

# A Study on Philippians 4:8 – by Lisa Price

## Philippians 4:8 - The Intro

Philippians 4:8

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things...*

I love a good mystery. In fact, when I was young you scarcely found me without my nose buried in a Nancy Drew, Bobsey Twins, or Hardy Boys mystery book. I still love mysteries. All the CSI series' television shows are absolutely fascinating to me. I am a perpetual whodunit. Recently, however, I have been intentionally trying to apply this verse in my life. I have been making a conscious attempt to really meditate, dwell on, chew on the things outlined in it: the true, the noble, the just, the pure, the lovely, and those things of good report. Let's just say CSI doesn't usually fit the criteria.

First things first: let's see what each of these words mean. I used Webster's dictionary.

- “Whatever things are true...” steadfast, loyal, consistent.
- “Whatever things are noble...” possessing, characterized by, or arising from superiority of mind or character or of ideals or morals.
- “Whatever things are just...” acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good ; righteous
- “whatever things are pure...” (1) : free from harshness or roughness; : free from what vitiates, weakens, or pollutes (2) : containing nothing that does not properly belong : free from moral fault or guilt : marked by chastity
- “whatever things are lovely...” eliciting love by moral or ideal worth
- “whatever things are of good report...” of which no evil thing can be truthfully said

Over the next several times together I want to explore each of these things with you. In the meantime, look at your day, and what your “intake” is during the day. Does it meet these qualifications? If not, why not? What can you change to make your intake fit?

## Philippians 4:8 - Whatever things are TRUE

Truth...If we are to think on, meditate on, “chew” on truth, we really need to start at the beginning. Just exactly what is TRUE? According to the Scriptures, TRUTH is:

1. That which is opposed to falsehood.

- Proverbs 12:17,19 *He that speaks truth shows forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit ...The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment*

## 2. Fidelity/Lack of Obedience.

- Isaiah 59:14,15 *And judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. ... Yes, truth fails; and he that departs from evil makes himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.*
- Jeremiah 7:28 *But you shall say to them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receives correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth*

## 3. The Doctrine of Christ

- Galatians 2:5 *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*
- II Timothy 3:7, 4:4 *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ... And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables*

## 4. Jesus Himself

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.*

## 5. God's Word

John 17:17 *Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth.*

In light of the scripture, then, we need to focus our thoughts on things that oppose falsehood; Things that are faithful to, and in keeping with the body of Christ that we claim to be a part of; Things that advance the Gospel; Things that make Jesus visible in us; And things that focus on God's Word.

I came across this article by Wilfred M. McClay entitled "A Few Thoughts on Education in Modern America", and was positively intrigued by what I read...allow me to share some excerpts with you:

"...We may soon come to the point where old-fashioned wholesomeness is the most radical posture of all—particularly if it strengthens us to be able to say "no" to the ephemera of our popular culture, and instead resolve to stake our lives on something more solid and more lasting. And it's very much at odds with the prevailing approach of many parents, educators, writers, producers, media providers, and kids. The prevailing view is that no one can really know for sure what is true, pure, and just—that such judgments are strictly individual in nature, and that it therefore would be an arrogant imposition of one's values or tastes to assume otherwise. Therefore the only really fair and honest way to educate young people is to "expose" them to many things, as many things as possible, respect their "feelings," and leave it to them to sort it all out...The Philippians passage shows us a better way. It assumes that the fundamental channels of education are mimetic, that they involve learning by imitation, a process in which the choice of admirable examples to be imitated is all important: deep calls unto deep, refinement begets refinement, high ideals call forth high ideals, heroic deeds leave a deposit of noble character. **It matters what we are "exposed" to, because we take on the shape of the things we contemplate.** A steady diet of triviality, mediocrity,

baseness, and propaganda... leaves us far less than what we could have been. You should remember this in your leisure hours..."

Take a look at the passage I highlighted in the last paragraph... "It matters what we are 'exposed' to, because we take on the shape of the things we contemplate." What do I expose myself to on a regular basis? The "truth" of reality TV? The "truth" in the liberal news media? The "truth" found in the lyrics of the songs I listen to, or the words of the book I am reading? I don't think I am alone in saying I am solely responsible for exposing myself to far too many falsehoods. Far too many times I lack fidelity in my relationship to my Heavenly Father, my Savior. Far too few times I share the truth of the Gospel with people I care so deeply for. I get so busy doing things for God that I forget about just being with God.

So please allow me to encourage you, as I encourage myself: Make a conscious decision to, moment by moment, only allow our minds to contemplate things that are true. To allow our senses – sight, touch, taste, hearing, smell – to filter out the falsehood. To take a heavenly perspective as we go about our day so that we may share the truth of the Gospel when an opportunity presents itself. To remain faithful to God's high calling on our lives, and to, "by the mercies of God, ...present [our bodies] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) I will take the shape of the things I contemplate. I want to closely resemble Jesus, the Way, the TRUTH, the Life...don't you?

#### **Philippians 4:8: "...Whatever things are HONEST..."**

The word "honest" in the New Testament in the King James Version generally represents the adjective *kalos*, "good," "excellent," "honorable." In most courtrooms today, the judge is referred to as "Your Honor". Ever thought about why? It is because that title portrays an expectation of the conduct the judge will exhibit during the trial: honorable, fair, straightforward, full of integrity, sincere, truthful, and chaste. In short, they are expected to be honest...that is why they have been placed in the judge's seat!

In this verse we are told to contemplate the things that are honest: To "think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]" (The Amplified Bible – Lockman). I am sure you have heard before the simile between meditation and a cow chewing on a cud...how the cow chews, then swallows, then brings it back up later to chew on again, then re-swallows, then brings it back up again, etc. In a like manner, our minds should attempt to digest that which is honest, then bring it back up into our minds again and again until all the nourishment has been pressed out of it.

I can't help but remember a line the wife said in the movie *Fireproof*. When speaking of her husband's computer pornography addiction she said, "There is nothing honorable about that." What we are exposed to – whether by our choice or not – on a daily basis can not always be described as honorable. Don't meditate on to the dishonorable. "Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (II Corinthians 10:5)

When faced with a difficult situation at work, or with your children or grandchildren, always seek to do what is fair. "My brothers, do not let your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be tainted by favoritism." (James 2:1, ISV) Be straightforward, yet speak the truth in love.(Ephesians 4:15)

Consider this quote:

“Some people will not tolerate such emotional honesty in communication. They would rather defend their dishonesty on the grounds that it might hurt others. Therefore, having rationalized their phoniness into nobility, they settle for superficial relationships.” ~Author Unknown

As our pastor constantly demonstrates, and encourages us to do: be transparent. Do everything with integrity. Be sincere (Romans 12:9) (Philippians 1:10) (James 3:17). Be chaste: pure, modest, and decent. To the best of your ability, be free from fault (I Thessalonians 5:23) (II Peter 3:14). Work hard. Deal faithfully with those who have authority over you (Hebrews 13:7), and with those who are under your authority.

The ultimate goal in all of this is found in the latter part of Philippians 2:14-16a: Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the middle of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life. (AKJV) We all have been given the high calling of carrying the Gospel into all the world (Mark 16:15). We are conformed to that which we contemplate. Let us contemplate that which is honest so that we may shine brightly in the midst of this dark world.

### **Philippians 4:8 - "Whatever things are JUST..."**

I think we all remember the story of Solomon told in I Kings Chapter 3: As a young child Solomon was given his father the king's throne. In a dream God told him to ask for whatever he wanted and it would be given to him. Solomon asked for wisdom so that he could govern with justice. God gave it to him, as evidenced in the story that follows involving the two women fighting over the newborn. Only the true mother of the child would want the infant's life spared instead of his body divided equally between them. The news spread quickly: justice had been done.

Justice. The moral ideal of fairness and equity. Ignazio Silone says, “An earthquake achieves what the law promises but does not in practice maintain - the equality of all men.” Justice means “to be guided by truth, reason, and fairness; equitable; based on right, or awarded rightly and in accordance with standards.” The first several verses of Exodus 23 deal expressly with practical application of those things considered to be, or not be, by definition, just:

1. "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.
2. "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd,
3. "and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.
4. "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him.
5. "If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.
6. "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits.
7. "Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.
8. "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

9. "Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt. (NIV)

So, then, being urged to think on those things that are just in Philippians 4:8, let us put these verses in Exodus to practical application. To think of that which is just, do not lie, and do not listen to those who do. Do not stretch the truth in situations to ensure vengeance upon people who have wronged you. Don't do something just because everyone else is doing it. Realize that sometimes being right means being unpopular. Follow the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you were "in a pickle", wouldn't you want someone else to help you out of it? Wouldn't it speak volumes to you if someone you counted as an enemy were to put her own needs aside to assist you with yours? Be sure you get all the facts before you issue judgment in an issue. And don't even think about trumping up charges to serve your own purposes. Don't accept bribes, or do something to "scratch" someone else's back so they can scratch yours later. Do your best to make everyone feel loved and welcomed. Don't hang with your clique. "How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You give [God] one-tenth of your mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the most important things in Moses' Teachings. You should have done these things without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23, GWT) ( See also Luke 11:42)

Consider: "No man suffers injustice without learning, vaguely but surely, what justice is."  
~Isaac Rosenfeld

When contemplating that which is just, we cannot forget the justice from which we were spared, for, according to Romans 3:23, "All have sinned...", and Romans 6:23, "...the wages of sin is death...". Justice demanded a sacrifice for our sin. Jesus Christ was that perfect, sinless sacrifice that paid the debt He did not owe, the debt we could not pay. And, because we have been given such, the only logical response to others who are indebted to us would be to extend the mercy extended to us. Consider Matthew 6:12 ("forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"), or Luke 11:4 ("forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us").

"We who have been set free by God's grace and forgiveness are called to extend that freedom to others by cancelling their debts whether material or social. When we pause to think of all the injustice that is spawned by indebtedness, from international and third world debt to the debts of political and personal patronage – 'you owe me' -- we begin to see how radical and relevant this petition is to our world." (Gary Hauch)

In short, meditating on those things which are just goes much deeper than whether justice has been served to us...the matter begs the question of whether we have shown others the same justice Jesus showed us. "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes." (Deut 10:17, NIV) What does He require of us: "but to do justice and love, and to walk humbly with [our] God." (Micah 6:8)

## Whatever things are PURE

I cannot help thinking of an example I heard my former pastor Jerry Chaddick give countless times at a kids camp. He asked the kids to imagine a full wooden barrel of the clearest, cleanest, coolest, most refreshing water you have ever seen or tasted in your life. He then asked the kids to imagine that he put a single drop of a deadly poison into the barrel of water. Would anyone like to have a drink of this water? It is still just as clear, just as cool, just as refreshing...no takers? Of course not! It has lost its purity!

We as Christians need to remain pure, also, as we are vessels containing the Living Water. One drop of the poison of sin can completely ruin our testimony, our credibility with the lost around us. But it is pretty evident (with me anyway!) that I can't go even a whole day without some kind of poison messin' up my own personal barrel.

I used to give Bro Jerry Chaddick a hard time about hearing his "Inward, Outward, Upward" sermon so many times that I could preach it. I think what really happened, though, is God was trying to get that concept of my inward thought life, my outward conduct life and my upward relational life with Him through my thick skull. Trust me, this is an ongoing process. This is not Bro Jerry's sermon, but I will borrow his wording:

### I. Inner Purity – Our Attitudes and Thought Life

#### a. Vengeance, Grudges and Uncontrolled Anger

i. Romans 12:17-21 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

ii. See also Luke 6:27-45

#### b. Envy, Jealousy and Pride

i. Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

ii. Envy is the sin that crucified Jesus (See Matthew 27:18)

### II. Outward Purity – Our Conduct

a. I Thessalonians 4:1-10 *Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind*

*your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

*b. I Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God.*

### III. Upward Purity – Our Relationship With A Holy God

a. James 4:8 *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.*

b. Isaiah 1:16 *Be washed, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; let there be an end of sinning*

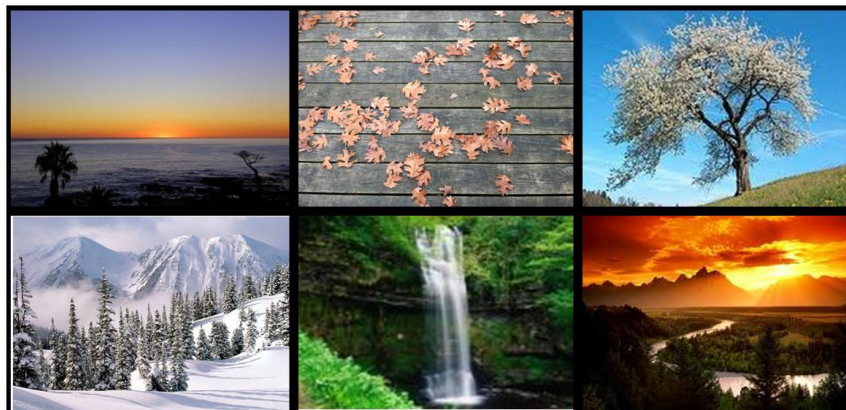
Purity. Freedom from pollutants. Genuineness. Without moral defilement. Innocence. Easier said than done, to be sure. I challenge you (as I challenge myself today) to purify yourself in the three areas mentioned above, especially in the area of your thought life and attitudes. We do, after all, conform to that which we contemplate...remember?

### Whatever things are LOVELY

Lovely: Beautiful, pleasing. We are to think on the things that line up with what God sees as lovely. In Genesis, after each creation, the Bible says that God saw what He had created, and saw that it was “good”.

I have had the privilege to travel a lot in my lifetime. I have seen trees ablaze with the transformation into the fall colors. I have seen the quaint calmness of the little Amish towns upstate. I have seen the majestic beauty of the mountains, and the mesmerizing relaxation of the beaches. I have seen great forests, and desert plains that seemed to go on forever. I have seen roaring waterfalls and gurgling streams. And it indeed was good, beautiful, pleasing...lovely.

Instead of rambling on about God’s awesome creation, I thought it best to simply attach a few pictures of His magnificent splendor in nature. As you look at these pictures, please take a moment to thank Him for His loveliness





## **Philippians 4:8 - Whatsoever things are of GOOD REPORT**

Things that are of good report...well, that pretty much means watching the news is out. Guess the television in general is out, too!! Seriously, what we need to allow our minds to dwell on needs to be wholesome, encouraging, and pleasing to God. Understand, though that this scripture is not telling us to ignore everything that is going on in the world. That concept is contrary to Scripture. We should “be vigilant”, and “watch” while we know and anxiously await the time of His return. (See I Thessalonians 5) But we shouldn’t dwell on the negatives in the world. When we see the bad reports out there – and there are plenty of those out there – we should MEDITATE on the fact that Christ’s return is imminent. THAT is the ultimate good report.

Yesterday I read the devotional article sent out through David Jeremiah’s mailing list. (Here is the link address: [http://tpm.convio.net/site/MessageViewer?em\\_id=25941.0&dlv\\_id=25561](http://tpm.convio.net/site/MessageViewer?em_id=25941.0&dlv_id=25561) ) When reading it, I could not help but think that sleep is one of the benefits we receive by simply following God’s instructions to dwell on things that are of good report. The lack of sleep from stress leads ultimately to more stress. It becomes a vicious, and never-ending, cycle. Jeremiah closed his devotion with a quote from Charles Spurgeon: "How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep."

How true that is. In today’s chaotic and unpredictable world, we need to think on the things that are of GOOD report...the promises and the provision of our Heavenly Father, of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. “Come unto Me all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your soul. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

## **Philippians 4:8: “...If there be any virtue...”**

Virtue is often defined as moral excellence. That definition is getting harder and harder to grasp because of the lack of a moral standard in this nation, and around the world. People today are encouraged to do what feels good, instead of doing what is good. We have gotten away from the standard of good set by the Word of God. So let’s try to get to the root of the word “virtue” to work out our own definition.

In Hebrew, the word for virtue is chayil which literally means strength. It is translated as virtuous, valiant, and other ideas in which a person is strong. In Greek, the word for virtue is arete, and is translated as manliness, valor, excellence, or praise. Virtue is still used to refer to mastery in a specific field, an excellence in achievement (e.g., a piano virtuoso). Virtue, then, can be encompassingly defined as the quality of having the strength to master the state of doing what is excellent and praiseworthy habitually. That’s quite a mouthful. Let’s eat that elephant one bite at a time.

To be virtuous one must not only know what is right, but also do what is right. Do you remember Paul’s dilemma in Romans 7? “For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” He is speaking here of the ultimate struggle between flesh and spirit: “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Strength is required when we choose to crucify our flesh and do that which we know to be right.



We need to strive to “master” Christianity. The military knows it can’t have half-hearted soldiers and neither can the Lord. Athletes don’t win with “good enough” effort, so why do we put in less effort in being a Christian than in our sports? Mediocrity doesn’t lead to advancement, especially not in Christianity. We are to GROW in our faith, and “press toward the mark of the high calling of Christ.”

II Timothy 2:14-26 gives us a lot of insight into the excellent and praiseworthy things we should be doing. Let me assure you, it takes everything I have PLUS the Holy Spirit to accomplish this in my life. I fall SO SHORT so often. But I am committed to making virtue a habit in my life. Are you?

### **Philippians 4:8 – “...and if there be any PRAISE...”**

We have reached the last segment of the verse we have been looking at together. I have really learned so much, and still have infinitely more to learn, just on this verse alone!!

This segment can be looked at from two perspectives: Times we experience that we ourselves offer praise, or times at which praise from others is directed at us. Let’s look at the first perspective for a moment.

Praise: to commend or glorify. I cannot help but think of the “Whatsoever things are lovely” pictures when I look from this perspective. God’s glorious creation is without a doubt commendable! I also think of the times as a parent I am so proud of my kids...like when they earn academic awards, or sing beautifully in church, or behave like I have trained them to. When something they have done is commendable. And I think, too, of the countless times I have applauded something or someone, because I feel their work is commendable. It is in times like these that I am to think on the pure, lovely, honest, true, virtuous, etc. By letting my mind dwell on “these things”, the praise I may have originally directed at an individual becomes, almost inexplicably, directed to the Lord.

Then the second perspective: when the praise is directed toward us personally. It is so easy to allow pride to swell when we are commended, but the Bible gives us a stern caution in Proverbs 16:18, “Pride goeth before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” When we think on “these things” while the praise is being showered on us, our hearts immediately soften, and all the glory and honor is passed through us and straight to the throne of God.

Consider this quote: “Piety and true morality are inseparable. Piety is love with its face towards God; morality is love with its face towards man. Despise not anything that is good in itself; only let it keep its due place. Not that Christians should make man's praise their aim, but they should live so as to deserve men's praise.” (1)

Should there ever come a time in our lives that there is PRAISE involved, we are instructed to think on the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report at that very moment. So whether the praise is directed from us or at us, if we remember to follow these simple instructions, we can whole-heartedly give all the praise and glory to the only one to whom it is due – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Sing with me: (even if it’s only in your heart)

When I think about the Lord,  
How He saved me, how He raised me,  
How He filled me with the Holy Ghost,  
How He healed me to the uttermost...  
When I think about the Lord,  
How He picked me up and turned me around,  
How He placed my feet on solid ground  
It makes me want to shout  
Hallelujah! Thank you Jesus!  
Lord, You're worthy  
Of all the glory, and all the honor, and all the praise!  
--Shane Barnard

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(1) Jamieson-Fausset Commentary on Philippians 4:8