

The Allure of Home

T.S. Weaver investigates ways by which one can employ cultural methods to make the gospel appealing. He concentrates on one piece of culture and expresses a few ideas on how it can be used in the defense of the faith.

Is the pandemic over yet? If we can count the fact that the [U.S. has lifted COVID-19 test requirement for international travel as an indicator](#), I think it's safe to say it is. Regardless, I think we have had enough time to reflect on its impact. The pandemic was an extraordinary blow in 2020. I can remember how it all unfolded like it was yesterday. Everything shut down and my fiancé at the time started working from home (at my apartment mostly because she did not have internet at hers) and I followed suit about a week later, and the infamous toilet paper hoarding began around the nation. Around two years later, the pandemic acts as the backdrop to daily living, and my now-wife is still working from home.

We are rethinking the way we do a lot of things. As one commentator said, "A global health crisis has exposed outdated economic, political and social systems. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution, we have the facility to reimagine our world."^{1} While I am not sure what all he means by that, and how much of it is an exaggeration, I can agree the crisis changed things. This same commentator, Kian Bakhtiari, has predicted seven cultural trends "that will shape the next decade."^{2} I would call them "cultural texts." According to Kevin Vanhoozer, each cultural text "has meaning to the extent that it communicates something about our values, our concerns, and our self-understanding."^{3} Bakhtiari lists his observed cultural texts as:

- a return to traditions
- metaverse jurisdiction
- creator inequality

- divisions in diversity
- ethical investment
- employee activism
- consumerism in crisis

Bakhtiari says,

Uncertainty has created a strong nostalgia for the good old days and a newfound desire to be rooted in tradition. We, humans, tell ourselves stories to make sense of the world. Stories make us feel like we have control. They allow people to find meaning where there is chaos. In moments of crisis, we often choose to escape the present by seeking refuge in the past.[\[4\]](#)

Has he been reading Joshua Chatraw (author of *Telling a Better Story*) or Paul Gould (author of *Cultural Apologetics*)? Chatraw explains the problem with the current cultural narratives that makes even more sense of Bakhtiari:

Something's missing. There is a shallowness that gnaws away at the fleeting happiness these narratives offer. The realities of life have a way of applying such pressure at times even the cynic can't help but peer into the secular crevasses beneath his feet. People can't help but feel the existential angst when the script they've assumed begins to break down.[\[5\]](#)

Like Ursula Le Guin says, "There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories."[\[6\]](#) Chatraw again says, "Despite the cries of those who claim that we as modern enlightened people should come of age and simply logic-chop our way to truth, story still remains our *lingua franca*."[\[7\]](#)

Bakhtiari takes this story/narrative idea in the direction of connecting with the past via tradition. The first example he gives is something I was completely unaware of and do not understand, but I am not surprised. His example is Gen-Z's

fascination with Y2K fashion, 90s sitcoms and even wired headphones. First, let us all just acknowledge Gen-Zs are weird. During my internship at Probe Ministries, one of the things I learned is that Gen-Zs drive mentors nuts because they are so hard to understand and connect with. Second, I did not even know there was such a thing as Y2K fashion. Strangely, even though I do not understand the appeal with these things other than just they are “old,” I have noticed a similar fascination with Mason jars.

All this said, I still do not understand what Bakhtiari means by tradition in this context. He somewhat clarifies by pointing out how globalization attributes to the feeling of losing “local traditions and identity.” His proposed solution for global brands is that

They need to find ways to remain culturally relevant in different markets—with divergent needs and values—while maintaining global consistency. This can only be achieved by working with local markets to produce consumer segments, including different communities and sub-cultures.[\[8\]](#)

Admittedly, I wish he would have gotten more specific, but I often find that when people talk about culture, it is usually in broad strokes and abstract thoughts. I have deciphered what I think he meant by tradition, how it affects culture, and how it is charmed.

Disillusionment

But how did we get to the point that traditions or old stuff have become so attractive to people? For C.S. Lewis there is a “narrative embedded within the deeper structures of the created order, which enables, shapes and moulds the construction and narration of human stories.”[\[9\]](#) I believe there is also a narrative embedded within cultural structures. Again, Bakhtiari believes globalization is the problem. So what story is globalization telling us? Bakhtiari thinks the

story goes something like,

Many countries and communities feel like they have lost their local traditions and identity. The move towards localization is further compounded by nations prioritizing self-reliance. As demonstrated with the rise of populism in advanced economies.[{10}](#)

Should we quit telling stories altogether? We are too enlightened for stories, right? As Chatraw says, “Human potentiality is reached not by giving up on stories, which we can’t really do, but by embracing the true story of the world—the story that elucidates all other stories.”[{11}](#) More on that true story later.

Back to globalism and the desire to return to traditions. What is really happening in culture, and what Bakhtiari does not fully grasp, is that we are in a trance from materialism. There is a collective yearning to connect with the transcendent, a reminiscence for an enchanted universe, something past the usual, that will not leave us. This is what the return to tradition is about. Therefore, Gen Zs are fascinated by Y2k fashion and things of the past.

Therefore, there is an obsession with Mason jars. Moderns assert all is matter, while they show a profound desire to relate to something outside the physical earth. The outcome is a silly and eventually inadequate effort to discover meaning, purpose, and identity in dull obsessions.

What this reveals about how our culture thinks is that we are “sensate,” as philosopher Paul Gould has articulated.[{12}](#) We are obsessed with the material and the physical to the exclusion of the immaterial and spiritual. As C.S Lewis has portrayed, we are concentrating on the “stream of experience.”[{13}](#) Gould has said, “Our whole education system trains us to fix our minds upon the material world.”[{14}](#) We turn out to be obsessed with the now, with lack of thinking of

the past (hence the attempted solution to connect with the past via Y2K fashion). The thinking of our culture is superficial and absent of skill to think truly around issues that really matter . . . just look at social media. Most people are driven to a greater extent by emotion and want than by good sense.

It is one thing to think thoughts, but another to live out actions. I just heard on the news the other night an attorney shared her favorite quote that went something like, "It is one thing to think about your values, it is entirely different to live them. That shows what you believe." So how does our culture live? What do people believe? Looking to Gould's analysis again, he argues we are hedonistic.^{15} We go from one craving to the next, stuffing ourselves with delights that supply an instant carnal gratification, which turn out either to be a passing flame or new addiction. We have a robust wish to improve fairness, defend the weak and persecuted, and fulfill the wants of all persons. This appeal eventually drops short though, as we hold a disillusioned picture of life and have adopted the parallel principles of greed, decadence, and utilitarianism.

Allure

I hypothesize there is something deeper going on with the desire to return to traditions. The reason Gen Zs and others are becoming obsessed with the past is because it awakens a desire for transcendence. 90s sitcoms take us back and ask us to travel in the direction of the target of our yearning. In the mystical autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis recalls three initial events where he roused a yearning for the divine.^{16} His earliest event of deep yearning was "the memory of a memory." While he paused near a currant bush on a summer day there unexpectedly began in him "the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House—when my brother had brought his toy garden into the nursery."^{18} Before in his biography,

Lewis had depicted the toy garden as “the first beauty I ever knew.”[{19}](#) While Lewis remained gazing away at the scenery, a feeling similar to “enormous bliss” swirled in him.[{20}](#) His recollection of that previous recollection stirred inside him a natural yearning for beauty.

Lewis’s next installment of passionate longing happened after he read Beatrix Potter’s *Squirrel Nutkin*. While he read the tale, Lewis was unsettled “with what I can only describe as the Idea of Autumn.”[{21}](#) Once more, his feelings and his yearnings were taken to something lost from his life. A third peek of inspiration arrived out of poetry. While he casually flipped through Longfellow’s *Saga of King Olaf*, he fell upon this:

I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful
Is dead, is dead[{22}](#)

Lewis writes, “I knew nothing about Balder; but I instantly was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote).”[{23}](#) Every one of these events had a little in common: “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy.”[{24}](#) Note Lewis’s yearning for the sublime (what he refers to as Joy) was roused out of a recollection of a toy garden, a tale, and a poem.

These are all images of some sort, whether recalled from the past or evoked from reading. James K.A. Smith says, “Our orientation to the world begins from, and lives off of, the fuel of our bodies, including the ‘images’ of the world that are absorbed by our bodies.”[{25}](#) Frequently it is the “aesthetic currency of the imagination—story, poetry, music, symbols, and images”[{26}](#) that awaken our desire for the transcendent. In a strange way, I think the “return to traditions” examples Bakhtiar uses such as fashion, wired

headphones, and sitcoms represent different memories, symbols, and images that evoke “traditional” feelings for Gen Zs, that are a call to return home—that is the transcendent source.

We Cannot Get Home on Our Own

I think Gen Zs, by returning to traditions, are trying to find their path home by chasing (old) possessions. This method is a stalemate. This self-redemption proposal fails since it does not properly identify the underlying trouble. Our trouble is not a shortage of junk. Our trouble is transgression: humankind is justly guilty to God and merits conviction and accusation. The result of human transgression is death—separation from God. There is no self-redemption, no path home on our own. This is awful news.

Only God, who is wealthy in compassion, has worked out something for man. This is great news: God’s answer to mortal disaster—His salvage strategy. This strategy climaxed in the coming of Jesus, His death on the cross that paid the price of transgression for man, and His resurrection proving He is God. Jesus offers us a path home. Jesus declares, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”[\[27\]](#) C.S. Lewis says, “The thing you long for summons you away from self. . . . Out of our selves, into Christ, we must go.”[\[28\]](#) Gould said, “Paradoxically, if we aim for home and happiness, we won’t find it. We must instead aim at something else—or better, *someone* else—and along the way, we will find shalom.”[\[29\]](#) As Jesus spoke,

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?[\[30\]](#)

You will either receive the joy and home God gives, or

perpetually go hungry. The choice is yours.

Notes

1.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

2.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

3. Kevin Vanhoozer, "What Is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Culture," *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, Michael J. Sleasman (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2007), 26.

<4.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

5. Joshua D. Chatraw, *Telling a Better Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 7.

6. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (London: Women's Press, 1989), 25.

7. Chatraw, 17.

8.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

9. Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 65.

10.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

11. Chatraw, 18.
12. Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 28.
13. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour, 1990), 11.
14. Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 28.
15. Ibid.
16. C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, 1955).
17. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 16.
18. Ibid.
19. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 7.
20. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 16.
21. Ibid.
22. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 17.
23. Ibid.
24. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 17-18.
25. James K.A. Smith, *Imaging the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 17.
26. James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 129.
27. *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), John 14:6.
28. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins,

2001), 154.

29. Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 205.

30. *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Matthew 16:24-26.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chatraw, Joshua D. *Telling a Better Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020.

Gould, Paul. *Cultural Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.

www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2022/02/20/7-cultural-trends-that-will-shape-2022-and-beyond/?sh=52aeb883768f

Lewis, C.S. *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. New York: Harcourt, 1955.

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Lewis, C.S. *The Screwtape Letters*. Westwood, NJ: Barbour, 1990.

McGrath, Alister, E. *The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Ryrie Study Bible*. The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 2011.

Smith, James K.A. *Imaging the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

Smith, James K.A. *You Are What You Love*. Grand Rapids: Brazos,

2016.

Vanhoozer, Kevin. "What Is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Culture." *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, Michael J. Sleasman. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2007.

©2022 Probe Ministries

The Empty Self

Christian philosopher J.P. Moreland claims that Christians are not experiencing spiritual maturity because they are victims of something he calls the Empty-Self Syndrome. This article examines his analysis and offers ways for Christians to avoid its influence.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Christian philosopher Dr. J. P. Moreland is a man with a mission. He claims that Christians are not experiencing spiritual maturity because they are victims of something he calls the "Empty-Self Syndrome."^[1] This lack of maturity leaves believers without the necessary tools to impact their culture for God's kingdom or to experience what the Bible calls the "mind of Christ." According to Moreland, the purpose of life for believers is to bring honor to God. This involves finding one's vocation and pursuing it for the good of both believers and non-believers, while in the process, being changed into a more Christ-like person. Doing this well involves developing intellectual and moral virtues over long periods of time and delaying the constant desire for immediate gratification.

Unfortunately, our culture teaches an entirely different set of virtues. It emphasizes a self-centered, consumption-oriented lifestyle, which works directly against possessing a mature Christian mind. It also places an unhealthy emphasis on living within the moment, rather than committing to long-term projects of personal discipline and learning.

To better understand his argument it helps to explain the concept of necessary and sufficient causes. A necessary cause for Christian maturity is salvation. For without the new birth, a person is still spiritually dead and devoid of the benefits of the indwelling Holy Spirit. However, although forgiveness of sin is necessary for Christian maturity, it is not sufficient. We cooperate with the Spirit to reach maturity by disciplining our will and intellect in the virtues outlined in the New Testament.

Writing to Titus, the apostle Paul said that a leader in the church should be “self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”[\[2\]](#) This admonition assumes a number of complex skills and a life of dedication to learning and teaching. Our leaders must be knowledgeable of the Scriptures, but they must also be able to defend the Christian worldview in the marketplace of ideas common to our culture. The ability to give a response to those opposed to Christianity, and to do so with gentleness and respect, as Peter teaches (1 Peter 3:15), requires a confidence that comes with a life of devotion and study. Herbert Schlossberg writes:

In their uncompromising determination to proclaim truth, Christians must avoid the intellectual flabbiness of the larger society. They must rally against the prevailing distrust of reason and the exaltation of the irrational. Emotional self-indulgence and irrationalities have always been the enemies of the gospel, and the apostles warned their followers against them.[\[3\]](#)

In this article we will consider Moreland's description of the empty-self syndrome and offer ways for Christians to avoid its influence.

Seven Traits of the Empty-Self

We are discussing a set of hindrances to Christian maturity called the "Empty-Self Syndrome." J.P. Moreland, in his book *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, lists seven traits common to people who suffer from this self-inflicted malady. To some, it might appear that Moreland is describing a typical teenager and, in a sense, the analogy fits. The *empty-self* is best summarized by a lack of growth, both intellectually and spiritually, resulting in perpetual Christian adolescence.

Inordinate Individualism

The first trait of the empty-self is *inordinate individualism*. Those afflicted rarely define themselves as part of a community, or see their lives in the context of a larger group. This sense of rugged individualism is part of the American tradition and has been magnified with the increased mobility of the last century. People rarely feel a strong attachment or commitment even to family members. The empty-self derives life goals and values from within their own set of personal needs and perceptions, allowing self-centeredness to reign supreme. Rarely does the empty-self seek the good of a broader community, such as the church, when deciding on a course of action.

Infantilism

Many observers of American culture note that adolescent personality traits are staying with young people well into what used to be considered adulthood. Stretching out a four-year college degree to five or six years and delaying marriage into the thirties are signs that commitment and hard work are not highly valued. Some go even further, seeing an *infantile*

demand for pleasure pervading all of our culture. The result is that boredom becomes the greatest evil. We are literally entertaining ourselves to death with too much food, too little exercise, and little to live for beyond personal pleasure.

Narcissism

The empty-self is also *highly narcissistic*. Narcissism is a keenly developed sense of self-infatuation; as a result, personal fulfillment becomes the ultimate goal of life. It also can result in the manipulation of relationships in order to feed this sense. In its most dangerous form, one's relationship with God can be shaped by this need. God is dethroned in order to fit the individual's quest for self-actualization. This condition leaves people with the inability to make long-standing commitments and leads to superficiality and aloofness. Education and church participation are evaluated on the basis of personal fulfillment. They are not viewed as opportunities to use one's gifts for the good of others.

All of us are guilty of these attitudes occasionally. Christian growth is the process of peeling away layers of self-centered desires. The situation becomes serious when both the culture and the church affirm a self-centered orientation, rather than a God-centered one.

According to Moreland, the couch potato is the poster child for the empty-self. Rather than equipping oneself with the tools necessary to impact the culture for Christ and His kingdom, many people choose to live vicariously through the lives and actions of others. Moreland writes, " . . . the pastor studies the Bible for us, the news media does our political thinking for us, and we let our favorite sports team exercise, struggle, and win for us." [\[4\]](#)

Passivity

The words we use to describe our free time support this notion

of *passivity*. What was once referred to as a holiday or originally a holy day has become a vacation; what used to be a special time of proactive celebration has become a time for vacating. The goal seems to remain in a passive state while someone else is paid to amuse you.

One of the most powerful factors contributing to this passivity is the television. Watching TV encourages a passive stance towards life. Its very popularity is built upon the vicarious experiences it offers, from sports teams to soap operas. It is hard to imagine how a person who watches an average amount of TV, which is twenty five hours a week for elementary students, could have enough time left over to invest in the reading and study required to become a mature believer and defender of the faith. Our celebrity-centered culture encourages us to focus on the lives of a popular few rather than live our own lives to the fullest for God.

Sensate Culture

It follows naturally that the empty-self syndrome encourages the belief that the physical, sense-perceptible world is all that there is. Although Christians, by definition, should be immune from this attitude, they often act as if it were true. The resulting *sensate* culture loses interest in arguments for transcendent truth or in ideas like the soul, and the consequence is a closing of the mind, as described by Allen Bloom in his best-selling book on university life in the late 1980s.[\[5\]](#) Students and the general public lose hope in the possibility that truth can be found in books, so they stop reading; or at least stop reading serious books about worldview issues. Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sarokin wrote that once a sensate culture takes over, a society has already begun to disintegrate due to the lack of intellectual resources necessary to maintain a viable community.[\[6\]](#)

Paul reminds us of the danger of the empty-self state of mind when he writes, "Their destiny is destruction, their god is

their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .”{7}

No Interior Life

Moreland claims that in the last few decades people have become far more concerned about external factors such as the possession of consumer goods, celebrity status, image, and power rather than the development of what he calls an *interior life*. It wasn’t long ago that people were measured by the internal traits of virtue and morality, and it was the person who exhibited character and acted honorably who was held in high esteem. This kind of life was built upon contemplation of what might be called the “good life.” After long deliberation, an individual then disciplined himself in those virtues most valued. Peter describes such a process for believers when he tells us to “add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”{8} He adds that “if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”{9} The Christian life begins with faith, but grows by feeding the interior life in a disciplined manner.

Busy-ness

Almost everyone experiences the last trait of the empty-self to some degree: the hurried, *overly busy life*. Although most of us wouldn’t think of it this way, busy-ness can actually be a form of idolatry. Anything that stands between a person and their relationship with God becomes an idol. As Richard Keyes puts it:

Idolatry may not involve explicit denials of God’s existence

or character. It may well come in the form of an over-attachment to something that is, in itself, perfectly good. The crucial warning is this: As soon as our loyalty to anything leads us to disobey God, we are in danger of making it an idol.{10}

Many pack their lives with endless activities in order to block out the emotional emptiness and spiritual hunger that fills their souls. Nothing but God Himself can meet that need. David cried out to God saying, "Do not cast me from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." {11} The empty-self attempts to replace God with things God has created, a life that's too busy for God is missing out on life itself.

The empty-self is highly individualistic, infantile, narcissistic, passive, sensate, without an interior life, and too busy.

Curing the Empty-Self Syndrome

Is there a vaccine for the Empty-Self Syndrome? In his book *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, J. P. Moreland lists six steps for avoiding the empty-self. Like all maladies, we must first admit that there is a problem. Christians need to realize that faith and reason are not diametrically opposed to one another and that intellectual cultivation honors God. We need to begin talking about the role of the intellect and the value of a disciplined Christian mind. The results of not doing this will be a church with shallow theological understanding, little evangelistic confidence, and the inability to challenge the ideas that are dominant in the culture at-large. Christians will continue to be obsessed with self-help books that merely soothe, comfort, and entertain the reader.

Second, we need to choose to be different. We must be

different from the typical church attendee who rarely reads or considers the questions and challenges of unbelievers, and different from the self-centered general culture that seeks knowledge only for power or financial gain.

Third, we might also need to change our routines. Believers would benefit by turning off the TV and instead participating in both physical exercise and quiet reflection. We need to get out of our passive ruts and be more proactive about growing spiritually and intellectually.

Fourth, we need to develop patience and endurance. The intellectual life takes time and diligence. It is a long-term, actually life-long, project and for some of us just sitting down for fifteen minutes might be difficult at first. Our newly developed patience is also needed for the fifth goal, that of developing a good vocabulary. As is true of any area of study, both theology and philosophy have their own languages and it takes time and effort to become conversant in them.

Finally, the last step is to establish intellectual goals. This is often best accomplished with the aid of a study partner or group. Setting out on a course of study and sharing what you find with someone else can be exhilarating. Although your study might begin in theology, it should eventually touch on a broad spectrum of ideas. Even reading recognized critics of Christianity is of value if you take the time to develop a response to their criticisms.

We should also teach our children that their studies are an important way to honor God. We are not advocating the development of the mind merely to collect information or to advance one's career. Our goal is to accomplish what Paul demands in 2 Corinthians 10:5. It is to be able to demolish any obstacle, or any pretension to the emancipating knowledge of God. The picture Paul is painting is that of a military operation in enemy territory.[\[12\]](#) It's time to start training!

Notes

1. J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), see chapter four for this discussion.
2. Titus 1:8-9
3. Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols For Destruction* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990), 322.
4. J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 90.
5. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), see part one on the student.
6. Ibid., 91.
7. Philippians 3:19-20
8. 2 Peter 1:3-7
9. 2 Peter 1:8
10. Os Guinness & John Seel, *No God But God* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 33.
11. Psalm 51:11-12
12. Murry J. Harris, *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 380.