

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Double-Mindedness and the Christian

by Dan Trygg

“A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, double-minded people!”

James 4:8

“For the ones being according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but the ones according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

Romans 8:5

“This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.”

James 3:15

“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test-out-to-discern the will of God, that which is good, pleasing, and mature.”

Romans 12:1

“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”

I Corinthians 14:20

The recent decision by the Supreme Court of the United States that requires that same-sex couples be allowed to marry in all 50 states is a very controversial ruling. The court itself was deeply divided. The decision was rendered on the basis of a simple majority of 5 justices for the decision, and 4 opposed to it. **Contrary to the definition and understanding of marriage in history or around the world, this decision reflects a radical departure from traditional values.** The Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender special interest groups and political activists have succeeded in turning the tide of public opinion to support their interests. **The GLBT movement has convinced people to believe that their particular “life-style choice” or sexual preference is not a moral choice, or mental illness, or even a social deviation. They have come to believe and promote the idea that they are “born this way”.** Their sexual preference assignment is wrapped up in their very “essential identity”. They were *born* to be attracted to people of the same sex, or they were really “a female trapped in a man’s body”, or vice versa.

**One of the most disconcerting aspects of this entire “social revolution” has been to witness the relative inability of many Christians to give a clear, cogent and consistent response to these issues.** This was especially apparent in people’s reaction to the Supreme Court decision. Many were angry, others grieved, while still others actually celebrated this marked departure from Biblical morality. **If “righteousness exalts a nation”, and “sin is a reproach or disgrace to any people” (Prov. 14:34), then we ought to be grieved and ashamed of this decision, not rejoicing or celebrating it.** The “pursuit of happiness” (redefined as “what makes *me* happy”) has trumped the “pursuit of righteousness” (defined as “what pleases *God*”). **Hedonism, tolerance and “political correctness” have won out over any concern for God’s standards of morality or righteousness.** We are more concerned about *offending people* than we are about *offending God*. We have come to call evil *good*, and good *evil* (Isa. 5:20).

This should not be surprising for those who make no claim to being people of faith, but **it is very strange that those who do claim to be followers of Jesus Christ should end up cheering on those who promote what God says is evil. How can this happen?** Why is there so much inconsistency among those who claim to be following the same Master? **How can we explain this phenomenon? Furthermore, what are we to do about this? How do we engage in intelligent conversation with people who claim to be people of faith, but who hold to opinions that diverge from Biblical teaching?** So many are talking *past* one another, ...shedding lots of *heat* and emotion, but very little *light* or clarity. **The problem is that they are coming from very different places. Their presuppositions and foundational beliefs are drastically different, ...even if they are not clearly examined. We have to lay bare these underlying assumptions, in order to have intelligent, productive dialogue.**

My main concern in today’s notes is to recognize and address the reality of the “double-mindedness” we have seen surface so plainly in the comments from people who claim to be followers of Jesus. **This phenomenon is not a new thing.** This same dynamic was also evident among church people of the first century. In fact, **to some degree or another, this “double-mindedness” is present in every generation, ...even in the life of every believer!**

**Every person begins their journey with a faulty view of reality.** The world view they cobble together is a combination of what they learn from their family, their personal experiences, and the teachings and examples they receive from the society in which they live. **Each person learns to survive and navigate through life by adjusting their beliefs and behavior to what they perceive as true and/or advantageous to them.** At its core, this is a *self-centered world view*. **As soon as a person comes to faith in Christ, their perception of the world is confronted by another Reality, a Reality that there is a God who is the Creator of all things. The world is not about you, or any other individual, it is about Him.** This *should* radically shake up our world view, and *should* motivate us to find out more about God. **If we really grasped the significance of who He is, we would want to discover more about Him.**

Where would we learn about *Him*, what *He thought*, what *His purposes are*, and what *He expects of us*? He has given us a revelation of Himself to instruct us in these very things, recorded in the Bible. Jesus told the apostles to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to do all that He said (Matt. 28:18-20). He also said that those who would learn and continue in His word *are* His genuine disciples. They will come to know the truth, and the truth will set them free (Jn. 8:31,32). **The church is to be a learning community. God desires us to have an accurate understanding of Reality.** As His followers, **it is incumbent upon us to learn the truth and correct our world view.**

Unfortunately, many believers are uninformed, untaught, and many are lazy. They do not make the effort to learn the truth. **They continue to navigate by the understanding they assembled from their experiences, their family and from the surrounding culture.** Some have heard or read the teachings of the Bible, but *they do not integrate them into their own world view.* The truth of God is in a separate file of “religious facts and trivia” which they can pull up, if they need to, but the world view that they navigate through life by does not originate from there. Consequently, **they mirror the values of the surrounding culture more that the truth of the scriptures.**

The term, “double-minded”, in the book of James is a compound word that literally means “two-souled” or “two-selfed”. **The double-selfed person has two minds, or two world views, two orientations toward life.** That is why James 1:8 says he is “unstable” or “restless” in all his ways. The word for “unstable” means “having-no-foundation”, “no-set-place”. We are familiar with the term “schizophrenic”. That refers to someone with a “divided” or “split” mind. This is similar, but *may actually be worse.* This is someone who has *two separate minds, or selves.* **What are these “selves” or “minds”? There are actually several contrasting mindsets pointed out in the scriptures.** (1.) **Fleshly vs. Spiritual.** We can have a fleshly mind, or a mind *set on* the flesh (Rom. 8:3-14). The first example is a mind that *originates from* the fleshly, sensual background which we learned growing up in this world. The second is a mindset or *focus on* fleshly fulfillment or self-striving. The first example is more *natural and animalistic*; the second seems to be a *conscious, purposeful embracing* of that orientation. Both of these are contrasted with the mind that *originates from* the Spirit of God, and a corresponding *mindset toward* the Spirit. Paul revisits this contrast in Galatians 5:13-24. It is clear that these two orientations are at odds with each other. We are not to live *by* the flesh, or live *according to* the flesh. In Christ, we have been crucified to the flesh. We are to learn to walk *in, with* and *by* the Spirit. The results of either orientation are markedly different. We have the choice as to which orientation to live according to, *and* we will experience the consequences of those choices in the fruit of our lives. (2.) **Earthly vs. Heavenly.** In James 3:13-18, the writer contrasts wisdom which is “earthly, natural and demonic” from that which “comes down from above”. Again, these are mutually exclusive orientations. Note that there is a “wisdom” or “way of doing things” that is derived from each of these orientations. Again, the fruit produced by following these different orientations is very different. Paul contrasts “natural” with “spiritual” as well (I Cor. 2:14,15). The word for “natural” is “soulish”, or from the “self”. The contrast is between having a natural, earthly understanding and ability versus the insight, leading and power of the Spirit in your life. (3.) **Of this evil age vs. of the Kingdom of God.** Paul admonishes us to not conform ourselves “to this age”, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds to discover God’s will (Rom. 12:2). Jesus gave Himself to “take us out from this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). *There are two spiritual kingdoms at work on planet earth.* The present evil age is the kingdom of this world-system which Satan is ruling over. He manipulates, controls and destroys people through deceptive propaganda and enticing temptations. His twisted lies are all around us, and pervades every aspect of our society. He is working to keep people *away from* knowing God, or growing in their understanding of Christ. He promotes evil, abuse, and sin. The Kingdom of God is the other influence that is at work in the lives of Christians. It operates by different principles, and seeks to influence us *toward* the will of God. *Two very different spiritual influences are at work in our lives at the same time.* We must *choose* to put aside the propaganda and agenda of the evil kingdom, and rebuild a new understanding based upon the Kingdom of God. If we do not put forth this effort to put off the lies, we will likely just get carried along into the same deceptions that the larger ungodly culture adheres to. (4.) **Immature vs. Mature Thinking.** *Many people have not learned to think perceptively* about things. They just mimic what others say, not having taken the time, or developed the skills, to analyze issues more accurately. Immature thinking can also be more emotionally reactionary, instead of based in clear-minded, rational thought. Emotions play a huge part in people’s opinions and decision-making. Emotional identification can be *persuasive*, but *have nothing to do with truth.*

**These various contrasting “mindsets” illustrate ways in which people compartmentalize their thinking.** Their “double-mindedness” can influence them to think and act in ways contrary to Biblical truth. They may *think* they are supporting something good, but they are not seeing things from God’s perspective. **What does James say about double-mindedness?** “*Sanctify your hearts, you double minded!*” This means to “dedicate” or “set apart” **their minds and hearts fully to God, so that they would no longer be influenced by competing influences.** If their minds were truly devoted to God, they would become people of truth, wholeness and integrity.