

Finding Light in the Darkness

Session 10: Thinking Skills Sifting Out the Bad Information

We often approach the Bible like an encyclopedia, dictionary, or do-it-yourself book. Those books provide answers and solve problems. That's what some people want from the Bible—questions answered and problems solved.

While the Bible does include the solution to our separation from God and it does answer many questions, its major goal is to change us. Encyclopedias, dictionaries, or do-it-yourself books are not designed to fundamentally change the readers.

Too often, we look to the Bible to change our circumstances. God desires the Bible to change us!

Have you noticed how Jesus often did not give direct answers to questions? The Bible is written to teach us how to think more than it is what to think.

God's goal is to change the way we think so that we are changed. The things we do will naturally change, followed by changes in our circumstances. We often want to change our circumstances without being changed ourselves. We got it backwards.

Romans 12:1-2 — And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (NLT)

How Would You Answer?

- **Should I pay my tithes or my bills?**
- **If I give tithes, will God prosper me so I can pay my bills?**

Establishing a Thought Process Baseline

Write a very short summary of the major point you would make in answering the following questions.

Note: Don't spend a lot of time on this. Just put down some of your first thoughts. No one else will look at the answers. It will be used for future comparison by you.

[Note: These questions are actual questions. They provide a good example for application of the various skills discussed in this session. While the discussion may challenge your thinking on this issue, the goal is to learn thinking skills.]

The Information Age

- **Information *quantity* rapidly increasing**
- **Information *quality* rapidly decreasing**

- **Cultural tastes affect information**
- **Remember: received information has been selected, filtered, slanted, changed, and sometimes fabricated**
- **What left out is often more important than what is included**

Good thinking skills are **more important now than ever before**. The amount of readily available information is rapidly increasing. Unfortunately, the quality of much of the information is decreasing. Since there are **now so many creators of information**, it is important to understand that many of them are not careful to validate their facts and conclusions. Also, some have **ulterior motives**. The responsibility now rests with us to be sure that the information we are accepting and passing on is valid.

As a commodity item, information is also affected by the tastes and desires of its consumers. This is evident in our **news coverage, television programming**, and other media presentations. Today's cultural priorities in America include **selfishness and entertainment**. Therefore, the distributed information is often **about "me" and it's fun**. We must always be aware that the information we receive has been selected, filtered, slanted, changed, and sometimes fabricated. What is left out is often more important than what is included. **To ignore thinking skill development is an invitation for deception and control.**

Examples: Urban legends, hoaxes, email chain letters, etc.

Email Hoaxes

In just 4 days from today all U. S. cell phone numbers will be released to telemarketing companies and you will begin to receive sales calls. You will be charged for these calls! Even if you do not answer, the telemarketer will end up in your voice mail and you will be charged for all of the minutes the incoming (usually recorded) message takes to complete. You will then also be charged when you call your voice mail to retrieve your messages.

This is an actual email hoax that has been frequently circulated. It is a hoax!

See www.snopes.com/politics/business/cell411.asp for more information on this particular hoax. You can check www.snopes.com and other places for information about possible hoaxes and urban legends. Note: We do not endorse all the snopes.com material. They are not necessarily always accurate or unbiased. so use with discretion.

Be careful what emails you forward. If you choose to forward an email, delete all previous email addresses from the body and use the BCC (blind carbon copy) feature to hide the email addresses of those you send it to. That way, no one can harvest and sell the emails.

Warning: Avoid Deception!

- **And now beware! ... false teachers, like vicious wolves will come in among you after I leave.... Even some of you will distort the truth.... Watch out!
— Acts 20:28-31 (NLT)**

- ... but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Keep away from every kind of evil.
— 1 Thes. 5:21-22

Most important part is to know the truth really well! But we are also warned to watch out for deception. Following are some skills that we can develop to help us actively expose and counter lies.

Thinking Skills

- Test all things; hold fast what is good. — 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- Think rather than just react
- Thinking skills help identify core issues when...
 - ♦ Studying the Bible
 - ♦ Helping people
 - ♦ Troubleshooting problems
- Thinking skills can be learned and improved

Good thinkers develop habits of analysis, taking the time to think about claims and issues rather than just reacting to them. We must learn to consistently examine information carefully to insure that we accurately discern the good so that we can hold on to it while discarding lies.

Like any other skills, thinking skills can be learned and improved. When understood and practiced regularly, thinking techniques help virtually anyone improve their ability to identify the core issues in any question or problem, eliminate extraneous issues, then make an intelligent decision. These skills will also help you in your Bible studies to insure that you use valid techniques for the conclusion that you reach and live by.

When studying, researching, and answering questions (or helping others with questions or problems), it is very important that you **develop thinking skills that efficiently get to the core issues**. You need to be able to identify and side step any issues that hide or lead away from the core issues. You also need to take time to think and ponder issues. This lesson covers some thinking techniques and identifies some typical problems to avoid. This is not an exhaustive study!

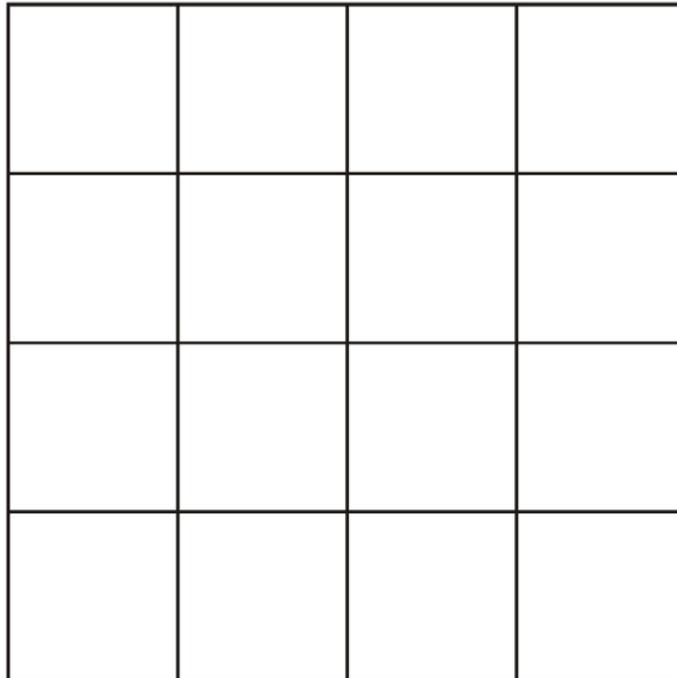
Connect the Dots

Draw a box of nine dots as shown below. Connect all the dots with only four straight lines. The pencil must not leave the paper until all dots are connected. Solution is given at the end of the notes.



How Many Squares?

How many squares are there in the box below? The solution is given at the end of the notes.



Think Outside the Box

- **Think differently**
- **Don't stop at first possible answer**
- **Step back, change perspective**
- **Don't limit yourself to the readily obvious**
- **Watch out for assumptions**

Thinking outside the box simply means to think about problems and issues differently than other people or **differently than you normally do**.

Don't stop with the first answer to a question, the first analysis of a situation, or the first solution to a problem. Ask if there are other possible ways of seeing the problem or other possible solutions.

Step back, look at it from different angles.

Don't limit yourself. Watch out for comfortable or regular patterns or approaches. Take a little time to consider the issue rather than just fire off the first idea that comes along.

Assumptions will “fill in the gaps”, sometimes incorrectly, causing you to miss important information.

Peace Outside the Box

- **Example: What does the Bible say about peace?**
 - ♦ **Many people focus on spiritual or inner peace. There is also...**
 - ♦ **Social Peace**
 - ♦ **Quietness, stillness**
 - ♦ **Calm (weather, water)**
 - ♦ **Reconciliation**
- **Don't limit yourself to the readily obvious or first thing that comes along**

When researching peace in the Bible, people often focus only on spiritual or inner peace. However, the Bible also has much to say about social peace. There are many types of peace: freedom from strife; freedom from war; public quiet, order & security; quietness; calm (weather, water); stillness; reconciliation (to make peace with someone); etc.

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you! — Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. — Romans 14:19 (NKJV)

When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. — Proverbs 16:7 (NKJV)

Sand Bags. Sand bags are sometimes filled with sand and used to line rivers and streets that are in danger of flooding. The Japanese were having trouble locating enough sand to fill the bags. How do you think they solved this problem?

They let go of the assumption that only sand can fill a sand bag and devised a bag that could be filled with water. The water bags worked just as effectively as the sand bags, there was plenty of cheap fill material, and when empty, the bags stored easily. (Illustration from: *Eating Problems for Breakfast*, pg 53.)

Think Ahead

- **Like a fire drill**
- **Anticipate possible issues and consequences before they occur**
- **Determine ahead the best response**
- **Consider long-term or broad-reaching consequences of actions and choices**
- **Make any adjustments that are prudent**

Consider possible issues and situations ahead of time. Determine ahead how you should respond and follow through when it occurs. Much like a fire drill where you think about and practice proper responses to an emergency so you know what to do if a real emergency occurs.

Often, in the heat of the moment, it is hard to calmly think through the various issues and consequences. Take time to **identify possible future situations** and how you can **anticipate and prepare** for them.

Example: A company I worked for taught that all accidents are preventable—think ahead. Soon after, when tightening a bolt with a wrench, I paused a moment to consider what would happen if the wrench slipped. Determined that it would smash my finger, so repositioned my hand. Wrench did slip, but there was no injury.

Anticipate consequences of choices and actions. Ask yourself what long-term or broad reaching effects will result if the choices or actions under consideration are implemented. Realize that many effects may not be readily obvious.

Also like a turn or fork in the road. If come upon one unexpectedly, must either stop and look at a map (or call someone), or blindly choose one and hope you don't end up lost. When you prepare ahead, you know exactly what to do when you come to the turn or fork in the road.

Don't Stop Short

- **Don't jump to conclusions**
- **Don't stop at the first conclusion**
- **Follow a scenario out to its possible end result**

Don't jump to conclusions. When addressing a problem or a question, don't stop at the first answer that pops up. Write down the various possible answers that come to mind, and continue collecting data until you have enough to make a reasonable decision.

Most people do not follow lines of reasoning out to their probable end result.

Many people stop as soon as they arrive at the conclusion they want.

Crossing the Reed Sea

- **Some claim that the Israelites crossed the Reed Sea, not the Red Sea**
- **The Reed Sea was only ankle deep, so this was not really a miracle**
- **You can spend all day in fruitless arguing with these “experts”**
- **Or, simple point out that if that’s true, God drowned the Egyptian army in ankle deep water!**

Example: Israelites crossed the Reed Sea, not the Red Sea. The Reed Sea was only ankle deep where they crossed, so it was not a miracle. However, if that is true, then God drowned the Egyptian army in ankle-deep water. That may be an even greater miracle that the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. (God said they crossed on dry land and the water was a wall on either side. If it was ankle deep, after the first few hundred people, sheep, and wagons crossed on the soggy soil, it would have become a mud hole that would have been very difficult to cross.)

These people stopped at a conclusion that seemed to be what they wanted – to discredit a miracle.

Rabbit Trails

- **Weave back & forth over themselves to confuse pursuing animals**
- **Applies when jumping from subject to subject (or task to task), never lingering long enough to resolve anything**
- **Scatters attention and causes focus to be lost — rabbit escapes**
- **Your own mind can tend to run rabbit trails if don’t keep it focused**

Rabbit trails are paths that rabbits take that weave back and forth over themselves in an effort to confuse a pursuing dog. With people, this most often is evidenced by someone who refuses to stay focused on the topic or discussion at hand. They try to talk about almost everything they can think of and **nothing gets resolved**.

Rabbit trails help the rabbit escape.

Rabbit trails can be interesting and exciting, but typically they **don’t really go anywhere**. You must learn to identify the core issue and **relentlessly drag the focus** of the discussion or research back when it begins wandering off. You must have a **clear idea of where you are heading**.

Even **your own mind** can tend to run rabbit trails instead of focusing on the problem at hand. **Stay on target!** Firmly and repeatedly bring the discussion or research back on track.

Whose Wife Will She Be?

- **Then Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question: “Teacher, Moses gave us a law that if a man dies, leaving a wife without children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother’s name. Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children. So the second brother married the widow, but he**

also died without children. Then the third brother married her. This continued with all seven of them, and still there were no children. Last of all, the woman also died. So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her.” — Mark 12:18-23

Think about this for a minute. Temporarily forgetting Jesus’ answer in the Bible, how would you answer this question? What is the main point?

We tend to answer the question the way it is asked. However, that is often not the real issue.

Jesus’ Answer

- **Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God. For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. “But now, as to whether the dead will be raised—haven’t you ever read about this in the writings of Moses, in the story of the burning bush? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ So he is the God of the living, not the dead. You have made a serious error.” — Mark 12:24-27**

Notice how Jesus **identified the real issue** (resurrection) and **brought that issue into focus**.

Handling Rabbit Trails

- **Maintain a clear focus on your goal**
- **Relentlessly bring the discussion back on topic**
- ***Shoot the rabbit!* Gently point out the tendency to go down rabbit trails and insist that the discussion stay focused**
- **Stay on target!**

Red Herrings

- **Dragged across the trail of the fox to throw pursuing hounds off the trail allowing the fox to escape**
- **A “juicy” topic thrown into a discussion to side track you when getting too close to a sensitive issue**
- **Leads away from the real core issue**

In the sport of fox hunting a red herring (a smoked herring having a reddish color) would sometimes be dragged across the trail of the fox to throw the pursuing hounds off the sent. (To prolong the hunt or test the dogs’ ability to follow the scent.)

In a similar way, people sometimes bring up an irrelevant topic in order to divert attention away from the original issue—especially if you are getting too close to something sensitive.

The red herring is typically an issue that is sure to cause discussion or argument, but often over an area that can be discussed extensively without resolving the real issue. The main goal is to lead the discussion or research away from the core issue.

Example: JW's often bring up the "Trinity" when they get to feeling threatened or confused by a Christian's questions.

Red herrings allow the fox to escape.

Woman at the Well

- **“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her. “I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband— for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!” “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”**
— John 4:16-20

We often do the same thing as this woman when she shifted the conversation away from an uncomfortable area.

Jesus’ Response

- **Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”**
— John 4:21-24

When Jesus got too close to her personal sins, the woman at the well used a red herring (controversy about where people should worship). However, in this case Jesus followed the new trail because it better served His goal. Need to always be aware of your goals.

Jesus had bigger fish to fry! It’s not that her sin was unimportant, but she primarily needed salvation. Once saved, her life should naturally be brought into conformity to God’s will.

Handling Red Herrings

- **Maintain a clear focus of your purpose**
- **Avoid taking the bait with the introduction of a new subject— unless it better serves your purpose (as for Jesus with woman at the well)**
- **Stay on target!**

Watch out for juicy bait thrown out to divert you from the important issues. Don't get sucked into discussing pet issues—or even important issues—that don't contribute to the current goal.

You must maintain a clear idea of where you are heading. Stay on target! Firmly and repeatedly bring the discussion or research back on track.

Hidden Assumptions

- A “fact or statement that is taken for granted, but not stated in an argument
- May be valid or invalid
- May be left out because considered obvious
- May be omitted to lead to an invalid conclusion
- Important to identify hidden assumptions: especially wrong ones

Not Enough Food

- That evening the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” But Jesus said, “That isn’t necessary—you feed them.” “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” they answered.
— Matthew 14:15-17

What are the hidden assumptions in this passage? Write down some of the ones you think.

What Hidden Assumptions?

- Crowd could not have sufficient food without going to the villages
- Disciples had no responsibility to feed the people
- Jesus did not understand the situation
- Disciples could not obey Jesus’ command because they did not have adequate resources

Common Example

- My wife doesn't satisfy me sexually, so I have been sleeping around.
 - ♦ Wife's job is to satisfy husband's sexual needs & fulfill his fantasies
 - ♦ Husband's sexual needs are more important than wife's emotional and physical well being
 - ♦ If wife doesn't perform to expectations, it is acceptable to find fulfillment elsewhere
 - ♦ Husband has no obligation to adjust his sexual expectations to meet his wife's needs
 - ♦ Adultery is okay under some circumstances
 - ♦ God grades on a curve. He doesn't really mean what He says in the Bible.

Hidden Assumptions Exercise

- **Circle the letter of the correct hidden assumption in each of the questions in the *Hidden Assumptions Exercise* located on the last page of these notes.**

[This exercise is taken from an online article of College of San Mateo, www.smccd.net. Note: This exercise seems to have an agenda. We do not endorse the source or conclusions. Answers, listed in *reverse* order for *after* you do the exercise are: *abcabcbbab*.]

Note: Hidden assumptions can be correct or wrong.

TV Commercials

- **Carefully watch the following commercial for discussion...**

Aleve[®] Commercial

- **According to this commercial, what is the best medicine for arthritis relief?**
- **Did not say “best”, said “none better”**
- **Implies Aleve as good as prescription**
- **Had trouble with steps before, can fully squat with ease after taking Aleve**
- **Younger, more active clothes after taking Aleve, enjoying life**
- **—watch the commercial again —**

Pain Medication Claims

- **Motrin[®]**
“Nothing works faster or stronger on muscle pain—not even Advil[®]* or Aleve[®].”
- **Advil[®]**
“Nothing Works BETTER!”
- **Aleve[®]**
Has dropped their “nothing better” claim on their web site

From their websites in 2010. Aleve commercial is from a few years back. Used as an example of things implied.

Wrong Implications

- **When information is designed to lead you to an invalid conclusion**
- **Watch what is NOT being said just as much as what IS being said**
- **Watch for messages implied in images**

There are “none better” than this brand of pain reliever. Implies that it is the best—but does not mean it is the best. They all may be exactly the same and “none better” is a true statement. If it was the best, they would have said that it was the best.

Watch what is not being said as much as what is being said. Often, what is not being said can provide valuable information.

You may have seen something similar to this in television commercials. “Chevy trucks have more power than Ford or Toyota.” What about Dodge and Nissan? They cannot say that their product is the best when it isn’t. But they will say things to imply that it is the best, and you will subconsciously register in your mind that it is the best. It can be a fun and useful exercise to listen to commercials and try to identify the hidden assumptions and wrong implications.

Example: Before and After photos. No makeup and not happy in *before*. Full makeup, dressed well, and very happy in *after*. Marketing knows what they are doing!

Man Born Blind

- **As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.**
— John 9:1-3

Disciples wrongly implied that someone sinned to cause the blindness.

Wrong Implications

- **That serious physical handicaps are always caused by someone’s sin**
- **This man was born blind because he or his parents sinned**
- **Both reveal an error in the beliefs of the disciples—which Jesus corrected**

The disciples appear to have believed that major physical defects were the result of sin (only). Specifically, they question whether this man was born blind because of his own sin or the sin of his parents. They seem to be a little puzzled that it could have been his own sin since he was born blind (before he had a chance to sin).

One wrong implication in this passage is that this man was born blind because of active sin. Another wrong implication is that serious physical handicaps are always caused by someone’s sin. Both reveal an error in the beliefs of the disciples—which Jesus corrected.

Handling Wrong Implications

- **Identify the conclusion to which the speaker/writer wants you to arrive**
- **Watch out for missing information and implied (but not stated) conclusions**
- **Practice careful listening and thinking**
- **Expose incorrect conclusions**

An advertisement is always designed to sell you a product or idea. Never forget that!

Bias & One-Sided Information

- **Bias happens when you have only one viewpoint of a situation**
- **Results in incomplete information**
- **Often occurs when someone is offended**

Bias happens when you only have one viewpoint of a situation or incomplete information. When describing a situation, people often only provide the information that **supports the conclusion they have already reached**. Consciously or subconsciously, they want you to come to the same conclusion about the source of the problem and the appropriate course of action.

Bible Warnings on Bias

- **Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.**
— Proverbs 18:13
- **The first to speak in court sounds right— until the cross-examination begins. —**
Proverbs 18:17 (NIV)

Handling Bias

- **Refuse to make judgments from just one side of the matter. Collect information from the “other” side.**
- **Recognize that people will consciously or subconsciously desire you to come to the same conclusion that they have**
- **Watch for omissions or shading of information**
- **Prefer talking with both “sides” together**
- **If a person offended, instruct them to go to the offender to resolve the issue (Matt 18:15-17)**
- **If a person knows someone is offended with him, instruct him to go to the one offended to resolve the issue (Matt 5:23-24)**
- **When studying the Bible, don’t just look for verses that support your expected outcome.**
- **Collect all the relevant verses, then let the Bible teach you what you should think about the issue.**

It helps to determine what goal or conclusion is being promoted or desired by the person. Then watch out for omissions or shading of information. In some cases, people are actively pursuing hidden agendas. For example, a person may seem to be helpful in pointing out where a co-

worker is not doing things the way he should. Later you find that person desires to get the co-worker's job.

When talking with people, don't make a judgment based on only one person's view of the situation. Ideally, you should get both people together to work out their differences. If you can only talk with one of the parties, then focus on what that person should do Scripturally—not on what the other (missing) person should do.

Often, when someone is offended, he or she complains to someone else rather than following the Bible instructions to go to the offender and work out their differences.

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If that person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. If the church decides you are right, but the other person won't accept it, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. — Mt 18:15-17

The listener then forms an opinion or judgment against the offender from biased (one-sided) information. The Bible is clear that this is foolish and violates Scriptural instruction.

In such cases, the listener should refuse to come to conclusions on biased information. Rather, he should encourage the offended person to communicate directly with the offender as the Bible instructs. Once that has been tried without success, then the two parties should discuss the situation with a godly mediator in an effort to resolve the issues with both perspectives on the issues.

If a person knows that someone is offended with him, then he should go to the offended person to resolve the issues.

“So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. — Mt 5:23-24

How Answer Now?

- **Should I pay my tithes or my bills?**
- **If I give tithes, will God prosper me so I can pay my bills?**
- **Should identify and address the various issues**
 - ♦ **Red Herrings?**
 - ♦ **Hidden Assumptions?**
 - ♦ **Wrong Implications?**

Now look back at your summarized answers to the two questions at the beginning of this lesson. Have you changed the way you would answer? Thinking skills can help you get to the core issues and to minister to people more effectively.

What Red Herrings?

- **Should I pay my bills?**
 - ♦ **Avoid issue of obedience to God by focusing on bills**
- **Will God prosper me...”**
 - ♦ **Focus on blessing as a condition for tithing**
 - ♦ **Looking at tithing as an investment rather than obedience**

Tithing is a matter of obedience and participation in the expansion of the Kingdom. It should not be based on capability, convenience, or anticipated receipt of blessings.

What Hidden Assumptions?

- **If tithe, cannot pay bills. No other options**
- **All the bills are for things absolutely essential**
- **No other expenses can be cut**
- **No way to increase income**
- **Want to do right, just can't**
- **Things cannot change, locked into their circumstances**
- **God & church are unreasonable to expect them to survive and tithe**

God is not obligated to pay for self-centered spending. He promises to meet your needs, not your wants.

People typically want a lot more than they need and need a lot less than they think.

What Wrong Implications?

- **Okay not to tithe if not enough money**
- **Will force me to be a bad person if tithe because cannot pay bills**
- **If tell me to tithe, saying it's okay to not pay bills — shift blame to you!**
- **If tell me to pay bills, saying it's okay to not tithe — shift blame to you!**
- **If God won't help pay my bills, why tithe?**
- **Spend what I want and God will pay bills as long as I tithe**
- **God is okay with me buying the things I have bills for**
- **God is more interested in my financial well-being, happiness, and comfort than with my obedience and character**

People love to shift responsibility from themselves to others.

Important to avoid this tendency for people to shift responsibility to you for their life decisions when counseling them. Follow Jesus' example. Don't give people answers—help them find answers!

Questions You Could Ask

- What does the Bible say about tithes?
- Why do you have more bills than you can pay?
- Is it possible that you may be spending more than God wants you to spend on things He is not interested in you having?
- Have you made a list of *everything* that costs money each month to see what is not essential?
- Do you think it is wise to cut off God's long-term blessings to meet an immediate need?

Learn to take a **long view** of things. Address the immediate situation and begin the process to correct the core problems so you can both tithe and pay your bills. Don't eat your seed. **Don't sell out tomorrow to obtain a temporary convenience or pleasure today.** Diligence is required.

Sharpen Your Thinking Skills

- Are there other possibilities
 - ◊ Thinking outside the box
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
 - ◊ Follow a scenario out to its end result
- Staying focused on a clear goal?
 - ◊ Avoid rabbit trails
 - ◊ Shun red herrings
- What are the hidden assumptions?
 - ◊ Valid or invalid
- What are the wrong implications?
 - ◊ Implied conclusions that are invalid
- Is the information biased?
 - ◊ Getting all sides of the story

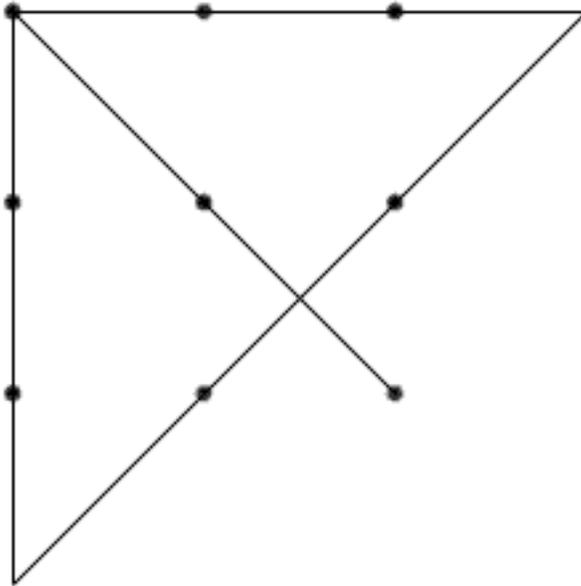
Homework

- "I know a godly pastor who prayed for tongues and did not receive. If God would give tongues to anyone, He would give to this man, so tongues must not be for today."
 - ◊ What are the red herrings?
 - ◊ What are the hidden assumptions?
 - ◊ What are the wrong implications?

[Write down your best answers before looking on the following pages.]

Connect the Dots Solution

Must think **outside the box** to make this work. No one said that the lines cannot go outside the box. But most people don't think about the lines extending beyond the normal borders of the box.



How Many Squares?

Answer: There are 30 squares in the figure. Broaden your perspective to include less obvious information. Keep looking until you find all 30.

Homework Answers

Following are some of the possible answers.

- **Red Herrings:**

- ♦ Asked for tongues, but Scripture says to ask for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).
- ♦ States that the pastor is godly. Throws a factor into the situation that you cannot easily evaluate and therefore cannot counter.

- **Hidden Assumptions:**

- ♦ Failure of a godly person to receive means it is for no one.
- ♦ The pastor is in no way responsible for the failure to receive tongues.
- ♦ Experience validates or invalidates Scripture.
- ♦ All the relevant facts are known.
- ♦ It doesn't matter what Scriptures you show me.

- **Wrong Implications:**

- ♦ Tongues is a reward for being godly.
- ♦ People should ask for and seek tongues (rather than the Holy Spirit). (The gifts are distributed as the Spirit wills — 1 Cor. 12:4-11.)
- ♦ Tongues have passed away.
- ♦ Experience trumps Scripture when it comes to determining God's will.

The Bible Must be the evidence for determining God's will, not our experience.

Hidden Assumption Exercise

(The following exercise is from an online article of College of San Mateo, <http://www.smccd.net>.)

What is the hidden assumption behind these arguments? Circle one answer for each.

1. You should be able to laugh aloud whenever you want to, wherever you are, because it's good for your mind and body.
 - a. Laughter helps you relax.
 - b. You should be able to do anything that is good for your mind and body whenever you want to, wherever you are.
 - c. You are laughing and can't stop.
2. Tom would never hurt anyone's feelings because he's very sensitive himself.
 - a. Sensitive people never hurt anyone's feelings.
 - b. Tom is very easily hurt.
 - c. Tom has been accused of hurting someone's feelings.
3. Cats don't lay eggs because they're mammals.
 - a. Cats have viviparous young.
 - b. Mammals don't lay eggs.
 - c. Cats are mammals.
4. The accused killer had been brought up as a devout Christian, so the community was very surprised when he turned out to be a violent psychopath.
 - a. The accused killer was a violent psychopath.
 - b. People brought up as Christians can't be psychopaths.
 - c. The accused had committed a violent crime.
5. Because he played and sang Irish music so beautifully, Torvald astonished his fans when he revealed that he was actually Norwegian.
 - a. Norwegians are bad musicians.
 - b. Torvald had kept his identity secret.
 - c. Only the Irish can play Irish music.
6. John is an attorney, so all he cares about is money.
 - a. John is like all attorneys.
 - b. Attorneys only care about money.
 - c. If he wasn't an attorney, he wouldn't care about money.
7. Rock music is definitely a part of today's society, so it must be basically a good thing.
 - a. Anything that is part of today's society is basically a good thing.
 - b. Rock music must be part of today's society.
 - c. Rock music must be a good thing.
8. The animal rights activist who beat up the butcher shouldn't go to prison because he is really sincere about what he's doing.
 - a. The animal rights activist was sincere about beating up the butcher.
 - b. Animal rights activism is not a crime.
 - c. People who are sincere about their "crimes" should be excused from punishment.
9. Schools can't stop Sikh students from wearing small swords in their turbans, despite the "No Weapons" policy, because it's part of Sikh religion to do so.
 - a. Turbans are religious artifacts for Sikhs.
 - b. Schools can't stop students from doing things that their religion tells them to do.
 - c. Schools should not have a "No Weapons" policy.
10. "Cow-Abunga" yogurts must be good for you since they're made with 100% natural and organic ingredients!
 - a. Anything natural and organic is good for you.
 - b. "Cow-Abunga" yogurts are made with 100% natural and organic ingredients.
 - c. Yogurts are good for you.