerful new machine but I was treating it like the old machines I'd used for years; as a result, I wasn't getting the benefit I expected. In fact, I recall at one point wondering aloud what all the fuss was about computers. I just didn't see the advantage, except for the colorful green block letters on the screen. It seemed to be more trouble than it was worth – but this was just a measure of my being embedded in old ways and ignorant of the new capabilities I possessed.

No excuse

Believers in Jesus Christ have the mind of the Lord. And whereas, in their old minds, which they had before believing in Him, they may have lived in the darkness of unbelief, without understanding the revelation and will of God, and without believing what God could do in and through their lives, now they have no excuse for continuing in ignorance of the many new and exciting truths God wants to teach them.

The mind we have now in Jesus Christ is completely new. It is free from the selfish and wicked ways of sin; open to the deep truths of God's Word; capable of gaining insight into the glory of God in the world around us; and able to think God's thoughts after Him in ways that allow us to live totally new lives from what we've ever known before. The mind of Jesus Christ is creative, energetic, broadly-informed, interested, curious, and alert to every opportunity to further the Kingdom and glory of God (Eph. 5.15-17).

As Christians, possessing the mind of Christ, we have access to new resources to guide our thinking, shape our outlook, and direct our lives. The world is a whole new place when we look at it with the mind of Christ. Rather than being distant and fearful, something from which we are alienated through ignorance, the world becomes the cosmos for which Christ died, a place of infinite wonder and glorious displays of the majesty and mystery of God, a world that God is renewing in Jesus Christ through the everyday lives and works of people like you and me.

Think like Jesus

The same is true with the people in our lives; now, with the mind of Christ, we see them as men and women made in the image of God, loved by the Savior, and capable of knowing Him and living in His Truth. As we use our new minds to engage the world and the people around us, we begin to think like Jesus, and to desire, as Jesus does, to see all of life and all the people we love reconciled to God, and the world turned rightside-up in Him.

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We are not thinking with the mind of Christ if we don't see the world as He does. If we are fearful of new situations, doubting whether God can use us, uninterested in the world or the people to whom God sends us, limited by our experience, or lacking confidence in the Word of God, we are thinking with our *old minds*, and not with the new mind that is ours in Christ Jesus.

The old mind sees only familiar roads. It expects pot holes and detours, traffic jams and road rage. The old mind lives in the past, and is unable to imagine anything other than what it's always known or done. The old mind wants things to remain the same; it can't be troubled to learn, and it prefers to go along with the spirit of the age, and not to rock any boats. The old mind cannot see the glory of God, nor the possibilities for revival, renewal, and awakening. The old mind affirms beliefs, but it hesitates to act on them, lest it seem to be out of step with the times.

We are called to put off such old mind thinking, and to be clothed with the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world looks very different from the vantage point of Christ's throne at the Father's right hand (Eph. 2.6).

Looking at the world with the mind of Christ opens all kinds of possibilities for how God might use us in loving Him and our neighbors. The possibilities are endless, but the challenge of learning to think with the mind of Christ is a huge one, to be sure.

For reflection

1. How can we tell when we're looking at our lives with the "old mind" rather than with the mind of Christ?
2. What would you prescribe as some reasonable steps to take in "putting on" the new mind we have in Jesus Christ?
3. What are the greatest obstacles to your beginning to live more consistently out of the mind of Christ? How can your fellow-believers help you overcome those obstacles?

Next step – Preparations: What is your church doing to help equip members to think with the mind of Christ? Talk with some church leaders about this question.

3 To Know All Things

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. 1 John 2.27

Not a chance?

Some years ago my friend Chris Watson began to push me to start a website. Now I had just begun to develop some skills with email and the Internet at this point: I'd learned about downloading and uploading and other, you know, real sophisticated stuff.

Chris would go on and on about how a website would be so much fun and how I'd be able to get my thoughts out more consistently to more readers. I would nod in assent, knowing that this was never going to be something I'd ever be able to understand. There wasn't a chance of me having a website.

But over the past several years the Lord has put people in my life who have helped me to understand how to use a website and how to keep one going. Whereas just a few years ago a website was merely something I was aware of, now I'm websited about as much as I can be, contributing to my own website, and discovering new potential for maximizing our website for our Kingdom-and-glory calling (1 Thess. 2.12).

I just didn't realize how much potential was there, right at my fingertips, until I began learning about this technology and experimenting with how I could use it for the Lord.

Anointed?

The Apostle John says that we have received from God an anointing – the Holy Spirit – and that He dwells in us and we may abide in Him. As we do, as we allow the Spirit to guide us into all truth and to teach us the mysteries of divine revelation coming at us from the Word and the world, there isn't anything we can't learn. We have the mind of Christ, and that, together with the presence of God's Spirit, is a *cart blanche* to learn as much as we can, and to use what we're learning for the Kingdom and glory of God.

Every believer in Christ has tremendous potential to learn new things, develop new interests, sustain new habits of study, and acquire new skills because we have the mind of Christ, and with that mind, the anointing of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God is the primary Instructor in the divine economy, and He can bring us into the truth of God in ways we would never have dared to ask or think before we acquired the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit compares spiritual things with spiritual things, searching the Scripture and illuminating the glory of God in the world, as He works to transform us increasingly into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2.12, 13; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

We who believe in Jesus Christ are called *disciples*. The word means *learners*. If you profess faith in Jesus Christ, you are called to be a learner. We are learners of Christ and God, students of His Spirit, Word, and world, and we are called to exercise dominion for God's glory and our neighbors' benefit in every aspect of our lives. We are blessed with the gift of God's presence, so that we might be a blessing to the people to whom God sends us every day.

Clearly, we have much to learn.

Learning without limits

And there is no limit to what we can learn, only holy constraints on what we might study, and no bottom to the profound mysteries we might plumb as we abide in the Spirit and study to unpack the mind of Christ.

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But learning new things doesn't come easily. Learning is hard work. It takes time, time we're probably already using in ways that aren't helping us learn like disciples, but which keep our old mind fat and happy.

But we have the mind of Christ, and we have been anointed with the Spirit of Christ! We need to respond in faith and obedience to His anointing, and become more focused and diligent about tapping into the mind of Christ.

Start with the basics: Spend more time in the Scriptures; do more reading and study in new subjects; try to gain some new skills for serving the Lord; study to understand contemporary worldviews, the varieties of cultural experience and expression, and the subtle beauties of the created order. So you've never been much of a student. There's no time like the present to remedy that. A world of understanding awaits you, whereby you can become better equipped to know, love, enjoy, obey, and serve the Lord Who has given you His mind and indwells you by His Spirit.

Our discipleship requires that we learn as much as we can, using the mind of Christ to prepare for serving Him day by day. The Spirit can teach us everything we need to know the Lord more completely and serve Him more effectively. But we must take the step of faith and become students of divine instruction wherever He might want to teach us and by whatever means it may please Him to employ.

For reflection

1. How are you presently involved as a *learner* in following Christ? Is what you are learning helping you to love God and your neighbor more effectively?
2. Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)? What are you studying – in Scripture and otherwise – to help you in seeking the Kingdom and glory of God there?
3. What can you do to gain more time for studying the life of discipleship? How would you fill the time you gain?

Next steps – Conversation: What is your present plan for growing in the mind of Christ – for becoming a true learner and disciple? Is it adequate to equip you for every good work? Talk with some Christian friends about this question, and encourage one another in developing better discipleship disciplines.

4 Inclined to Serve

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2.5-7

Entertainment value

Gathering from the ads I see on TV, many people find their computers and other electronica to be rich sources of personal entertainment. Computer games, DVD and audio players, design and video production capabilities, cameras and photo shops, and so forth must be great fun for those who know how to use them.

Social media, too: Our computers allow us to tie into networks of friends so that we can keep abreast of one another without too much investment of time or relational capital.

Such resources can be a source of great productivity; but they can also lead to blind alleys and box canyons of wasted time – or worse.

We have not been given the mind of Christ and the indwelling anointing of our Holy Spirit Teacher simply to learn new things that delight our own souls. That's *part* of what comes with having the mind of Christ and beginning to be a student of everything that's out there for us to learn. But if our learning stops with the entertainment value we derive from it, we will be short-circuiting a major reason for which we were given the mind of Christ in the first place.

If we only ever learn the things *we* want to learn, the things that *we* find interesting or amusing, or spend time only with the people *we* know and enjoy, we'll never realize the purpose of our discipleship, which is to serve others the way Jesus did. We're learning as we should, and thinking with the mind of Christ, when we're learning and thinking about how better to serve others.

Christian learning

A good bit of what passes for contemporary Christian learning is simply a spiritual version of having fun. We like being with our friends, watching a video, listening to a gifted teacher, or sharing in a discussion. We feel good about participating in such activities, even though if pressed, we might have difficulty recalling one thing we've learned that's fitted us for serving others with the mind of Christ.

We have the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ is designed to fit us for serving others – for *ministry*. We're thinking with the mind of Christ if we're constantly seeking ways to serve others with the grace and truth of God. Paul says we should let the mind of Christ be in us for *ministry*, and not just for some variety of spiritual amusement.

We're thinking with the mind of Christ when we *prepare* for ministry each day, studying to learn new ways of serving others, praying for the people we will meet each day, and planning the steps we'll take to serve them as *disciples* of Jesus.

If we're thinking with the mind of Christ we'll be alert to opportunities to *demonstrate* the love of Jesus, or to *speak an edifying word* to someone. The mind of Christ is lively in us when, like Jesus, we're looking for and taking steps to *serve others* with His grace and truth. Jesus applied His mind to bring *transformation* into our lives, by bringing us the gift of salvation. We'll be thinking with His mind when this is our outlook as well.

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Fit for serving

For the mind of Christ in us is designed to fit and incline us for serving others. The more we learn, the better we'll be able to think with the mind of Christ. As we do, all our learning will be focused on equipping us to reach out to others with the grace and truth of the Lord. This requires setting aside our own convenience and comfort to reach out and get to know others, discover their needs and concerns, and do what we can, by word and deed, to minister to them in the Lord.

We'll know that the mind of Christ is taking hold in us when we find that we're more concerned about the needs of those around us than our own needs; when we pray for people more consistently and more earnestly; when we're beginning to use our learning to comfort, encourage, embolden, and equip others, or to lead them to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus' mindset when He walked among us was to use all His knowledge to further His Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. This He did by serving others, even to the point of giving His life for our salvation.

As we begin to take up new studies, deeper studies, and to acquire more skills with the mind of Christ we've been given, let us make sure we devote our learning to the service of God and men. For only when we, like Jesus, are humbling ourselves to meet the needs of others will we be able to know that His mind has begun to transform our thinking, which, in turn is transforming all we are and do.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to humble ourselves to serve others? How can we maintain such a mindset?
2. What opportunities for serving others might you expect to encounter during any day? How can you prepare for these in the morning?
3. How can believers encourage one another in this calling to serve others (Heb. 10.24)?

Next steps: What opportunities for serving others present to you each day? Do you have a strategy for making the most of these opportunities (Eph. 5:15-17)? Make a list of what you expect today's opportunities for ministry are likely to include. Commit your list to the Lord, then prepare to reach out to others as the Lord gives opportunity.

5 Priorities for the Mind

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” John 17.17

Devoted?

When I purchased my new computer a while back, I immediately committed it to the work to which God has called me. I resolved that this computer is going to be worn out in the service of the Lord – writing columns, emails, website materials, study guides, books, and poems; mentoring and teaching; developing a wide range of resources; and whatever else God gives me to do as part of my calling in Him.

Don’t ask to borrow my computer so you can play video games on it, or surf the web for Internet porn, or even watch a movie. This computer is *mine*, and I have set it apart and devoted it to one cause, one use, and one agenda; nothing else will be tolerated as long as I’m the owner of this computer.

I’m sure you feel pretty much the same way about your own computer. You don’t want it used for anything other than the purposes for which you acquired it.

Well if we’re so proprietary about our *computers*, how must *Jesus* feel about the *mind* He has entrusted to us and the *anointing* He has sent to dwell in us! Surely He has specific purposes for each of these, that it would displease Him to see them used for anything else?

Are we as devoted to *His purpose* for our minds as *He* is?

Jesus’ concerns

In John 17, the great high priestly prayer of the Lord, we can discern a summary of Jesus’ primary concerns – the things that were heavy on His mind in those last hours of His earthly sojourn, concerns that He wanted His disciples to take up as well. What was on His mind in those crucial hours, and therefore, what should be the guiding force for the use of our minds as well?

First, the *glory of God*: Jesus desired above all that God should be honored and His glory known (Jn. 17.1, 4, 5). He devoted His life to the glory of God, and in His prayer, we see Him seeking God’s glory for Himself and His disciples. We are using our minds for God’s glory when our thinking, and all the products of our thinking – our plans, words, and deeds – are focused on honoring Him.

Devote your mind to the glory of God, so that God is glorified in all the everyday details of your life (1 Cor. 10.31), and God will fill your mind with the mind of Christ.

Second, the *redemption of the world*: Jesus was on His way to fulfill God’s redemptive plan, and He committed Himself to completing that great work (vv. 6-10). Thus the mind of Christ in us must also be dedicated to working out our own salvation, and seeking the salvation of the world (Phil. 2.12; Lk. 19.10). When we think about the state of the world and the lost people in our lives, do our hearts burn with longing, and our minds bristle with ideas concerning how we might help them to know the saving love of Jesus?

Finally, the *good of His people*: As Jesus was burdened in His high priestly prayer to see safety, peace, unity, and sanctification come to His disciples (vv. 9, 10, 17, 21), so must we, as we employ the mind of Christ in us to transform our lives and the lives of those around us.

Bring your mind under the mind of God

The glory and will of God must be the guiding focus in the use we make of the mind of Christ. We are not thinking with the mind of Christ, but living out of the old mind, if we allow anything other than the concerns

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of Jesus to determine what we think, how we plan, and what we decide or choose. Whatever we are learning as disciples of Jesus, we need to make sure it's not just for our amusement, but for reaching others with the *love of Christ for the glory of God and their redemption.*

Bring your mind under the Word of God, seek the peace and wellbeing of others, listen for the guidance of the Spirit of God, and set your course to think on and do the will of God, for His glory, in every area of our lives.

We are not free to use the mind of Christ merely for selfish interests or frivolous diversions. It may be in our souls, but it's Christ's mind, and He has told us how it must be used.

For reflection

1. How might you prepare each day to focus on the three priorities of Jesus?
2. Spiritual forces of wickedness, of course, will try to divert you from these priorities, and encourage you to think mostly about yourself. How will you deal with this?
3. How can prayer, used throughout the day, help you to keep focused on the priorities of the mind of Christ?

Next steps - Transformation: How much of your own thinking is guided by these priorities: the glory of God? The salvation of the lost? The good of God's people? What's one thing you could do in each of these areas to improve this focus?

6 For the Church

“...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16.18

Jesus’ agenda

When people share the same views, ideas, goals, and convictions, we say they’re on the same agenda. The Lord Jesus has an agenda, and all who have the mind of Christ will be concerned to make His agenda theirs.

Exalted in glory at the Father’s right hand, Jesus Christ is pursuing the agenda He declared on the outskirts of Caesarea-Philippi: He is building His Church. He has sent His Spirit into His people and given them His Word and His mind, so that they might take up His agenda and carry on the work He began while He was among us. Christ is fitting us to glorify God, seek and save the lost, and encourage and equip our fellow-disciples for lifestyles of worship and ministry. And the way we make sure we’re attending to all these things is by engaging with Christ in the work of building His Church.

The Church is the sign of the Kingdom of God, Christ’s billboard to the world that a new realm has come and a new rule is unfolding on earth as it is in heaven. And the Church is the outpost from which that Kingdom makes progress against the dark night of sin (1 Jn. 2.8).

The work of building the Church requires the mind of Christ. It is a primary reason why we have been given the mind of Christ, in the form of His Word and Spirit. If we’re thinking with the mind of Christ, we’re thinking about what we can do to contribute to the work of building His Church. The members of Christ’s churches must be equipped in their minds – and in their souls and bodies – to understand the will of God and take up the work of ministry with the people immediately around them.

Expressions of the Church

We cannot satisfy the intentions of Christ for the mind He has given us until we begin serving others in His Name with a view to building His Church (cf. Eph. 4.11-16). The Church is the Body of Christ, and just as my mind is careful to plan and care for the wellbeing of my body, so the mind of Christ in the Church is set on building-up His Body to the praise of the glory of God’s grace.

In the New Testament, the Church appears in four expressions – as a household and neighborhood entity, a local congregation made up of many house churches, a regional church consisting of many congregations (as the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3), and as the Church universal. With so many levels of Church, each of us can find some way to contribute to the growth and health of the Body of Christ, and to devote our minds to Jesus’ agenda.

A healthy, growing Church

Christ is calling every believer to join with Him in building His Church. But what does the Church look like as it is being built-up? Paul tells us that a healthy, growing church is characterized by two dominant traits: It is growing in unity and it is growing in maturity (Eph. 4.13-16). The better we understand these concepts, the more we will be able to contribute to the work of building the Church.

Jesus prayed in His high priestly prayer that His followers, who are all members of His Church, might be one. He has sent His Spirit to give us a bond of unity so that in what we believe, how we care for one another, and how we worship the Lord, our oneness might be visible to the watching world (Jn. 17.21). All who possess the mind of Christ must therefore use their minds to strengthen the unity of the Church in ways appropriate to their own callings. We must deplore the divisiveness that characterizes the Church of our Lord in these last days, and give ourselves to thinking, praying, planning, and collaborating with other believers for the greater

unity of the Body of Christ.

But we must also think, plan, and work to help the Church become mature: strong in truth, faithful in witness, sacrificial in love, and growing in character and numbers year by year. Thus the Church, at every level of its existence, expresses the reality of the living Christ to the world.

Building the Church must be a high priority for all who possess the mind of Christ, for this is the agenda on which Jesus has set His mind from the right hand of God.

We are building the Church when, using the mind of Christ, we are working to bring greater degrees of unity and maturity into the Body of Christ by as many means and in as many ways as our minds can think and our opportunities permit.

The Church doesn't grow simply because we want it to grow. It takes careful planning, thoughtful preparation, efficient ministry, and diligent review to help the Church grow consistently in unity and maturity. But this is why Jesus has given us His mind, that we might think more pointedly, plan more specifically, and work more reflectively toward realizing this great challenge and calling.

For reflection

1. What opportunities exist for you to contribute to building Christ's Church?
2. What can you do to help the Church grow in unity?
3. What can you do to help the Church grow in maturity?

Next steps – Preparation: How do your church leaders determine the health of your church at any given time? What criteria do they use? How do they focus ministry activities to improve the health of the local church? Talk with your pastor or some church leaders about these questions.

7 Nurtured and Refined

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus... Philippians 2.5

More beautiful and powerful

We have the mind of Christ, a resource more beautiful and more powerful than all the computers in the world, and one which is pre-set with an abundance of high-powered spiritual software to enable us to serve God and others, for His glory and their salvation, in building up the Church in unity and maturity as the Body of Christ.

We *have* the mind of Christ. It remains to be seen whether we will *use* that mind as He Who gave it intends.

Paul tells us that, while we have this mind as a gift of the Lord Jesus, we must nonetheless *nurture* the mind of Christ as a deliberate and ongoing act of maturing in the Lord. We must let the mind of Christ *be* the mind of Christ in us, and not just continue thinking, planning, setting goals, and looking out of our lives from the vantage point of our *old* mind.

Just like I've had to learn all the possibilities and powers of my computer over the years, and of the vast potential of the Internet, so believers must apply themselves to developing and giving full rein to the mind of Christ that is in them. We must strive for *maturity* in our thinking, so that we are no longer living like naïve children or uninformed dolts.

So how do we do this? How do we nurture and refine the mind of Christ so that His mind can *be* in us and we can fulfill His purpose in giving us His mind in the first place? A few suggestions.

The Word and prayer

First, make sure you are pursuing a good course of *spiritual disciplines*, especially time in the Word of God and prayer. I know I keep coming back to these over and over, but they are so important that we must guard against ever taking them for granted. Without these – to discern and reflect on the mind of Christ – we won't make any progress in nurturing that mind for maximum use.

Prayer and Scripture are the foundations of a life of learning to become a true disciple of the Lord. Make sure there's plenty of each of these in your life, and that you are continuously improving your use of these disciplines for gaining the mind of Christ.

Second, chart a course of *ongoing study* in areas that will equip you to serve others. Think about the places you go and the people you see each day – your Personal Mission Field. How can you improve your understanding of the various social and cultural arenas in which you travel? And what about the people you encounter there? You may want to read in areas of interest to the people you deal with each day, so that you can talk with them about their interests and concerns.

Perhaps you need to enroll in a course on how to be a better conversationalist, or learn to share the Good News of Christ. Maybe some more consistent input from Christian websites would help to equip your mind for more effective service and worldview living. What opportunities exist at your church for you to become better equipped in using the mind of Christ? Remember, as disciples of the Lord one of our primary callings is *to learn*. We should seek to learn as much as we can to better fit us for serving others, building Christ's Church, and glorifying our God.

The Mind of Christ

Third, find a *soul friend or study partner* to share in this adventure with you. As you sharpen and encourage one another, you'll find that your minds not only grow stronger but grow together in love as well. Learning to use the mind of Christ is challenging, and we'll be more likely to stay the course in this challenge if we have some friends alongside studying and growing with us.

Finally, look for new ways of *putting your mind to use* in the service of Christ. Teach a Bible study. Write a blog for a website. Learn a skill to allow you to serve in the local prison ministry or rescue center. Study to become a more caring and thoughtful person, and more adept at encouraging others with your words. Whatever you do, by all means work to nurture the mind of Christ in you, so that, increasingly, He may be seen to be guiding your thinking, outlook, and life.

A life-long calling

Nurturing the mind of Christ is a life-long endeavor, but it has to begin somewhere. Let the mind of Christ *be* in you so that *you become* more Christ-like in your thinking, and you'll find that growing in the mind of Christ can be one of the greatest adventures of your life.

There is room for improvement in each of us, so let's not waste any time on this challenge. Grow in the mind of Christ, press on toward maturity in your thinking, and watch how the mind of Christ grows in you.

For reflection

1. What are some areas of your life where you could begin to let the mind of Christ be in you more consistently and fruitfully?
2. How can you improve the time and effort you are presently making to let the mind of Christ be in you?
3. Whom can you enlist as a prayer partner or soul friend to help you in this effort to let the mind of Christ be in you?

Next steps: Set up a personal plan for growing in the mind of Christ over the next year. What goals will you set? How will you approach the challenge of growing in the mind of Christ? How do you hope that growing in the mind of Christ will benefit the people you see each day? Share your plan with a few Christian friends, and challenge them to do the same.

The Mind of Christ

For reflection or discussion

1. What does it mean to say that we have the mind of Christ? How is having the mind of Christ different from living in our “old” mind?
2. Why do you suppose writers like Harry Blamires and Mark Noll think that the Christian or evangelical *mind* is so little in evidence in our day?
3. How is it apparent to the people in your Personal Mission Field that you have the mind of Christ?
4. How would you describe your approach to growing the mind of Christ to maturity in your life?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this study? How are you applying that lesson to your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.