

The 5 Traits Of Highly Effective Christians

A Biblical Mindset

Life can be tough. School, relationships, parenting, work, money: there's all kinds of issues that we all deal with daily. Sometimes it seems like we're on top of things and sometimes it feels like life is on top of us.

For a person who has faith in Jesus Christ we have an added dimension. We have this thing we call our Christian life. It's all about our relationship with God and how we live that out on a day-to-day basis.

Because Jesus Christ died and rose again we have the confidence that we're forgiven of our sins. Our eternal destiny is taken care of but we still live our lives here trying to integrate and apply our Christian faith to life.

Eternal life is a gift that we receive by faith. Living a Christian life in the here and now is a commitment that we make by God's grace and strength.

The reality is that the Bible doesn't make any kind of distinction between the Christian parts of life and the rest of life. All of our life is about applying God's principles.

The Bible is an extraordinarily practical book that touches on every detail of life. If we really want to be successful in life we need to apply God's truth to all of it. This week we're beginning a series were titling *The Five Traits Of Highly Effective Christians*.

What we want to do over the coming weeks is to look at those distinguishing qualities or characteristics that define people who are highly effective in applying their Christianity to everyday life.

This morning I'd like us to begin with quality that's going to be foundational to all the others, and that's a biblical mindset.

In Luke 6:45 Jesus said, *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

In other words, what's on the inside of our life has a way of showing up on the outside. How we think, what we focus on, what we prioritize impacts our life.

I'd like to use a verse from the New Testament as our launch pad. Let's turn to **Colossians 2 Page 1046**

The Book of Colossians is a letter written by an Apostle of Jesus Christ named Paul to a congregation in Asia Minor.

Colossae was located near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates. The site, is located in what is now Anatolia in Turkey.

Paul had ministered in the larger more influential city of Ephesus. During his time there a man named Epaphras became a believer. He eventually went down to Colossae and started this congregation.

The church has been in existence for 6 years. At this point Paul is in jail awaiting trial by the Roman government. He's accused of stirring up trouble by preaching about Jesus.

Epaphras comes to visit Paul in jail and report on the church. The good news is the church has been strong. The bad news is that trouble was brewing.

Philosophers and teachers had show up with a bizarre combination of different religious and philosophical ideas.

The book of Colossians is God's answer to spiritual and philosophical confusion.

Almost in the middle of the book we find this warning. **Read vs 8**

The word translated "cheat" is the verb *sulagogeo* in the original. *Sulao* means "to plunder" and *ago* means "to lead."

The New International Readers Version says, *Make sure no one captures you.* In other words, "Make sure no one carries you off as a slave."

Here's how it can happen. Through ideas that are rooted strictly in human reasoning and not in God's way of thinking.

This is a strikingly graphic picture. In the end there's only two choices for life. We

think there's unending assortment of ideas and paths to walk down. It looks like there's hundreds of roads and choices.

The truth is when it comes to living life there's only two options.

The sign on one says, "Man's Way." The sign on the other says, "God's way."

We think we're so smart. We think we're intellectual and philosophical when we listen to the voices and choose our path. God says if we're not walking on His path of freedom we've been hijacked and we don't even know it.

Proverbs 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*
NIV

So how are we going to know His path?

For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.
Proverbs 2:6

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. Psalm 19:7

A highly effective Christian who's life is characterized by joy, strength, peace, contentment, love, patience, rest, freedom, and thankfulness is someone who has made the choice to walk down God's path by having a biblical mindset.

They're not going to be pulled down empty paths of deceit because they're committed to walking down God's path.

How do we develop this biblical mindset? What are some steps? Here's 4 practical, doable, workable actions that any of us can work on no matter what our situation.

The first step in developing a biblical mindset is:

I. Make Time To Read The Bible Regularly

Maybe you remember the FedEx commercial from a couple of years ago. It was a take off on the Tom Hanks movie Castaway. In the movie Hanks plays a FedEx

executive whose company plane went down leaving him stranded on a desert island for years.

Play Commercial (YouTube)

Isn't it ironic that we can keep this book on the shelf and then struggle with life? That we can preserve it somehow. Not open it, or read it or use it and then complain that we don't know how to deal with all the stuff of life?

We complain that we're not equipped. We grumble about why God would allow obstacles into our life and here we hold the answers.

Here's what the Bible says, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.* Proverbs 3:5-6

If you're still in Colossians 2 look at verse 8 again. Here's what's going to rob you of life. Following a philosophy based on the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ.

Here's why this warning is just as valid today as it was 2000 years ago. Because our day isn't any different from the 1st century.

The Greeks and Romans had a whole pantheon of gods and goddesses. There was no shortage of religious confusion. They loved rhetoric and debate and philosophy.

The problem was, none of it was grounded in objective truth. It was all just human ideas with no basis for evaluation other than what sounds good.

Today we're still confronted by a never ending parade of philosophies and religions that compete for our allegiance.

The problem is if they're not grounded in the objective revelation of God in the Bible they're just people's guesses.

And all you have to do is survey the world's history to see how much trouble those guesses have caused us.

The Bible claims to be the very Word of God. It says *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* II Timothy 3:16-17

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. Psalm 119:89

Turn to Psalm 19 page 489

If you have a Bible from the church here you'll notice each of the Psalms has a heading in bold. That's not part of the psalm itself but it's a statement by the translators of what they see as the theme.

Notice what they put over Psalm 19. This one's right on the money. "The perfect revelation of the Lord."

Our God is a God of revelation. He's a transmitter of truth and this psalm gives us His main ways of communicating with us.

First is through creation. **Read vs 1**

All of creation, and in this case the the visible solar system shouts out God's presents. it's says, "All this didn't just happen. There's a majestic Creator responsible for all that you see."

That goes on down through verse 6 and then there's a change. Now we're given the second way God communicates. **Read verse 7-11**

Law, testimony, statutes, commandments, judgments are all descriptive terms referring to God's truth in the Bible. We need God's truth for life.

Now, some of you are diligent to get into the Bible every day. That's not easy. I have to admit there are days when I have good intentions but somehow I don't get to it.

I'm always challenged by Steve Bond's father. His life axiom for life is "No Bible, no breakfast."

Maybe there's somebody here this morning who hasn't cracked a Bible for a long time. Maybe the only exposure you have to God's truth is what you get here on Sunday morning.

Maybe you're somewhere in between everyday and not at all.

If you're not reading the Bible regularly let me just encourage you to start this way. Start in the New Testament and read a chapter a day. When you get through the New Testament start with the Old.

Make a commitment to begin. If you miss a day or two because you were sick, or busy with work, or whatever, don't quit.

It's like the paperwork you get with a prescription. There's always a section titled "What to do if you miss a dose." The answer? Just start your medicine the next day and keep going.

I. Make Time To Read The Bible Regularly

II. Be Discerning When It Comes To Your Sources Of Information

The path to wisdom is often counter-intuitive. The reason that we need this biblical mindset is because we're so easily misled.

Turn to Romans 1 page 999

Romans 1 gives us the basis for God holding people accountable for recognizing His existence.

Read verses 18-25 (Comment on the human actions of ignoring and willfully rejecting knowledge.)

The reason we have to be discerning about our sources of information is that, like it or not, we are easily deceived. We're self-centered people who can see the world the way we want to see it.

Victor J. Stenger is Professor Emeritus of Physics and Astronomy, University of Hawaii and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, University of Colorado. He's an extremely well educated individual and a brilliant scientist.

He's written a number of books including *God, The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*.

In the chapter entitled *Cosmic Evidence* he tackles the question of "Why is there something rather than nothing?" That's a key question for anyone who says that God doesn't exist.

First he points out the uniqueness of a snowflake. That's an example of complexity coming from simplicity.

A simple water drop freezes and it turns into an intricate, six sided, snowflake. When it's heated up again it melts.

Then he writes this: "This example illustrates that many simple systems of particles are unstable, that is, have limited lifetimes as they undergo spontaneous phase transitions to more complex structures of lower energy. Since 'nothing' is as simple as it gets, we cannot expect it to be very stable. It would likely undergo a spontaneous phase transition to something more complicated, like a universe containing matter."

I'm no scientist nor the son of a scientist, physics and astronomy aren't my strong points, but I have to say that's one of the most bizarre things I've ever read. Simple things are unstable and can become more complex and nothingness is the ultimate in simplicity and therefore unstable so we would expect it to morph into the universe of billions of stars, planets, and galaxies?

The creation advertises, it blazons, it proclaims the existence and power of God but if someone wants to get rid of God they can always come up with a way to suppress the truth.

The next step from saying that matter creates itself is to say that we're just the end of a long evolutionary process that just happened. No God, just time plus chance and here we are today.

And even though in all the fossil record there's not one undisputed example of macroevolution, in other words, one species developing into another, that theory is propagated as absolute fact and anyone who disagrees is just a Bible thumper trying to foster their backward religion on everyone else.

Here's where discernment comes in. Since the path of wisdom is often counterintuitive we can fall for some pretty bizarre stuff. Just look at Scientology.

We need to read the literature and listen to the voices around us with critical thinking. If we're going to have a biblical mindset then we're not going to buy into everything we read and hear, even if the pastor of our church says it.

We're going to check out the information.

I don't want is some newscaster, university professor, pop star, or convincing pastor to form my ultimate understanding about God, eternity, and living this life.

I want a careful understanding of the Bible to determine my worldview and I don't just want to take the parts I like and ignore the rest.

Jesus Christ said some pretty harsh things. He said unless we trust Him for eternal life we're under the wrath of God. That's not exactly an ecumenical statement, is it?

If you are serious about developing a biblical mindset, then you need to be proactive about where you get your information. Sometimes that means disregarding or discarding information from other sources.

If you don't think critically about what you hear and read you will open yourself up for some big time deception. And here's the kicker; you won't even know how confused you are. You'll have no point of reference except what sounds good to you.

I. Make Time To Read The Bible Regularly

II. Be Discerning When It Comes To Your Sources Of Information

III. Guard Your Thought Life

Turn to II Corinthians 10 page 1030

To me it's compelling that the Bible repeatedly uses the metaphor of warfare to describe living in this world. The reason is because the culture, our own bent

toward self-focus, and Satan himself all are conspiring against us to beat us down and cause us to be anything but biblically minded.

Anybody whose tried to earnestly live God's way in this world knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Ephesians 6:12 challenges us with this: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* NIV

The battle to have a biblical mindset isn't with atheists, liberals, or hollywood.

It's spiritual. **Read vs 3-4**

So where's the battle ground? **Read 5**

Have you ever tried to stand up for what God says is right and you become like a bulls eye for attack? You're trying to take a stand in your personal life against some stronghold and you're confronted with arguments that sound unassailable?

"You're taking away people's rights and freedoms. You're trying to impose your morality on others. You're unloving. Your unchristian. You're a bigot. You're trying to turn back the clock on advancements by society."

Those arguments can be hard to answer. Those attacks can be hurtful. But if our belief system is set by the parameters of the Bible we can speak the truth in love.

Ray Steadman writes, "If you read the writings that defend error in our day you will often see some arrogant statements of the ability of man that are far beyond reality. You will read claims that men are smart, that they understand life, that they can handel all their problems."

"These arrogant assumptions of might or right are what Paul is referring to; this strange insanity that makes men think they can handel the world and handel life without any wisdom beyond their own."

That's the attitude but here's the real strong hold: *bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

the toughest struggle any of us are ever going to have is with what goes on in our own mind.

There are the fantasizings we indulge in, the day dreams of power and accomplishment that we feed on, the lusts by which we try to satisfy our inward desires.

Here's how the Message paraphrases this: *We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ.*

That's probably the hardest job of all, to keep our thoughts straight. If we're going to have a biblical mindset where we think like God would have us think we have to guard our minds.

For example, God tells us in the Bible that He's *...faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* I John 1:9

God forgives us because of the cross. Then he tells us to treat others the way He's treated us. *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.* Ephesians 4:32

Sounds good on paper but living it in the real world is a different story. Hey, we're glad that God forgives us. Without His forgiveness we'd be headed for hell. But when somebody hurts us or offends us, forgiveness can be the last thing on our mind. Revenge, anger, indignation, those are possible responses, but forgiveness, no way! That's what's going through our mind.

So we dwell on how we've been offended, We dwell on how we've been hurt. We dwell on our feelings toward that other person.

That's the way we think and respond. And God comes right into the middle of our pity party and rebellious mindset and says "I forgave you your offences against Me. I took care of the huge sin debt that you had. Now forgive that person who's hurt you."

That's when we need to bring those unbiblical thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. That's when we need to guard our minds from the things

God says are an affront to Him.

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IV. Use The Bible As A Filter For Life

Where do we find out what things please God? How do we tell the difference between good and evil in a culture that blurs the lines?

Colossians 2:3 says that in Jesus Christ *are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

1 Corinthians 2:6 An Apostle named Paul wrote: *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature,* referring to the writing of the New Testament.

The command in Colossians 3:16 is to *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*

Wisdom isn't hidden. **Turn to Proverbs 1 page 560 Read 20-21**

The Bible uses the word, "wisdom" over 200 times. It repeatedly says, "Wisdom comes from God."

Psalm 119:130: *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.* 2 Timothy 3:15: *"...The holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation..."*

Wisdom isn't hidden, it's all over the pages of the Bible. The Bible is the divine handbook for living. The owners manuel for life.

There's no way to become wise apart from the Word of God! It doesn't matter how smart someone is, if he or she does not know the Bible, they're wisdom deficient.

You say I'm not interested in what God has to say about life. I don't want to read something that's going to tell me I need to make some changes in my life.

Read 22

You may not like that, but God, who only has your ultimate good in mind, says your simple. The Hebrew word means naive, gullible, immature

There's plenty of scorners who delight in their scorning. That's total arrogance. That's pride. That's thinking you as a puny little created being know better than your all encompassing, all knowing, all powerful Creator.

If you hate divine knowledge, God says your a fool.

But there's hope. There's something we can do: **Read vs 23**

Recognize that God's Word is truth, that God is the only dependable source of wisdom, that even if you don't understand how life will all work out, you can trust Him. And then run everything through the grid of God's Word.

Have a biblical mindset that allows you to interpret life from God's view point.

Think about it. We can't even get the gospel straight with out the filter of God's Word.

If we were just operating on what made sense to us we'd think that getting into God's kingdom was just a matter of doing enough good things to get on God's good side. Before I knew what the Bible said, that's what I thought.

If you're good you go to heaven, if you're bad you go to hell. The problem is, how do you know when you've been good enough?

I was amazed when someone showed me how to use the filter of the Bible to know truth. I saw I was a sinner and that I could never be good enough to equal the value of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

What an insult, that after God gave His Son to be the sacrificial payment for my sins that I should think that I could buy my way in to heaven with something that I could do.

I John 4:9-10 *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His*

only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We need the filter of the Bible to clarify and refine our view of eternity. We need the filter of the Bible to clarify and refine our view of this life right now.

Life can be tough. School, relationships, parenting, work, money: there's all kinds of issues that we all deal with daily. Sometimes it seems like we're on top of things and sometimes it feels like life is on top of us.

God has given us His truth in the Bible so that we would know how to approach each of life's challenges. Are you on the right path when it comes to having a biblical mindset?

It's crucial for seeing life as it really is, and it's crucial for spending eternity with God.