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Thinking Like Jesus

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Recommended Citation

Pollard, C. William, "Thinking Like Jesus" (1996). *C. William Pollard Papers*. 112.
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"THINKING LIKE JESUS"
CHAPEL ADDRESS, ATHI RIVER CHAPEL
DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY
THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 1996

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THE SERVICEMASTER COMPANY
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

On Tuesday, we shared together something of our differences and how we are alike. And as we thought together about a vocation, what we were going to do to earn a living, we found that it wasn't just a question of making money or supporting a family. Our work, our vocation, if you will, has a spiritual dimension. And the answers to the questions of who are we and what do we want pointed us to Jesus Christ, to His example of serving others. And yes, there could be a mission or ministry, if you will, for a Christian in the marketplace.

Today I would like to share with you some thoughts about how we should think as we work, as we relate to the world around us. To think like Jesus. Not just as Christians (with all of the cultural baggage that goes with Jesus), but like Christ.

This is almost the end of March 1996. Some of you are already thinking about graduation and what you will do. Others are thinking about next year and what courses you will take.

In just four short years we will experience another millennium. A thousand years is a long time. Not many people have had the privilege of living through the turn of a century; far fewer, the turn of a millennium. What was the most important city a thousand years ago? Was it Rome? Constantinople? Peking? It certainly was not Moscow, Washington, London, or Nairobi. What are the changes ahead of us as we think of the 21st century? Just look at the changes that have occurred in the world around you in the last five years. It is a time of accelerated change and choice. It is a topsy-turvy world, a world of conflict among cultures, races, and religions. A world where we seem

to be bombarded by variant human behavior. A world of new opportunities to serve and communicate the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In such a world, it will be increasingly important for us as Christians to do things right and to do the right thing. Not to be caught up in what I refer to as the arrogance of ignorance, closed in our own ghetto of Christian culture; but thinking like Christ as we are a beacon and light to the world around us.

You and I have a wonderful privilege. If we know Christ, we have been promised the mind of Christ. Listen for a moment to these passages of scripture in I Corinthians 2, Philippians 4, and John 17. Paul speaking here: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ in Him crucified. As it is written, no eye has seen nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed it to us by His spirit. The spirit searches all things, even deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him. In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, and he himself is not subject to any man's judgment. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Finally, my 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. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice. The God of peace will be with you."

John 17: Now this is eternal life that men may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. To know God, to have the mind of Christ, think on things that are noble and just and right. What does all of this mean to you and to me?

As a leader of a large international business, someone who is active in my church and other Christian, I sometimes get criticized for the way I think. Sometimes, I am told, I think too much like a man or like a businessman or like an American. Rarely have I

ever been criticized for thinking too much like Jesus. How do we think more like Him? Here are some thoughts for your consideration.

1. First, we must think about first things first. What are the priorities in our life? We can't live an active and busy life without being pulled in many different directions: school work, athletics, social activities, family, church, devotional life. How do I prioritize all these things? My doctor tells me I have to do more exercise. I must lose more weight. My business associates and customers tell me I must spend more time with them. My wife tells me I must spend more time with her. My children ask for my time. My church asks for my time. Where do I allocate my time? How do I allocate my thinking? The answer is simple. Just setting priorities. But how do I set these priorities? Does business come before family? Does family come before church? Does school come first? After all, I do have to study for that exam.

The English word "priority" has a very interesting history. It was first used around the 14th century, and it was not until the last 50 to 70 years that it was ever consider in the plural--priorities.

There is a lesson for us to learn in this. There is only one priority. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." Think about first things first. The question is not what I am doing this moment or what I am thinking about in this particular endeavor. The fundamental question is: is Jesus in it? Jesus wasn't concerned about whether corn could be picked on the sabbath or not; whether people could be healed on the sabbath or not. The issue was: was Jesus in it. I can be actively involved in school; I can be actively in my business; I can be actively involved with my family; and Jesus can be right there with me. But if I am committed to something, if I am intensely involved in something either in doing or in thinking and Jesus is not there, it is time to stop. Otherwise, it will affect the way I think like Jesus. [Here describe my story regarding the practice of law.]

2. The second point is learning to think along a problem or an issue, not just at it or about it. This means get involved. Walk a mile in the other person's shoes. It is the whole message of the Incarnation. Why did God become man and dwelt among us? Could He not have declared from heaven above that all who believed would be made righteous and just? Why must His Son come and walk this earth? Simply because He wanted us to know Him, and He wanted to know us. He got involved. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. What a pattern. What an example for us as we think of the world around us, as we think along a problem and not at it. As we think along an issue, we identify with the people involved. We carry His cross and bear His sufferings. We learn something about the vitality and the pains of life.

[Here tell story of Dr. Brand.]

Do you and I feel the pain of involvement? The life of involvement? Of thinking because we are involved, not thinking simply in the abstract.

3. We need to think like a servant, not like a master. As we have already discussed last Tuesday, Jesus gave a wonderful example of giving in washing His disciples' feet. We learned to be stewards of what God has given us, entrusted us with talents and gifts, all to be used for His purpose. As we think as servants, we learn to be givers, not takers. We learn to avoid the sin of envy. Envy is not just the aspiration, ambition, or desire to emulate someone else. It is the desire to take it away. To take the good away from someone. It expresses itself in many way. The penchant for equality is only one example. We are not equal; we are different. Some are very capable artists, musicians, mathematicians, scientists. We are not the same. The banner of equality should never be used to eliminate or cancel the canon of excellence. We have all been put upon, treated unfairly at some point in our lives. We are not simply victims, and we can't raise the banner of victim for restitution or retribution. When we do so, we do so out of a sin of

envy. Jesus taught us to be net givers, not net takers. To think as a giver, not as a receiver. Will the leader please stand up? Not the president, but the role model. Not the highest paid person, but the risk-taker. Not the person with the most perks, but the servant. Not the person who promotes himself, but the promoter of others. Not the administrator, but the initiator. Not the taker but the giver. Not the talker, but the listener. Those who serve want effective leadership. Leadership they can trust. Leadership that will nurture their soul. Remember, as we think like Jesus, we identify with Him as He was in the very nature of God but did not hold onto it but made of himself nothing and took on the nature of a servant.

As we think like Jesus, we think about what is right and avoid thinking about those things that are wrong or evil. To think of whatever is pure, whatever is noble, whatever is lovely, whatever is praiseworthy. Our mind is a great storage place of information. Everything we see and read and experience, we absorb. It becomes a part of us. Yes, we learn to suppress some things that are still there. It affects how we think. We can clutter our mind. We can infect our mind. We can, with the exercise of our will, control the effectiveness of our mind being as the mind of Christ.

Do you see what you think? Or think what you see? [Here give law school experience.] This example has always been a reminder to me of how experiences affect the way I think. How does one maintain a healthy mind?

My encouragement to you is nothing new. Bathe yourself in the word of God. Meditate upon Him, regularly fellowship with other Christians, be involved in your local church, and be active in serving others. Learn to think about people, not just things. Relationships make a difference. Jesus was always working with people. He did not take causes. He took up people. Let me share with you the experiences I have had in the last few months with three people from different parts of the world.

[Here explain experiences with Hassan, Tomita san, and Susan.]

Thinking like Jesus is hard work. Listen to Jesus respond to the crowd around Him as they asked, "What must we do to do the work of God?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One whom He has sent." Our life is a life of faith. It does take effort. Thinking is testing, not just accepting. Doing, not just knowing. Listening, not just talking. Understanding, not just studying.

I have had an exciting time here at Daystar. I have enjoyed meeting and learning from many of you. Think like Jesus. Allow the mind of Christ to work in your mind. And so, as you learn, you will not simply be integrating your faith with your learning. You will be integrating your faith with your doing.

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Rev. 3/19/96