

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF MIND-SOUL

THE DIVINE PROGRAM

In the New Testament no one understood this better than the Apostle Paul. In fact, in his letter to the Philippians, after alluding to guarding the heart Paul prescribed his personal program in one sublime sentence: **“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things”** ([Philippians 4:8](#)).

Each of Paul’s ingredients is explicitly positive. The true, the noble, the right, the pure, the lovely, the admirable all defy negative exposition. Each ingredient was, and is, *a matter of personal choice* — and our choices make all the difference in the world. We all can *choose* a thought program which will produce a Christian mind.

I have great sympathy for those whose past has been a series of bad choices. I understand that if over the years one has chosen the impure and the illusory and the negative, it is very difficult to change. But as a Biblical thinker I give no quarter to myself or anyone else who rationalizes his present choices by the past. Brothers, *as Christians we are free to have a Christian mind*. It is within our reach, and it is our duty.

As we consider how Paul’s program should affect our minds, the sheer weight of its positives demands a determined rejection of negative input: **“Finally, brothers, whatever is untrue, whatever is ignoble, whatever is wrong, whatever is impure, whatever is unlovely, whatever is unadmirable — if there is anything shoddy or unworthy of praise — do not think about these things.”** It was not that Paul was a naive Pollyanna. He knew the dark side of human experience. [Romans 1](#) proves that. But he chose not to make such input a part of his mental programming.

So we must lay down as fundamental to our Christianity this truth: a Christian mind demands conscious negation; a Christian mind is impossible **without the discipline of refusal**.

Charles Colson tells of sitting at dinner with a president of one of the three major television networks. Colson felt he had a tremendous opportunity to influence the man, so he told him how millions of Christians were offended by the networks’ programming. Knowing that TV executives have an intense interest in profit, Colson suggested that it would be good business to air wholesome family entertainment. “After all,” added

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Colson, “there are fifty million born-again Christians out there.” The gauntlet was down, and as Colson tells it:

He looked at me quizzically. I assured him that was Gallup’s latest figure.

“What you are suggesting, Mr. Colson, is that we run more programs like, say, *Chariots of Fire*?”

“Yes!” I exclaimed. “That’s a great movie with a marvelous Christian message.”

“Well,” he said, “CBS ran it as a prime-time movie just a few months ago. Are you aware of the ratings?”

All at once I knew I was in trouble.

He then explained: That night NBC showed *On Golden Pond*; it was #1 with 25.2 percent of all TV sets in America tuned in. Close behind was *My Mother’s Secret Life*, a show about a mother hiding her past as a prostitute. It was #2 with 25.1 percent.

And a distant third — a big money loser — was CBS with *Chariots of Fire* — 11.8 percent. In fact, of the sixty-five shows rated that week, “Dallas” was #1, *Chariots of Fire*, #57.

“So,” my companion concluded, “where are your fifty million born-again Christians, Mr. Colson?”

Good question. Where are we?

If even half of Gallup’s fifty million born-again Christians had watched the show with the Christian message, *Chariots of Fire* would have topped the ratings. But the disturbing truth, as studies by the secular networks as well as the Christian Broadcasting Network show, is that the viewing habits of Christians are no different than those of non-Christians!

Since TV is a business, it gives its customers — the public — what they want. It is but a mirror image of us.