

Being a Spiritual Minded Christian
Part Two
Discerning Our Mindset

- *As believers we have a choice: We can be naturally minded, carnally minded, or spiritually minded.*

1 Corinthians 2:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴But 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.

¹⁵But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

- *As Christians we can have a spiritual mind which is to think the thoughts of God and to see and evaluate circumstances and events from God's perspective which is both heavenly and eternal.*
- *As Christians we can have a natural mind which sees and evaluates life only from this temporal physical earthly perspective.*
- *The natural mind sees things only from the natural perspective and either does not acknowledge the existence of a spiritual realm, or does not recognize the value or the activities of the spiritual realm.*
- *As Christians we can have a carnal mind which sees and evaluates life from a purely selfish perspective seeking to satisfy the fleeting lusts of the flesh. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." (Romans 8:7).*
- *The carnal mind is always impulsive. Esau exemplifies a man who operated from the carnal point of view, "lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright." (Hebrews 12:16).*
- *An important difference between the natural mind and the carnal mind is that a carnally minded person always seeks instantaneous gratification regardless of the consequences. A naturally minded man may be well disciplined and make sacrifices for longer term benefits as long as those benefits are realized in this life.*
- *A carnally minded man will experience the negative consequences of their choices fairly quickly, accompanied by regrets, sorrow, and shame. However, soon their carnal mind begins to override anything that would oppose them satisfying their lusts, and the cycle of lust, impulsive choices, and painful consequences begins again. The carnal mind keeps the person trapped in this endless cycle of failure.*

Romans 8:6 (NKJV)

⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

- *If a Christian is carnally minded it results in great loss, while if he or she is spiritually minded it results in life and peace.*
- *Esau was a carnally minded person who lived his entire life without ever trying to curb his lusts. His carnal choices resulted in great permanent loss and sorrow as his father was not able to give his son the inheritance that he should have received. “For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” (Hebrews 12:17).*
- *As opposed to the carnally minded man, a naturally minded man may accomplish many things in this life from an earthly perspective. It may only be at the end of their lives or in eternity that they realize the great loss they have actually incurred by living a life that was not spiritually minded.*
- *A carnally minded man will give in to his lusts no matter what the loss and sorrow accompanying his choices, while the naturally minded man may be willing to make great sacrifices and even live a disciplined and austere life if he can see a longer-term benefit in this life.*

Luke 12:16–21 (NKJV)

¹⁶Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

¹⁸So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

¹⁹And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’

²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

²¹“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

- *In this parable of a certain rich man, we can observe both the carnal mind and the natural mind in operation.*
- *The carnal mind is seen in his obsession with his love of riches and pleasures. ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’*
- *However, we can also see the natural mind in operation, because he was willing to work hard and to make temporary sacrifices to accomplish his goals. “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.’”*

- *However, both the carnal mind and the natural mind fail to take into consideration the eternal outcome of their actions. God has the final word. “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.””*
- *The naturally minded man does not consider the final outcome of their labours, because it would produce a sense of futility realizing that everything they accomplish in this life will ultimately come to an end. Solomon, who pursued success instead of God, said this: “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).*

Matthew 16:24–27 (NKJV)

²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

²⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

²⁷For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

- *Jesus’ words in Matthew 16 are an affront to the naturally and carnally minded man, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*
- *The spiritually minded man sees great value in Jesus Christ—that He is far more valuable than anything else this temporary life can offer.*
- *The spiritually minded Christian recognizes two things:*
- *The loss one incurs by failing to live a life for Christ: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”*
- *Secondly, the great eternal gain to live a life fully for the glory of God: “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”*
- *The carnal mind, the natural mind, and the spiritual mind each deals with the possessions, resources, and opportunities of this life in quite different ways:*
- *The carnal man wastes them.*
- *The natural man sacrifices for them.*
- *The spiritual man uses them for God’s glory.*

- *For this reason it is important that Christians are able to determine what type of mind they are operating in and begin to think as spiritually minded people.*

Romans 7:11 (NKJV)

¹¹For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

- *The Greek word translated as “deceived” means “to cause someone to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth – to mislead.”*
- *It is not always easy to discern what state of mind we are operating in, because sin by its very nature results in the one who is caught in its web to become self-deceived.*
- *If we knew we were being deceived, we wouldn’t be deceived.*

Hebrews 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

- *Not only does sin deceive us, but it also causes us to become hardened so we fail to recognize that we are the ones who have the problem and we blame our circumstances, others, or even God.*
- *The Bible warns us, “Who can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin”?” (Proverbs 20:9).*
- *We need to seek God to help us discern the true condition of our hearts and minds.*
- *God also provides Christian fellowship so we can have accountability and give others the opportunity to speak into our lives.*

Proverbs 22:3 (NKJV)

³A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished.

- *Proverbs says the wise man foresees evil and prepares himself. Therefore, one could say that the spiritually minded person is watchful and takes the appropriate measures to protect himself and his family.*
- *However to determine if our actions are motivated by godliness requires more than just looking at the actions, but determining the condition of the heart, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.” (Proverbs 21:2).*
- *Apostle Paul is a wonderful example of a spiritually minded Christian.*

Philippians 1:12–30 (NKJV)

¹²But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

¹³so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

¹⁴and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

- *Paul did not complain about the hardships and suffering he faced. He endured because his assessment of them was, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel”*
- *Paul viewed his imprisonment and hardships in the most positive light for this reason. To others without an opportunity to hear the Gospel, “it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ.”*
- *Paul was greatly encouraged that his example of joyfully suffering for Christ resulted in the believers becoming fearless even in the midst of great persecution, “and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”*

¹⁵Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

¹⁶The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

¹⁷but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

- *Paul then illustrated another aspect of being spiritually minded—being free from selfish ambition and the desire for worldly success, “the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.”*
- *Not everyone who preaches Christ is motivated by a spiritual mind. Some are carnally minded and motivated by selfish ambition and self-promotion.*
- *It is not only possible for those who preach the Gospel to be caught up in the fleshly desire to be successful and popular, it is a real danger! “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill”*
- *Paul then described those who are motivated to preach the Gospel from a carnal mind. “The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains.”*
- *There were people preaching the Gospel to try to vex Paul’s heart, because they wrongly assumed that he was also motivated by a carnal mind.*

- *Paul's response perfectly reflects a spiritually minded Christian. Paul's motivation was not to make his ministry flourish, but that the Gospel message would continue to spread, so that as many as possible could hear about Christ, "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."*
- *Paul's joy was not a subdued joy, but an overflowing joy that Christ was being preached, "in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."*
- *Paul was devoid of selfish ambition. His only desire was to glorify Christ and for the furtherance of the Gospel.*
- *When David voiced his desire to build a house for the Lord, God's response was, "You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight."*
- *However, David's response is a wonderful example of how his desire to build a house for the Lord was not tainted by selfish ambition, but really reflected a heart to glorify and honour God, "Now David said, "Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it." So David made abundant preparations before his death." (1 Chronicles 22:5).*

John 3:26–30 (NKJV)

²⁶And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

²⁷John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

²⁸You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease.

- *John the Baptist is another wonderful example of one who was fully spiritually minded.*
- *Unwittingly, John's own disciples were trying entrap him in selfish ambition when they said, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"*
- *John the Baptist's response reflected full well a spiritually minded man, "He must increase, but I must decrease."*
- *John knew his ministry would end, but Jesus' ministry would continue forever.*

Philippians 2:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.

²⁰For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.

²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

- *Paul’s commendation of Timothy gives us another insight into being spiritually minded – it is a rarity, “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.”*
- *We must always be on guard not to be subtly deceived into being self-centered and self-seeking.*
- *This world indoctrinates us to be carnally and naturally minded.*
- *The world assesses someone as wise who knows how to benefit themselves at the expense of others, “It is good for nothing,” cries the buyer; But when he has gone his way, then he boasts.” (Proverbs 20:14).*
- *However, God has a totally different way of determining if we have negotiated a successful deal, “he who wins souls is wise.” (Proverbs 11:30).*
- *Everyone is always looking for the best deal for themselves, but Paul exhorts us to “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4).*
- *Often, Christians lose opportunities to be an example of the generosity of Christ to this world by being self-seeking and not seeking to bless others if it means we don’t get the best deal ourselves.*
- *On their deathbed many will weep because they built their kingdom, not God’s.*
- *It is interesting to note that those who were preaching Christ out of selfish ambition misunderstood Paul and thought he was motivated by the same carnal mind.*
- *One way to determine the condition of our hearts and minds is to become aware of what things irritate, bother, and upset us. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” (Romans 2:1).*
- *The speck in our brother’s eye will reflect the log in our eye. (Matthew 7:5).*
- *The carnal mind is only able to see the faults in the other person, because the carnal mind is selfish and self-centered and one of its basic modes of operation is to protect and defend self at all costs.*

- *A real breakthrough came in my life many years ago when I was so desperate to move on with God that I was willing to listen to anything—even the truth.*

Philippians 1 (NKJV)

¹⁹For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

- *Another characteristic of a spiritually minded man is that discouragement and doubts do not weigh him down. He keeps His eyes focused on the Lord even during very difficult and trying times, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”*
- *The spiritual minded man is able to look past the circumstances of this life and see the faithfulness of God.*
- *“There is no panic in Heaven! God has no problems, only plans.” (Corrie Ten Boom).*
- *The spiritually minded man always anticipates that as they trust in Christ they will be found faithful and will produce the hundred fold increase, “according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness.”*
- *The spiritually minded man does not try to place his personal expectations on God, but trusts and surrenders to God’s will no matter what the outcome, “so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”*
- *The naturally minded man becomes discouraged and even disillusioned when things do not turn out as they would have hoped. Even Christians in ministry who are naturally minded have walked away from ministry because of disappointments.*

²¹For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- *This is the heart of being a spiritually minded Christian, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*
- *If Paul died he won, and if he lived he won. Either way he won.*
- *To be spiritually minded is to have an excitement and an anticipation to be with Christ in our resurrected eternal bodies.*
- *Being spiritually minded is not looking to Heaven as an escape from all our problems and failures, but as the fulfillment of God’s plans and promises.*

- *To be spiritually minded means to live this life fully for Christ. “For to me, to live is Christ.”*
- *As Christians we tend to short change ourselves from the joy of life by not living our lives fully for Christ.*

²²But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

²³For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

²⁴Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

- *Paul definitely did not have an escapist mentality. He was being pulled by two great delights and desires, “I am hard-pressed between the two.”*
- *Paul wanted to be with Christ in unbroken fellowship with Him, “having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”*
- *However, Paul also had a love for the Church and the believers and a desire to continue to be able to encourage and build them up. “Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”*

²⁵And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,

²⁶that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

- *Paul’s heart of faith and love is seen in his willingness to continue to serve the churches with the expectation of the great fruitfulness that would result in “your progress and joy of faith.”*

²⁷Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

- *Spiritually minded Christians strive to bring unity to the Body of Christ, but also to stand in the truth without wavering, so the Gospel is exalted.*

²⁸and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

- *When we are spiritually minded we are not controlled by fear, “not in any way terrified by your adversaries.”*

- *Paul goes on to say that this opposition and persecution is actually a sign that we are saved and they are lost, “which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”*

²⁹For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

³⁰having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

- *A spiritually minded Christian looks upon suffering and persecution for the name of Christ as an honour. “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”*
- *Christians in the West who are carnally minded respond to persecution with hostility as if it something from which they should be exempt.*
- *Paul makes it very clear that hostility and persecution go hand in hand with sharing the Gospel, “having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.”*
- *Suffering for Christ and bearing His reproach is not a burden but a privilege, but only if we do it honourably with a spiritual mind and not a carnal or natural mind.*
- *The next message in this series we will begin to study how to develop into spiritually minded Christians.*