



Dr. Robert A. Cook

# Great Thoughts That Will Change Your Life

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# **“Great Thoughts That Will change Your Mind”**

By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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What is the greatest thought you have ever had? If you have never asked yourself that question, try it. You may be amazed and challenged and inspired.

Obviously, our “great thoughts,” if they could all be set down, would show how different we are one from another. But from the long list that would emerge, at least seven tremendous concepts would stand out. Let’s look at them.

## **Form Versus Reality**

*There is a vast difference between form and reality.* Our Lord Jesus Christ clearly indicates that it is possible for one to be ecclesiastically correct-to preach, to work miracles, to be successfully busy in the name of the Lord - and still be lost. These are His words, not mine:

*“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven .... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you ... ” (Matt. 7:21-23)*

The apostle Paul stresses the same truth in II Timothy 3: 5 where he speaks of those who have a “form of godliness” but who lack the power thereof.

This difference between form and reality is no idle subject. Nor is it just a beginning point for a sermon that is to go on. It is as important to each of us as a jugular vein. The Bible says that if you have the Son of God, you have life - that is reality. And if you do not have the Son as your Savior, your Teacher, your Guide, everything else is meaningless form. It is dreadfully possible to be sitting in church, looking alive, but actually to be a spiritual corpse.

I ask you: Do you really *know* Him? Is He your Lord? Does He bless you and walk with you and guide you? Do you have the assurance from the Holy Spirit’s presence within that you are God’s child? This is what counts. Not dead orthodoxy but living truth. Not busy work but the miracle of the power of God working in you.

One of the things I have to continually impress upon our young people at The King’s College is that to be a genuine Christian means to let the Lord Jesus into the total life , even non - religious affairs. The Lord Jesus has to be real when the clothesline breaks ... when you have a blowout on the way to a wedding ... when you forget to add the baking powder to the cake and it turns out to be a lovely flop just when Mrs. Gadabout is coming for tea - and she will tell the whole

neighborhood what a poor cook you are.

Jesus Christ has to be real when there is too much month left over at the end of the money... when you think you have the juicy contract landed and then the phone rings and you hear, "Sorry, we won't be able to go through with it" - and you have already bought the raw material for the job.

The Lord Jesus Christ has to be real when you become the butt of somebody's unwarranted blame. You didn't deserve it and there is no way to answer it. You seethe and burn inwardly when some one has lied about you or criticized you unjustly. Christ has to be real where you live and when and where you hurt. And bless God, if He is real there, nothing else matters. Hallelujah! This is a great thought. It is foundational. Everything else of value stems from it.

Now look at a second "great thought."

## **Redirected Focus**

It is possible to change the focus of your life from yourself to others. Several years ago I was present at a Youth for Christ Congress in Japan. There were delegates from all over the world, with quite a few from North America. During the Congress, many of our North American friends gave a word of testimony by interpretation. I listened to the Japanese translation of these messages, and since I already knew the English, I paid attention to the Japanese equivalent to see if I could make out the foreign words. There was one expression that kept being repeated. It intrigued me so much that I finally went to the interpreter and asked what this word was. I found it was the personal pronoun "I". These dear people were talking more about themselves than anything else! However, as the week wore on, and God got through to some folks, we heard less and less of the personal pronoun and more and more of words pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are all self-centered. (Whose face do you look for in a group picture?) All of us are like the disciples to whom Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields." He said that to people who were interested in lunch. It was as though they had canvassed all the delicatessens and had finally found one that sold delicious corned beef and all the rest of those Kosher delicacies. They came back and spread out the lunch and said, "Master, eat."

He told them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." They immediately resented His words and His attitude and said in effect, "Isn't that a nerve! Here we were walking our feet to the bone, trying to find some one whose store was open at noon when every respectable person is

taking his siesta. We finally found food and brought it here and now He says He isn't hungry!"  
And they were put out about it.

In our way of speaking the Lord replied, "Fellas, you've got your eyes on the wrong thing. You're looking for groceries instead of looking for souls. Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest."

At just that moment a sizeable group of men came out from the town because the Samaritan woman (formerly a hussy) had been there, being a missionary. It was she who got this congregation together.

And Jesus said to the disciples. "There's the harvest, fellas. Get your eyes on people, not on provender. Get your eyes on souls, not symptoms. Get your eyes on others' needs, not on your own little troubles."

You say, "Now wait a minute. You used the word 'little.'" Sure, it's scriptural. "*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (II Cor. 4:17).

The "great thought" in all this is that you can, by the grace of God, change the focus of your life, and He will bless you and bless others when you do this.

## **Activists for Christ**

It is possible to become a Christian activist. The radicals have stolen that word and smeared it. But it is a good word: activist. It means to do something wholesome and constructive about a situation. Last week somebody sent me a beautiful motto. It says, "DO something: Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way." It is surprising what a small amount of doing can solve many problems.

There is always something you can do in any situation. Let me illustrate that point. In Judges 7:21 we find Gideon with 300 people in his army. Thirty thousand men had been sent home: twenty thousand were scared and the other ten thousand were careless. All that were left were 300 men. They had the equivalent of an EverReady flashlight, a cornet and a water pitcher. The Bible says, "*They stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled*" - scared to death. "*Every man*" - there's no substitute for personal responsibility. Each of us has his separate job to perform. We can perform it best if we have learned the secret of trusting God actively throughout the day.

Greet your Lord in the morning. Pray before you have breakfast. Pray before you tackle your first job of the day, whether in the home, the office, the schoolroom or wherever. Pray before you open a letter-it might be a check for \$5,000 or a bill for that much. Those of us on the radio know it might be a scathing anonymous letter signed "A dear friend in Christ."

Yes, do something: pray. In other words, become a Christian activist by praying first and then following through on what the Lord says to you. If you will do this, God, through the Holy Spirit, will enable you to do something glorious this year. That is a great thought.

## **The Price of Leadership**

Another great thought is that leadership is possible, and that it is costly. Paul said to Timothy, *"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (II Tim. 2:2). *"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"* (I Cor. 4:2). Are you faithful? If you are always late for Sunday School or not there at all, you are saying to those who are watching you that it isn't all that important. If as a teacher you are unprepared, if you drone through the lesson, you are saying that the Word of God doesn't mean much to you. Are you prompt or chronically late? Do you give up when the going is hard and the responsibility galling? Faithfulness is the price of leadership. It is a great thought that God, through the Holy Spirit, can make you faithful (if you want Him to): *"The fruit of the Spirit is ... faith (faithfulness)"* (Gal. 5 :22).

## **The Contemporary and the Worldly**

There is a difference between contemporaneity and worldliness. I tell our young people at The King's College that the Lord wants us to be sharp. I don't think there is any good purpose served by looking either freakish or old-fashioned. Some people think you have to be weird to be with it.

When we say "world" we don't mean the world of trees and flower and mountains and lakes that God made beautiful. We are talking about the world system that bypasses God - the Garden of Eden philosophy brought up to date. "Cheat a little," it says; "it's good for you." .. "Nice guys finish last, don't mind who it is that you climb over, or how - just get to the top." .... "Give yourself a break; you only live once and are a long time dead, so live it up-have a blast." .. "Don't get too religious; you will lose friends, careers and money." ... "Prayer is all right, but don't be radical about it." ... "Be your own guy and run your own life."

That's worldliness. It cannot be defined by means of any list of "don'ts" that we ordinarily associate with our fundamentalism.

Mind you, I am a fundamentalist - I use the word benignly. I hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I believe the whole Word of God and I'm going to continue to stand on it and preach it. But by the same token, I know that worldliness has gotten into the heart of many a person whose doctrine is impeccable and whose conduct cannot be criticized. It can get into my heart - or yours. It is the love of money or ease or position or anyone of a score of other things that take over the rulership of the life. And remember:

*"All that is in the world (the world system), the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father. . . And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2: 16, 17). "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" Gas. 4:4).* Those are strong words. There is no grey there. It is clear black and white. What a great-and sobering thought it is that there is a difference between the contemporary and the worldly.

## **Informality and Carelessness**

There is a difference between informality and carelessness. In this day we don't stand on ceremony as we used to, and I am glad. But there is a thin line between informality and Christian courtesy. There is such a thing as good taste and the watchful observance of the rights of others. Everybody you meet hurts somewhere . You must be careful not to make him hurt any more through your carelessness. If you can, find where the person is hurting and apply a little love and compassion.

Paul says, *"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15, 16)*

This principle of knowing the difference between informality and carelessness applies in interpersonal relationships. Brashness can turn a person off; friendliness can win him.

We need to guard against carelessness in dress -we ought to look well for Christ's sake; carelessness in speech - spice in the vocabulary often turns out to be minced oaths; carelessness in business relationships - we need to do precisely what we promised. Especially must we be watchful of how we treat each other at home.

John G. Paton, the great missionary to the New Hebrides, tells in his autobiography of his early years in Scotland. The whole family lived in a cottage made up of a large kitchen workshop, a small closet-like room, and a bedroom that accommodated the entire family. Paton recalls that his father would do his work in the workshop and then, three times a day after meals, he would go into the closet between the two main rooms. The family knew that when that door was

closed, the father was kneeling down praying for them. There were eleven children born of the union of James and Janet Paton, and at the judgment everyone of them will stand at the mention of their parents' name and call them blessed.

That's what I'm talking about. It wasn't a formal household. You can't be very formal with eleven people in two rooms! But it was a God-fearing, God-honoring, prayer-filled home. Don't criticize your wife or your husband in public, not even under the guise of joking. Don't be bombastic in your treatment of the waiter or waitress in a restaurant. Don't drive your automobile in high-handed disregard of the law. Remember that as a Christian you are always on duty. There is never a time when you can say it doesn't matter.

## The Lordship of Christ

**There is no substitute for the lordship of Jesus Christ.** Your whole lifestyle will be changed if you make Him Lord. Anything less than His complete control leads only to hypocrisy. The real reason, says Paul, behind the Calvary sacrifice was to make us believers totally Christ's own. Look at Romans 14:7-9: *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."*

**He must be Lord of the mind.** II Corinthians 10:5: *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

**He must be Lord of the body.** Romans 12: 1, 2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren. . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind."* The body always reflects the order of the mind.

**He must be Lord of every activity.** Colossians 3: 17, 23: *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ... And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily."* (That's our word "psyched up"!)

At our college we recently lost a professor by drowning. He was caught in a sudden squall as he was sailing the Hudson River. At our memorial service, the president of the choir gave a word of tribute, along with many others. He said, "The thing I remember about Dr. Ariton is that he was completely dedicated to Jesus Christ as Lord. To him the Christian life was really very simple: either you obey the Lord or you don't."



To make Him Lord means to turn over to Him every contested territory. It means to welcome Him into the totality of your life. The amazing thing is that when you thus invite Him, He will come in. *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,” He says. “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).* That is a great thought!

We have considered seven great thoughts. Add your own to the list. Ponder them well. Let the Holy Spirit use them, and the Word of God from which they are drawn, to change your life.

