

Be Wary of Your Default Settings

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Whatever is just, pure, pleasing, commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. - Philippians 4:8

Two young fish were swimming along when they happened to meet an older fish swimming the other way. He nods and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" The two young fish swim for a while longer, and then one asks the other, "What's water?"

It is interesting what we don't notice, what we're oblivious to. Sure, we have our memorized, favorite scriptures and our treasured sayings, but we don't keep them in mind but rarely. In terms of the Philippians verse above, we don't "*think about these things*" often enough. We just "swim" through life without noticing the obvious realities.

Rather than *think about these things*, we have default settings in our brains, such as, "I'm the center of the universe." David Foster Wallace said in his famous Kenyon College graduation address, "Everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe, the realest, most vivid and important person in existence. We rarely talk about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness because it's so socially repulsive, but it's pretty much the same for all of us, deep down.

"It is our default-setting, hard-wired into our boards at birth. Think about it: there is no experience you've had that you were not at the absolute center of. The world as you experience it is right there in front of you or behind you, to the left or right of you, on your TV, or your monitor, or whatever. Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real..."

Default brain settings lead to unhappiness, even misery. What are these people doing standing in the checkout line in front of *me*? Don't they know *I* have other things to do? Or why don't these people agree with *me*? It's so obvious that *I'm* right and they're wrong. How could they vote for such a person? And why do so many people spend their spare time doing the things they do? Why would *I* want one of those? Why on earth would *I* want to that?

When we aren't conscious of what we're thinking, self-centeredness tends to take over. It's all about *me*. When this happens, our world becomes filled with people who are in our way, people who are idiots, people we could do without. And that doesn't sound much like anything Jesus ever said about the people in his world. And don't we affirm in our better moments that Jesus is the center of our lives?

Think about the things Jesus said and did and expects of us. That's the water we should and could be swimming in.