

Your Engine Light Is On

CONCEPTS

Critical decision-making instruction is lacking in our basic educational systems. Many organizations teach about critical thinking, but few teach students how to think critically about anything. Religious organizations consider the topic of critical thinking to be somehow New Age and say it should be discouraged in our educational syllabi. As Christians, we must think critically and make good decisions based on the truth of God's Word, not worldly bias or satan's influence.

PURPOSE

False indications, faulty intelligence, and worldly bias often play a role in the lives of Christians who lose focus on the truth and lose faith in God. Satan is the great deceiver whose only purpose is to confuse and lead us in the wrong direction by pushing us toward wrong thinking.

SCRIPTURE BASE

Psalms 1:1, 1 Corinthians 2:6–8, Philippians 4:8, Matthew 4:1–11, Romans 8:5–8, Romans 8:38–39

BACKGROUND

If you had ever ridden with me in my old 2005 pickup, you might have seen my engine light glowing on my dash. It's been like that for about five years. It makes my wife nervous, and it used to bug me too. I've tried fixing it and taken it to several mechanics; they all have prescribed fixes. I've tried those remedies that only cost a few bucks. A few recommendations would have cost a lot of money, and I've not done those. You see, the pickup starts and runs fine with the light on.

There may be a real fix, but it doesn't matter because I know it's not a big deal. I figured out I could get by. I ignore the lie; I don't get excited about it or change my driving habits.

The intel that the sensor and indicator give me is faulty. False intel in life, if believed, can have costly, if not fatal, results. Maybe you have a similar story to use for this Spur. The idea is that sometimes we make bad decisions based on faulty intel. Many times, that intel comes directly from the lies of satan.

SPUR

False swatting has become a significant problem across the US. You can Google it and find several incidents at schools, businesses, and private homes. An infamous event happened on Dec 28, 2017, in Wichita, Kansas. A local police officer (sniper) fatally shot Andrew Finch after being mistakenly swatted by an online gamer playing *Call of Duty*. The unidentified gamer argued with another online gamer and decided to play a prank. He submitted a 911 call and mistakenly gave the wrong address, resulting in a SWAT team response. Andrew Finch answered the door and was told to put his hands up. When he unexpectedly dropped one hand to his waist, he was immediately shot by the sniper officer. He was DOA at the hospital.

The original intel was false, and the result was permanent. Andrew Finch, a father who had young children, was murdered.

In many ways, we all live with false information that pervades our daily lives. Some of it is the news we receive from all types of media. Some of it is gossip we hear from friends or family. As Christians, we should be diligent in keeping ourselves from falling for these lies and deceptions. Our walk should be in Spirit and truth, but it is much more complicated than just saying so.

Consider how many people do terrible things based on false information. Suicide, murder, abortion, divorce, fights, division—you can name several negative results of people taking action based on false information.

Critical thinking requires us to fight the indicator light. Those lights on your car's dashboard have been called idiot lights by mechanics for years because they know the truth. Indicator lights don't tell you the whole story. You must dig deeper. You have to see all the angles and not jump to conclusions. You cannot let prejudice or even previous experiences tell you what is right or wrong. You have to weigh the evidence and search for the truth. If you don't know the difference between true and false, you can't make a good decision, and you may as well hope for good luck. Do not put your faith in a warning light, regardless of how long it burns.

The warning light urges you to take action and become active in trying to find out what is wrong. Investigative research will lead you to act if needed; sometimes, you

must do something as soon as possible. No decision is a decision, and it is usually the wrong one (Elder and Elder).

Peter A. Facione, an identified leader in the use of critical thinking, said this in 2011:

Critical thinking is skeptical without being cynical. It is open-minded without being wishy-washy. It is analytical without being nitpicky. Critical thinking can be decisive without being stubborn, evaluative without being judgemental, and forceful without being opinionated.

All this advice about indicators transfers directly to everyday living. Christians, especially, need to be critical thinkers too. We must know where our truth comes from and never doubt it. Satan is the liar of all liars, and he will invade every thought process you have to skew the truth and give you the false indicator he wants you to react to. Sometimes, bad advice comes from well-meaning friends. Check the facts (Psalm 1:1).

Some of satan's best work is right inside your brain to doubt yourself and who you are. If you believe his lies, he will have you thinking you are not good, intelligent, strong, rich, or powerful enough. Soon, you will give up without even trying. Do not accept the lies. The truth is that you are a child of God, and when you know that, you can brush off all those lies above, having the wisdom God gives through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6–8).

The cartoon that shows the devil sitting on one shoulder and an angel sitting on the other shoulder whispering in the ears of the decision-maker comes to mind. Satan can't control your mind, but he can influence the way you think.

If you are wary that you might be lied to and you begin to accept the lie because the idiot light continues to blink, then it's time to reintroduce yourself to the only book on how to live on earth by God, the author of life.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

That devil sitting on your shoulder screaming in your ear, "Loser, Worthless, Unloved, Hated," is lying to you. These accusations come from the father of lies, the great accuser and master of false indicators. So shed that junk and believe what God

says. Ask Him for help. Use His Word to combat the fiery arrows being shot at you. Read Matthew 4:1–11 and do what Jesus did when satan tried to sway Jesus into sin.

Romans 8:5–8

For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

And never forget that God is on your side. You have become a child of God, and as such, who can be against you if God is for you? The battle has been won; stay on the right side.

Romans 8:38–39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PRAYER

Lord, Father of life and Creator of all things, protect us daily from the one seeking to destroy our minds and lives. Remind us through the Spirit to seek Your Word and truth. Help us maintain a Spirit-filled perspective and walk in step with You and Your will for us. Teach us daily and remind us of Your love; all good gifts come from You. Give us Your peace and spare us from evil. Amen.

CREDITS AND/OR INSPIRATION

Readings from two books with a Christian perspective and bias:

Richard Paul Elder and Linda Elder. *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life*. Fourth edition. The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2022.

Peter Facione. *THINK Critically*. Pearson, 2010.