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# Being a "Thinking Christian"

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At the end of each column I write for the Daily Press, it says I have a blog called Thinking Christian. You might suppose (and you would be right) that since I chose that name for it, I think it's possible to be a thinking Christian, and that there is some value in being that way.

Not everyone would agree. Occasionally on the blog I get comments like, "Thinking Christian?! What a contradiction in terms!" Oddly, no one who has said that has explained why they would say that.

That's not to say that every non-believer or skeptic visiting there is so thoughtless. Like many other places on the Internet — not to mention the wider world of human interaction, from coffee shops to college classrooms — there's almost always some kind of lively discussion going on there.

Not surprisingly, what the atheists and skeptics usually say is that the Christian faith is not true, and they offer their reasons for saying so. Some even say that there's something inherently wrong — arrogant or illegitimate — with claiming that one's beliefs about religion are actually the truth. They don't seem to recognize that this itself is a belief concerning religion, which they want us to accept as actually true.

But being the truth is what Christianity has historically claimed for itself: that **Jesus Christ** really did live a perfect life of following the Father, that he really did die for our sins, and that he really did rise bodily from the grave; and that the Bible speaks truth in all that it affirms. Obviously these are contentious claims; obviously not all agree.

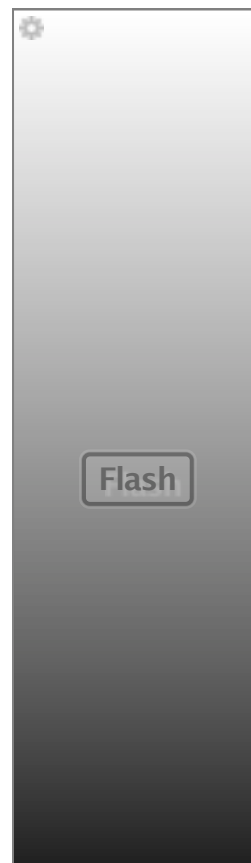
When unbelievers explain why they don't believe, we believers have a responsibility (1 Peter 3:15) to treat them with respect, and to have an answer ready. I have found through experience that answers for objections to Christianity do exist, if we take the time to find them. That is one definite situation where thinking is important for Christians.

But in reality it's only a small piece of it. Even if there were never any doubts about the truth of the Christian faith, still there is so much to explore in it, and we could never come to the end of it all. What is God really like? How can we know him more intimately? What does it mean to follow Christ? How do we deal with the difficulties of life? What decisions should we make when it isn't obvious?

The first Great Commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Christian worship and discipleship involves the mind as much as the heart and soul.

What, then, does it take actually to be a "thinking Christian"? Does it require a seminary degree? Does it mean always knowing the answer, or being an expert on the faith? If these are the requirements, I certainly don't meet them, and few of us could. Most of us don't have the calling, the gifting, or the educational opportunities to attain to that.

Rather it's like everything else in the Christian life: God calls us to start from where we are, and to press forward from there. We're not all equally gifted in matters of the heart, either. We don't all have the same capacity, for example, to care for the disabled or disadvantaged. But mercy and compassion are expressions of God's heart,



which he urges us and by his spirit equips us to grow in, even if they are not our strengths. He wants us to use the heart we have, and to let him enlarge it.



That's what being a thinking Christian is like. It's using the minds we have, stretching them, studying, being prepared to give an answer when asked: letting God enlarge us in that way, too, as we love him with all our minds.

Tom Gilson is the director of strategic processes for Campus Crusade for Christ. He can be contacted through his blog at [www.thinkingchristian.net](http://www.thinkingchristian.net).

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