

CALLING THE CHURCH BACK

TO THE ONE THING THAT MATTERS

LOVE THE LORD
YOUR GOD WITH
ALL YOUR HEART

THE
THE

AND WITH ALL
YOUR SOUL AND
WITH ALL YOUR MIND

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

THIS IS THE
GREATEST AND
FIRST COMMANDMENT.

AND THE SECOND IS
LIKE IT: LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

MATTHEW 22:37-39

THE ONE COMMAND.
THE WHOLE YOU.
THE LIFE THAT MATTERS.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Calling the Church Back to the One Thing That Matters

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Introduction: The Question We Stopped Asking

I have a question for you.

Not the kind of question a pastor asks from a stage when he already knows the answer and is just waiting for you to catch up. Not the kind of question a small group leader poses while glancing at the clock, hoping someone will say something profound so they can all go get coffee.

I mean a real question. The kind that lands in the middle of your chest and sits there. Heavy. Uncomfortable. Demanding.

Here it is:

If someone followed you around for a week—not with a camera crew, not with your permission, but just watched—what would they conclude you actually love?

Not what you say you love. Not what you want to love. Not what you posted about loving last Sunday when the worship team played your favourite song and the lighting was just right.

What would they say you actually, functionally, demonstrably love?

Would they say you love comfort? Your phone? Your reputation? Your kids? Your future? Your fears? Your bank account? Your body? Your political tribe? Your favourite show? Your version of Jesus that fits neatly into your schedule and never asks you to do anything inconvenient?

Would they say you love God?

And here's the follow-up question, the one that makes people in churches shift in their seats and look at the floor:

Would they even be able to tell the difference?

Because here's the problem I've been staring at for years now. Here's the thing that woke me up at three in the morning with a weight on my chest that wouldn't lift until I finally got out of bed and opened my Bible and started writing:

The modern church has forgotten what love actually is.

We haven't just lost the practice of it. We've lost the definition. We've taken the greatest commandment in all of Scripture—the one Jesus Himself said everything

else hangs on—and we’ve turned it into a sentiment. A slogan. A song we sing when we’re feeling spiritual enough.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

We nod when we hear it. We’ve got it on mugs and throw pillows and Instagram bios. We’ve reduced the most radical, all-consuming, life-demolishing command ever uttered to something we can purchase at a Christian bookstore for \$14.99.

And in doing so, we have become a generation of believers who have absolutely no idea what it actually means to love God.

We have been taught—by culture, by comfort, by pastors afraid to offend, by a Christianity that has been watered down until it’s indistinguishable from the world it was meant to transform—that love is a feeling. That love is something you experience when the music hits right. That love is a warm affection toward a vague higher power who exists to make your life better.

We have been sold a counterfeit. And most of us don’t even know we’re holding monopoly money while the real currency sits untouched in the vault of Scripture.

So here’s what this book is.

It is not a devotional you read before bed to feel peaceful. It is not a collection of nice thoughts about God to help you through your week. It is not going to hold your hand and tell you you’re doing just fine and God is so pleased with your effort.

This book is a call. A wake-up. A confrontation. A declaration.

Because I believe—I *know*—that the church is starving. We are starving for something real. We have been fed spiritual junk food for so long that we’ve forgotten what a real meal tastes like. We’ve been told that loving God means showing up on Sunday, maybe serving on a team, maybe not cussing too much, maybe giving a little when it doesn’t hurt. And we’ve accepted that as enough. As normal. As Christianity.

But it’s not. It’s a ghost of it. A shadow. A shell.

And the Holy Spirit is moving in this moment to call us out of the darkness and back into the blazing, terrifying, glorious centre of what it actually means to love God with *everything*.

I'm not writing this because I have it figured out. I'm writing this because I realized I didn't. Because I looked at my own life—my frantic schedule, my distracted prayers, my divided heart—and I saw a man who said he loved God but whose life looked an awful lot like someone who loved a hundred other things more. And I felt the weight of that. The shame of it. But more than shame, I felt grief. Grief that I had been given the greatest treasure in the universe and had treated it like a nice accessory.

And then I opened my Bible. And I read Matthew 22:37 again. Not the way I'd read it a thousand times before—skimming, assuming, moving on to something else—but really read it. And I realized I had no idea what it actually meant. I had no idea what Jesus was actually demanding. I had no idea what it would actually cost.

So I went back. I went back to the Hebrew. I went back to the context. I went back to what this command meant when God first spoke it to Israel through Moses. I went back to the original words, the original weight, the original intention.

And what I found changed me.

It dismantled me. It broke something open in my chest that had been calcified by years of comfortable Christianity. It made me angry—angry at what I'd been taught, angry at what I'd accepted, angry at what I'd allowed to pass for love. And it made me hungry. Hungry for something real. Hungry for the kind of love that doesn't just change how you feel on Sunday morning but reorients your entire existence.

That's what this book is. It's what I found. It's what I'm still learning. It's what the church needs to hear—not because I'm special or because I've got some secret revelation no one else has, but because I've simply gone back to what God already said. And what God already said is enough.

I'm not going to sugarcoat it. I'm not going to soften it. I'm not going to tell you that loving God is easy or comfortable or fits nicely into your already-too-busy life. It isn't. It doesn't. It will wreck you. It will demand everything. It will ask for things you didn't know you had and things you desperately wanted to keep.

But I will tell you this: it is the only thing worth doing. It is the only thing that will satisfy the ache you've been trying to fill with a hundred other things. It is the reason you exist. It is the command that holds all other commands. It is the love that makes sense of everything else.

So if you're ready to stop playing church. If you're ready to stop pretending. If you're ready to let the greatest commandment actually become the command that governs your life—not just a verse you know but the truth that owns you—then turn the page.

We've got work to do.

PART ONE:
THE TEXT

Chapter 1: The Greatest Commandment

Let me tell you about the man who asked the question.

He wasn't just some guy wandering through the temple courts, curious about what this controversial rabbi from Galilee might say. He was a Pharisee. Which means he was part of the religious elite. The spiritual professionals. The men who had dedicated their lives—their *entire* lives—to the meticulous study, interpretation, and application of God's law.

If anyone in first-century Jerusalem knew the commandments, it was this man.

He had likely memorized the Torah—the first five books of what we call the Old Testament—by the time he was a teenager. He could recite passages forward and backward. He knew that there were 613 commandments in the Law of Moses. He knew which ones were considered “heavy” and which were “light.” He had spent hours, probably days, debating with his colleagues about the precise application of each one.

This was his life's work. His identity. His reason for existing.

And now here he was, standing in front of Jesus, asking a question that had been debated in rabbinic schools for centuries:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Matthew records the scene with almost surgical brevity. No long descriptions. No dramatic staging. Just the question. And then Jesus's answer.

But before we get to the answer—before we let Jesus speak into our own moment with the same words He spoke into that one—we need to understand what was actually happening. Because if we don't, we're going to miss something crucial. Something that changes everything about how we hear what Jesus said.

Here's what you need to understand about this moment.

Matthew 22 is a battlefield.

By the time we get to verse 34—where this particular confrontation takes place—Jesus has already been through a gauntlet of attacks. The chief priests and elders have challenged His authority. He's told them the parable of the tenants, which was essentially a theological grenade lobbed directly at their faces. The Pharisees have tried to trap Him with a question about paying taxes to Caesar, hoping He'll either incite rebellion against Rome or alienate the Jewish crowds. He slipped right through that one. Then the Sadducees—the religious faction that denied the resurrection, the existence of angels, and pretty much anything supernatural—came at Him with an absurd hypothetical about a woman who married seven brothers and whose wife she would be in the afterlife.

Jesus dismantled their arguments one by one. In public. In front of crowds. With the kind of authority that made the religious professionals look like children playing at grown-up games.

By the time this Pharisee steps forward—Matthew tells us he was “an expert in the law,” which is the Greek way of saying he was a lawyer, a Torah scholar, a man who had built his entire life around the interpretation of Scripture—he's not necessarily asking in good faith.

The text says he asked the question “testing” Jesus. The same Greek word used elsewhere in the Gospels when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. This wasn't a sincere seeker looking for spiritual guidance. This was a man trying to trip Jesus up. To expose Him. To get Him to say something that could be used against Him.

Which makes what happens next all the more remarkable.

Because Jesus doesn't dodge.

He doesn't give a vague, philosophical answer that sounds profound but means nothing. He doesn't say, “Well, all the commandments are important in their own way.” He doesn't launch into a lecture about how the question itself is flawed because the law is a seamless garment and you can't pick one thread over another.

No.

He answers. Directly. Clearly. With a precision that silences every critic in the room and leaves them standing there with nothing to say.

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”

And then, because He knows they’re going to ask, because He knows the second question is coming before they even open their mouths, He adds:

“This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Mic drop. End of discussion. The experts in the law, the men who had spent their entire lives cataloguing and categorizing the 613 commandments, suddenly have nothing to say. Matthew tells us that from that day forward, no one dared ask Him any more questions.

They were done. They had brought their best. They had brought their most sophisticated theological traps. And Jesus had answered with a simplicity so profound, so undeniable, that all their complexity suddenly looked like what it was: busywork. Distraction. The religious equivalent of rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic while ignoring the iceberg directly ahead.

Here’s what I want you to see.

Jesus didn’t invent this commandment. He quoted it. And the fact that He quoted it is actually more important than you might realize.

Because when Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” He wasn’t introducing a new teaching. He was reaching back—way back—to the most foundational moment in Israel’s history and pulling forward the one command that had always been meant to govern everything else.

He was quoting Deuteronomy 6.

You know Deuteronomy 6. Or at least, you think you do. It’s the chapter that contains the Shema—the prayer that observant Jews have recited twice a day for thousands of years. It’s the passage that begins, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” And then, immediately after that declaration of God’s singular, exclusive, unmatched glory, comes the command:

“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

This wasn't just another commandment among 613. This was the commandment. The one that gave shape and meaning to all the others. The one that Moses, speaking for God, told the people to "impress" on their children, to talk about when they sat at home and when they walked along the road, when they lay down and when they got up. The one they were supposed to tie as symbols on their hands and bind on their foreheads and write on the doorframes of their houses and on their gates.

In other words: this wasn't a suggestion. It wasn't a nice sentiment. It wasn't a spiritual ideal for the especially devout.

It was the operating system for the entire nation of Israel. The core command from which every other command derived its authority and its purpose. The lens through which every other obligation was supposed to be understood and applied.

And when the Pharisees asked Jesus which commandment was the greatest, He didn't hesitate. He didn't deliberate. He went straight to the heart of everything God had ever said and pulled out the one sentence that summarized it all.

Love the Lord your God. With everything. With all of it. With no reservation and no division and no compartment.

Everything else—every other command, every other duty, every other spiritual practice—hangs on this. It's the hook from which the entire tapestry of the Christian life is suspended. Pull this thread out, and the whole thing unravels.

I need to pause here and say something that might make you uncomfortable.

If you've been a Christian for any length of time, you've probably heard this verse dozens—maybe hundreds—of times. You've seen it on plaques. You've heard it in sermons. You've maybe even memorized it. You could probably recite it right now without even thinking.

And that's exactly the problem.

Because familiarity is the enemy of obedience. The more familiar we become with a command, the less likely we are to actually feel its weight. We start to assume we understand it. We start to assume we're doing it. We start to nod along when we hear it, mentally checking the box, moving on to the next thing, all while the actual content of the command passes through us without leaving a mark.

So let me ask you—honestly, not rhetorically—when was the last time you actually wrestled with what it means to love God with *all* your heart? Not just the part of your heart that shows up on Sunday morning. Not just the part that feels religious. All of it.

When was the last time you thought about what it means to love God with *all* your soul? Your entire being. Your life itself. The breath in your lungs and the blood in your veins.

When was the last time you considered what it would actually look like to love God with *all* your mind? Your intellect. Your thoughts. Your doubts. Your questions. Your ability to reason and analyse and understand.

If you're like me—if you're like most Christians I know—the answer is probably not recently. Maybe never. Maybe you've heard the words so many times that you stopped hearing them altogether. Maybe you've assumed that because you want to love God, because you *intend* to love God, that counts as actually doing it.

But intention isn't love. Desire isn't love. Wanting to want to love God isn't the same as loving God.

And here's the hard truth: Jesus didn't say, "Feel warmly toward God when it's convenient." He didn't say, "Try to prioritize God when nothing else is competing for your attention." He didn't say, "Love God with whatever part of you is left over after you've given the rest to your career, your family, your hobbies, your comfort, and your fears."

He said *all*. All your heart. All your soul. All your mind.

Not some. Not most. Not the leftovers. Not the parts you're not using for other things.

All.

This is the moment where most books about love would pivot to something encouraging. Something soft. Something that makes you feel like you're okay, like God understands your limitations, like He's not really expecting you to actually love Him with everything because He knows you've got a lot going on.

I'm not going to do that.

Because the Bible doesn't do that. Jesus doesn't do that. When He said "all," He meant all. And if you're reading this and you know—deep down, in that place you don't talk about in small group—that you're not loving God with all of anything, the last thing you need is someone telling you it's fine.

It's not fine.

It's the greatest commandment. The first. The one everything else hangs on. And if you're not keeping it, you're not keeping any of them. Not really. Not in the way God intended.

You can check off all the religious boxes. You can attend church, give your tithe, serve on the hospitality team, lead a small group, share the gospel with your neighbours, and even preach sermons—and still, if you are not loving God with all your heart and soul and mind, Jesus would look at you and say, “You've missed the point. You've missed everything.”

Because the whole thing—the entire Christian life—is supposed to be an expression of love for God. Not obligation. Not duty. Not religious performance. Love.

And if it's not love, it's not Christianity. It's something else wearing Christianity's clothes.

So here's what we're going to do in this book.

We're going to go back to the beginning. We're going to look at this commandment the way Jesus intended it to be understood—not as a sentimental platitude, but as a radical, all-consuming, life-reorienting demand.

We're going to clear away the distortions. The things we've been taught about love that aren't true. The ways we've reduced this command to something manageable. The comfortable lies we've told ourselves to avoid the uncomfortable truth of what God actually requires.

We're going to look at what it actually means to love God with all your heart—not the heart as we moderns think of it, all emotion and feeling, but the heart as the ancient Hebrews understood it: the centre of your entire inner life, the seat of your thoughts, your will, your desires, your decisions.

We're going to explore what it means to love God with all your soul—your life, your breath, your existence, the very thing that makes you *you*—and why this kind of love goes so much deeper than anything you've been taught.

We're going to reclaim what it means to love God with all your mind—not checking your brain at the door of faith, but bringing your intellect into full submission to God, wrestling with questions, pursuing truth, and thinking God's thoughts after Him.

And along the way, we're going to be honest. Brutally honest. About where we've fallen short. About where the church has fallen short. About the ways we've settled for a counterfeit version of this command because the real thing was too costly, too demanding, too disruptive to the lives we've built for ourselves.

Because here's what I've come to believe: the modern church is dying of starvation in the middle of a feast. We have the greatest command ever given sitting right in front of us—and we've reduced it to a slogan. We've turned it into a song. We've printed it on t-shirts. We've made it safe.

And the Holy Spirit is done with safe.

I'm going to tell you something about myself. Something I don't say lightly.

I spent years—years—thinking I was loving God. I was in church every Sunday. I was leading. I was teaching. I was giving. I was doing all the things that looked like love from the outside. And on the inside, my heart was divided. Pulled in a dozen directions. Giving God the parts that were convenient and keeping the rest for myself.

I didn't even know it. That's the terrifying part. I thought I was fine. I thought my love for God was genuine. I thought all the activity, all the religious effort, all the boxes checked—I thought that was love.

And then one day—I can still tell you exactly where I was sitting, exactly what time it was, exactly what I was reading—the Holy Spirit pulled back the curtain. And I saw myself the way God saw me. And what I saw wasn't a man who loved God with all his heart. What I saw was a man who loved a lot of things with a lot of his heart, and God got whatever was left over.

It was ugly. It was humiliating. It was the most painful moment of my spiritual life.

And it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Because in that moment—in the wreckage of my self-deception—I finally understood why Jesus said this was the greatest commandment. Not because God needs our love. Not because God is insecure and requires constant affirmation. But because love for God is the only thing that can reorient everything else. It's the only force strong enough to pull all the scattered pieces of our lives into a single, coherent whole. It's the only foundation solid enough to build a life on.

Without it, we're just going through motions. Religious activity without transformation. Sound and fury signifying nothing.

With it—with genuine, whole-hearted, soul-deep, mind-engaged love for God—everything changes. The way you work changes. The way you parent changes. The way you handle money changes. The way you respond to suffering changes. The way you think about your future changes. The way you spend your time changes. The way you love your neighbour changes.

Because everything hangs on this. *Everything.*

So here's the question we're going to spend the rest of this book answering:

What does it actually mean to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?

Not what does it feel like. Not what does it look like when everything is going well and life is easy and God is blessing you. But what does it mean—really mean—in the mess of your actual life? In the mundane Tuesday afternoons and the sleepless nights and the moments when you're angry at God and the moments when you're not sure you believe anything at all? In the middle of your distractions and your failures and your secret sins and your exhausted attempts to be a good Christian?

What does this command actually require? And how do we actually do it?

Those are the questions we're going to pursue. Not with theory. Not with abstraction. But with the kind of unflinching honesty that's willing to look at our actual lives and compare them to what God actually said.

Because if you're like me—if you've been coasting on religious autopilot, assuming that because you're in church and you believe the right things and you're not committing any obvious sins, you must be loving God—then this book is going to disrupt you.

I hope it does.

Because the alternative is worse. The alternative is going through your entire Christian life thinking you're loving God when you're not. The alternative is standing before Him one day, hearing Him say, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" and realizing, too late, that you never actually understood what love meant.

I don't want that for you. I don't want it for me. I don't want it for the church.

So let's stop pretending. Let's stop settling. Let's stop assuming we know what this command means and actually go back to what God said.

Let's start with what love is not.

Because before we can build anything, we have to clear the ground. And the ground is littered with distortions.

PART TWO:
“LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD”

Chapter 2: What Love Is Not

Before we can build anything, we have to clear the ground.

And the ground is littered with distortions.

I mean that literally. If you could see the spiritual landscape of the modern Western church the way God sees it—if you could pull back the veil and look at what we have actually built our lives on—you would see a field so cluttered with debris that it's almost impossible to find the original foundation. We have piled up so many assumptions, so many cultural accommodations, so many comfortable half-truths about what it means to love God that the actual command Jesus gave has been buried under centuries of spiritual landfill.

We have to dig it out.

And the first step in digging is identifying what *isn't* the treasure. Because if you don't know what you're looking for, you'll end up carrying home rocks while the gold stays buried. You'll spend your whole life loving a version of God that doesn't exist, practicing a kind of love that isn't love at all, and wondering why you feel so empty at the end of it.

So let's clear the ground.

Let's name the distortions. Let's call them what they are. And let's have the courage to admit that most of us—myself included—have been operating under at least one of these counterfeit definitions for far too long.

What Love Is Not: Love Is Not a Feeling

This is the big one. This is the distortion that has done more damage to the church than almost any other.

We live in a culture that has taught us—through movies, through music, through every form of media we consume—that love is a feeling. Love is what you feel when the music swells and the camera zooms in and the two main characters finally kiss in the rain. Love is butterflies in your stomach. Love is warmth in your chest. Love is that emotional high you get when something moves you.

And because we have absorbed this definition of love without even realizing it, we have carried it into our relationship with God. We assume that loving God means *feeling* love for God. We assume that if we don't feel warm and fuzzy and emotionally connected during worship, something is wrong. We assume that the quality of our love is measured by the intensity of our feelings.

This is a catastrophe.

Because here's what you need to understand: feelings come and go. They are unreliable. They are influenced by sleep, by hormones, by what you ate for breakfast, by the weather, by a hundred factors that have nothing to do with your actual relationship with God. If your love for God is built on your feelings for God, your love for God will collapse the moment your feelings do.

And your feelings *will* collapse. Not because you're a bad Christian. Not because God has abandoned you. But because that's what feelings do. They are waves, not anchors. They rise and fall. They surge and retreat. And if you've tied your understanding of love to them, you will spend your entire spiritual life on a rollercoaster of confusion, never sure whether you actually love God or not.

The biblical word for love—the word Jesus used when He quoted Deuteronomy, the word Moses wrote in Hebrew, the word that runs like a golden thread through the entire Scriptures—is not primarily a feeling.

It is a covenant commitment.

It is a posture of the will. A deliberate orientation of the entire person toward God. A decision, made and remade, to align yourself with Him regardless of how you feel at any given moment.

Think about marriage for a second. If you are married, you know what I'm about to say. There are days when you feel deeply in love with your spouse. There are days when you don't. There are days when you look at them across the dinner table and feel a warmth that could melt steel. There are days when you're irritated by the way they breathe. But if your marriage is built on feelings, it will not survive the first real storm. What holds a marriage together is not the feeling of love but the commitment of love—the decision, made in advance, to be faithful, to serve, to sacrifice, to stay, even when the feeling isn't there.

It is exactly the same with God.

Loving God with all your heart does not mean feeling loving feelings toward God at all times. It means orienting your entire being toward Him as an act of your will. It means getting up in the morning and deciding, before you feel anything, that you belong to Him. It means choosing obedience when obedience feels like nothing. It means continuing to pray when prayer feels like talking to a wall. It means sitting in church on a Sunday when you feel absolutely nothing and singing songs you don't feel and listening to a sermon you're not sure you believe and still, in that moment, choosing to say: I am yours. *My will is bent toward you. Even when I feel nothing, I am yours.*

That is love. That is biblical love. That is the love Jesus commanded.

And here's the thing that will either liberate you or terrify you: this kind of love can exist even when you feel nothing. In fact, sometimes the purest expression of love is exactly that—loving when the feeling isn't there. Choosing. Committing. Orienting. Because the feeling may return tomorrow or it may not return for months, but the commitment remains. And God sees that commitment as love.

Not because He doesn't care about your feelings. But because He knows that feelings are not strong enough to hold the weight of a life. Only covenant commitment can do that.

What Love Is Not: Love Is Not Sentimentality

Here's the second distortion, and it's closely related to the first.

Sentimentality is not love. It's love's cheap imitation.

Sentimentality is that vague, warm feeling you get when you think about something spiritual. It's the emotional glow that comes from hearing a beautiful song or seeing a sunset or contemplating the idea of a higher power who loves you and wants you to be happy. It's safe. It's comfortable. It asks nothing of you and demands nothing from you. It's the spiritual equivalent of eating whipped cream and calling it a meal.

And the modern church is drowning in it.

We have replaced the God of the Bible with a sentimental abstraction. We talk about “love” without talking about who we love. We sing songs about “You” without ever specifying which “You” we mean. We have created a spiritual culture where it’s acceptable to feel warmly toward a vague divine presence but unacceptable to speak with clarity about the God who revealed Himself in Scripture, who spoke through prophets, who became flesh in Jesus Christ, who commands obedience, who judges sin, who demands everything.

Sentimentality loves the idea of God. Biblical love loves *God*.

The difference is everything.

You can feel sentimental about a concept. You cannot love a concept. You can only love a person. And the person you are commanded to love is not a generalized divine force. It is the specific God who said, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” It is the God who gave His name—Yahweh—to Moses at the burning bush. It is the God who spoke the universe into existence, who drowned an army in the Red Sea, who thundered from Mount Sinai, who dwelt in a pillar of fire and a cloud of smoke. It is the God who became a man named Jesus, who was born in a barn, who healed the sick and raised the dead, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, who rose from the grave on the third day.

That God.

Not a sentimentalized version of Him that you’ve created in your own image. Not a God who exists to affirm your choices and make you feel comfortable. Not a God who asks nothing of you and demands nothing from you because He’s just so loving that He would never interfere with your life.

That God does not exist. He is a figment of your imagination. He is an idol. And you can feel sentiment toward an idol all day long—you can cry during worship songs, you can get emotional during sermons, you can feel deeply moved by the idea of God’s love—and none of it counts as loving God. Because you’re not actually loving God. You’re loving a version of God that you invented, a version that doesn’t require you to surrender anything, a version that fits neatly into your existing life without disrupting anything.

Here’s what I need you to hear: God is not a feeling. He is not a concept. He is not a sentimental abstraction that exists to make you feel warm and fuzzy. He is a consuming fire. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the One before whom angels cover their faces and cry out “Holy, holy, holy.” He is the One who will one day judge the living and the dead.

And He commands you to love Him. Not a sanitized, sentimentalized, watered-down version of Him. *Him*.

The real Him.

The Him who demands everything. The Him whose love is passionate and active and fierce. The Him who is jealous for your affection because He alone is worthy of it. The Him who revealed Himself in Scripture, who spoke through prophets, who became flesh in Jesus Christ, who will return one day not as a gentle teacher but as a conquering King with a sword coming out of His mouth.

Loving that God—the real God—is not sentimentality. It is the most dangerous, costly, life-upending thing you will ever do. And it is the only thing that will ever satisfy the ache in your soul.

What Love Is Not: Love Is Not Transactional

The third distortion is subtle. So subtle that most of us don't even recognize it as a distortion. We've absorbed it so deeply that it feels like common sense.

Here it is: *I will love God if He blesses me.*

We would never say it out loud. It sounds too ugly when you put it into words. But it's there, lurking beneath the surface of our prayers, our service, our entire approach to God. We serve Him because we expect something in return. We love Him because we believe He will love us back in ways we can measure. We obey because we believe obedience will lead to blessing. And when the blessings don't come—when life falls apart, when prayers go unanswered, when God seems distant and silent—the love we thought we had begins to crack.

Because it was transactional. It was built on an unspoken agreement: *I will love You if You take care of me. I will serve You if You bless me. I will follow You if You make my life work the way I want it to.*

And when God doesn't hold up His end of the bargain—or rather, when He doesn't hold up the end of the bargain we invented without His consent—we feel betrayed. We wonder if it was worth it. We wonder if God is even good. We wonder if we've been wasting our time.

This is not love. This is a business arrangement.

True love—biblical love—is not transactional. It is not rooted in what God does for you. It is rooted in who God is. Regardless of circumstances. Regardless of outcomes. Regardless of whether you feel blessed or cursed, prosperous or poor, happy or devastated.

The psalmist understood this. In Psalm 73, Asaph confesses that he almost lost his faith when he looked at the wicked prospering while he struggled. He almost gave up. He almost said, “What’s the point of loving God? What’s the point of serving Him? The wicked have it better than I do, and they don’t even believe in Him.”

But then he went into the sanctuary of God. And he saw things differently. He saw that the prosperity of the wicked was temporary, that their end was destruction, that their comfort was an illusion. And in that moment, he said something that should be etched on the heart of every believer:

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”

Do you hear that? *Nothing*. Not blessings. Not prosperity. Not health. Not comfort. Not the approval of others. Not success. Not a happy life. Not an easy path. *Nothing*.

Asaph’s love for God had become non-transactional. He wasn’t loving God because of what God could give him. He was loving God because God is God. Even if everything else was stripped away—even if he lost it all—he would still have God. And that was enough.

Is that your love? Is that my love?

Or are we loving God because of what we get out of it?

Here’s the test: if God took away everything He has given you—your health, your family, your financial stability, your comfort, your sense of His presence—would you still love Him? Would you still serve Him? Would you still get up in the morning and orient your life toward Him, even if you received nothing in return except Him?

I’m not asking if it would be easy. I’m asking if it would be true. Because that is the kind of love Jesus commanded. Love that is not conditional on blessing. Love that is not transactional. Love that is rooted in who God is, not in what He does.

What Love Is: The First Glimpse

So if love is not a feeling, not sentimentality, not transactional—what is it?

We've only cleared the ground. We've only removed the debris. We haven't built anything yet. But we've seen enough to get a glimpse.

Love is a covenant commitment. It is a posture of the will. It is a deliberate orientation of the entire person toward God. It is active, not passive. It is decision, not emotion. It is choosing God when God is not choosing you back in the ways you expected. It is serving God when service costs you something. It is obeying God when obedience makes no sense. It is loving the real God—the God of Scripture, the God of thunder and fire, the God who became flesh and died on a cross—not a sentimental idol of your own making.

It is loving Him for who He is, not for what He gives you. It is saying, with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you."

That is love. That is the love Jesus commanded. That is the love that everything else hangs on.

And we haven't even gotten to the heart yet.

But before we move on, I need to ask you something. And I need you to be honest. Not with me—I'm a voice on a page, I'll never know what you answer. Be honest with yourself. Be honest with God.

Which of these distortions have you been living with?

Have you been treating love as a feeling, assuming you don't love God when the feeling isn't there? Have you been settling for sentimentality, loving a vague, comfortable version of God instead of the consuming fire of Scripture? Have you been operating transactionally, serving God for what you get out of it, and now you're angry because He hasn't held up His end of a bargain He never made?

Take a moment. Let the question sit. Don't rush past it. Don't give the Sunday school answer. Be real.

Because you cannot build a life on a foundation of distortions. You cannot love God with all your heart, soul, and mind if you don't even know what love is. You have to clear the ground. You have to name the counterfeit. You have to repent of the false definitions you've been living by.

And then—only then—can you begin to build.

So here's what we're going to do. We've cleared away what love is *not*. Now we're going to start building what love *is*. We're going to start with the heart. Because the heart is where it all begins.

But before we get there, I want you to sit with this for a moment. Let the clearing of the ground be its own kind of work. Don't rush to the next chapter until you've let these truths do their work. Because if you skip past this—if you nod along and turn the page without actually letting it land—you'll be carrying the debris with you into the rest of the book. And the foundation will still be cluttered.

So take your time. Go back and read it again if you need to. Ask God to show you where you've been loving a counterfeit. Ask Him to show you what love actually means.

And when you're ready, we'll turn to the heart.

Chapter 3: What Love Is

We have cleared the ground.

We have named the distortions that have passed for love in our hearts and in our churches. We have acknowledged—if we were honest—that much of what we called love for God was actually something else. A feeling. A sentiment. A transaction. A comfortable arrangement that demanded nothing and delivered nothing.

Now we build.

But before we build, we need to understand something about the kind of foundation we're laying. Because if you've spent any time in the modern church, you've been taught—implicitly, if not explicitly—that love is soft. That love is gentle. That love is the opposite of confrontation, the opposite of demand, the opposite of anything that might make you uncomfortable.

That is not the love of God.

The love of God is the most terrifying force in the universe. It is a fire that consumes. It is a weight that crushes. It is a love that killed the Son of God. It is a love that, if you ever truly encounter it, will dismantle everything you thought you were building and rebuild it from the ground up.

I'm not exaggerating. I'm not using hyperbole for effect. I'm telling you the truth that the Bible has been telling for thousands of years: the love of God is not safe. It is not comfortable. It is not designed to make you feel good about yourself.

It is designed to remake you.

And if you're not ready for that—if you're still hoping for a love that will affirm you without changing you, that will accept you without challenging you, that will let you stay exactly as you are while calling itself love—you need to stop reading now. Because what follows will not be what you're looking for.

But if you're ready—if you've tasted the emptiness of counterfeit love and you're hungry for something real, something that will cost you everything and give you something worth having—then keep reading. Because we're about to look at what love actually is.

And it will change everything.

Love Is Covenant Commitment

The first thing we need to understand is that biblical love is not a feeling. We've already said this. But now we need to say what it *is*.

The Hebrew word for love that appears in Deuteronomy 6—the word Jesus quoted—is *ahavah*. And while it can include emotion, its primary meaning is not emotional. It is covenantal. It is the language of binding commitment. It is the word used to describe the loyalty between a king and his subjects, the faithfulness between a husband and wife, the allegiance between a people and their God.

When God commanded Israel to love Him, He was not commanding them to feel warm affection toward Him. He was commanding them to be loyal. To be faithful. To bind themselves to Him in covenant commitment that would outlast any feeling, survive any circumstance, and remain true even when everything around them suggested it would be easier to walk away.

This is crucial because it changes everything about how we understand the Christian life.

If love is a feeling, then the Christian life is about manufacturing the right emotions. It's about trying to feel close to God, trying to feel passionate about worship, trying to feel something that will convince us that our love is real. And when the feelings don't come—when we sit in church feeling nothing, when we pray and feel nothing, when we read our Bibles and feel nothing—we assume something is wrong. We assume we don't really love God. We spiral into guilt and shame and eventually, often, into apathy. Because if love is a feeling and the feeling isn't there, what's the point?

But if love is covenant commitment, the Christian life looks completely different. It's not about manufacturing feelings. It's about keeping covenant. It's about getting up every morning and renewing your commitment to God regardless of how you feel. It's about obeying when obedience feels meaningless. It's about praying when prayer feels like talking to a wall. It's about staying faithful when faithfulness costs you something.

And here's the beautiful, liberating truth: *God sees that as love.*

Not second-rate love. Not love that's trying really hard even though it doesn't feel anything. Not love that He accepts grudgingly because He knows you're doing your best. No. He sees covenant commitment—the decision to bind yourself to Him, to orient your will toward Him, to remain faithful regardless of circumstances—as love. Pure, genuine, real love.

Because love, in the biblical sense, is not primarily about what you feel. It's about what you do. It's about where you place your loyalty. It's about who you bind yourself to when binding yourself to them is costly.

Think about marriage again. When a couple stands at the altar and makes vows, they are not saying, "I feel really strongly about you right now." They are making a covenant. They are binding themselves to each other in a commitment that is supposed to last until death. And when they keep that covenant—when they stay faithful through the hard years, the boring years, the years when the feelings fade and the attraction dims—that is love. That is the very essence of love. Not the butterflies. The faithfulness.

It is exactly the same with God.

When you wake up on a Tuesday morning feeling nothing—no spiritual warmth, no sense of God's presence, no motivation to pray—and you get on your knees anyway because you made a covenant, that is love. When you read your Bible and it feels like reading a phone book and you don't get anything out of it and you do it anyway because you promised, that is love. When you sit in church on a Sunday when you'd rather be anywhere else and you sing songs you don't feel and you listen to a sermon you're not sure you believe and you do it anyway because you are His and He is yours, *that is love*.

Not second-rate love. Real love. Covenant love. The kind of love that God commands. The kind of love that Jesus demonstrated when He went to the cross not because He felt like it—He asked for the cup to pass, remember—but because He was committed. He was faithful. He was bound to His Father and to us in a covenant that would not be broken by suffering or death.

That is love.

Love Is Active Devotion

The second thing we need to understand is that love is active, not passive.

We live in a culture that has taught us to think of love as something we *feel*. But the Bible consistently presents love as something we *do*. It is not a state of being; it is a direction of movement. It is not a noun; it is a verb. It is not something that happens to you; it is something you choose, again and again, moment by moment.

When Jesus quoted Deuteronomy, He was quoting a passage that immediately follows the commandment with instructions about *how* to love. Look at what Moses actually said in Deuteronomy 6:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Do you see what's happening here? The commandment to love God is immediately followed by a series of actions. Actions that require intentionality. Actions that require effort. Actions that require you to organize your entire life around the reality of who God is and what He has commanded.

Loving God, in other words, is not something that happens automatically. It is something you do. It is something you build into the rhythms of your life. It is something you talk about and think about and write down and put on your hands and your foreheads and your doorframes because if you don't, you will forget. You will drift. You will wake up one day and realize that your love has become a vague sentiment instead of an active devotion.

I need to say something here that might offend you.

If your love for God is not producing action—if it is not changing how you live, how you spend your time, how you use your money, how you treat your family, how you think about your future—then it is not biblical love. It might be sentiment. It might be affection. It might be a genuine desire to love God. But it is not the love that God commands.

Because the love God commands is active. It is devotion that shows up in the details of your life. It is not something you feel on Sunday and forget by Tuesday. It is something you *do*—on Sunday, yes, but also on Monday morning when you wake up and on Tuesday afternoon when no one is watching and on Wednesday night when you're exhausted and on Thursday when the temptation comes and on Friday when the suffering hits and on Saturday when you'd rather do anything else.

Active devotion.

This is what the psalmist meant when he said, "I have set the Lord always before me." He wasn't talking about a feeling. He was talking about an orientation. A posture. A constant, intentional, active placing of God at the centre of his awareness. He was *doing* something. He was actively, deliberately, moment by moment orienting his life toward God.

That is love.

Love Is Rooted in Who God Is

The third thing we need to understand is that biblical love is rooted in God Himself, not in what God gives us.

This is the hardest one. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where we find out whether our love is genuine or whether it has been transactional all along.

Because if you love God because of what He does for you—because He blesses you, because He answers your prayers, because He makes your life better, because He gives you peace and joy and purpose—what happens when He stops doing those things? What happens when the blessings dry up? What happens when the prayers seem to hit the ceiling and bounce back unanswered? What happens when your life gets worse instead of better? What happens when the peace disappears and the joy evaporates and the purpose you thought you had turns out to be something else entirely?

If your love is rooted in what God gives you, your love will collapse when God stops giving. Or rather, when God stops giving in the ways you expected. Because here's the truth: God never stops giving. He gives Himself. And if you love Him for who He is, that is enough. That is more than enough. That is everything.

The psalmist Asaph understood this. In Psalm 73, he confesses that he nearly lost his faith because he was looking at the wicked and seeing them prosper while he struggled. He almost gave up. He almost said, "What's the point of serving God? What's the point of loving Him? The wicked have it better than I do, and they don't even believe in Him."

But then something happened. He went into the sanctuary of God. And in that place, he saw things differently. He saw that the prosperity of the wicked was temporary, that their comfort was an illusion, that their end was destruction. And in that moment, he said something that should be carved into the heart of every believer:

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you."

Nothing. Not blessings. Not prosperity. Not health. Not comfort. Not success. Not a happy life. Not an easy path. Not answered prayers. Not spiritual experiences. Not even the sense of God's presence. *Nothing*. Asaph had reached the place where God Himself was enough. Where love for God was not contingent on anything God gave him. Where he would love God even if everything else was stripped away.

That is biblical love. Love that is rooted in who God is, not in what God does. Love that says, "You are enough. You have always been enough. You will always be enough. Even if I never see another blessing, even if every prayer goes unanswered, even if my life falls apart around me—I will still love You. Because You are worthy. Not because of what You do for me. Because of who You are."

I want you to sit with that for a moment.

Is that your love? Is that my love? Or is our love conditional? Is it transactional? Have we been loving God for what we get out of it, and now we're afraid to ask whether we would love Him if we got nothing at all?

Love Is the Reorientation of Everything

One more thing before we move on.

Biblical love is not something you add to your life. It is not a new activity you incorporate into your already-busy schedule. It is not a spiritual discipline you practice alongside your other commitments.

It is the reorientation of everything.

When you love God with all your heart and soul and mind, you don't just add "love God" to your to-do list. You let love for God become the lens through which you see everything else. You let it become the organizing principle of your life. You let it determine how you spend your time, how you use your money, how you treat your family, how you do your work, how you think about your future, how you respond to suffering, how you handle success, how you live and how you die.

Because if God is worthy of all your love—if He is the one being in the universe who deserves your entire heart, your entire soul, your entire mind—then He deserves to be at the centre of everything. Not just at the centre of your spiritual life, as if there were parts of your life that weren't spiritual. At the centre of *everything*. Your work. Your relationships. Your hobbies. Your finances. Your dreams. Your fears. Your failures. Your successes. All of it.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." He wasn't giving you a formula for getting what you want. He was telling you that when God is first—when love for God is the organizing principle of your life—everything else falls into its proper place.

Not because God becomes a means to an end. But because when the end is God Himself, everything else becomes what it was always meant to be: a context for loving Him, serving Him, enjoying Him, and making Him known.

This is what love is.

It is covenant commitment. It is active devotion. It is rooted in who God is, not in what He gives. It is the reorientation of everything around the One who is worthy of everything.

A Picture of This Love

I want to show you what this looks like. Not in theory. In practice.

There's a story in the Gospels that I keep coming back to. It's found in Luke 7. Jesus is at a Pharisee's house, having dinner. And a woman comes in—a woman with a reputation, the text says, a sinner. She doesn't say a word. She stands behind Jesus, weeping. And then she does something that scandalizes everyone in the room.

She pours perfume on His feet. Expensive perfume. The kind of perfume that represented a year's wages. And she doesn't just pour it. She pours it on His feet, and then she wipes His feet with her hair. Her *hair*. In that culture, a woman letting down her hair in public was an act of profound intimacy, something you would never do in mixed company.

And the Pharisee who invited Jesus sees this and thinks to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is."

But Jesus knows. He knows exactly who she is. And He says something that should stop us in our tracks:

"Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love shows."

Do you see it? Her love was not a feeling. It was not sentimentality. It was not a transaction. It was active, costly, publicly humiliating devotion. She poured out

everything she had—not just the perfume, but her dignity, her reputation, her safety—because she loved Jesus. Not because she wanted something from Him. Because she loved Him. Because He had forgiven her. Because He was worthy.

That is love.

And Jesus looked at that love—messy, extravagant, costly, humiliating love—and said, "This is what love looks like. This is what I came for. Not the careful, measured, respectable love of the Pharisee who invited Me to dinner but never let Me touch his life. This. This woman who poured out everything because I was worth everything."

This is the love we're talking about. This is the love Jesus commanded. This is the love that everything else hangs on.

Where We Go From Here

We have cleared the ground. We have named what love is not. We have begun to build, laying the foundation of what love actually is.

But we're not done. We've only laid the foundation. Now we need to build the structure. And the structure is found in the words Jesus used when He quoted Deuteronomy: heart, soul, mind.

What does it mean to love God with all your heart? Not the heart as we moderns think of it—all emotion and feeling—but the heart as the ancient Hebrews understood it: the centre of your entire inner life, the seat of your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral decisions.

What does it mean to love God with all your soul? Your life. Your breath. Your existence. The very thing that makes you *you*.

What does it mean to love God with all your mind? Your intellect. Your ability to reason, to question, to doubt, to understand, to think God's thoughts after Him.

We're going to explore each of these in depth. Because you cannot love God with something you don't understand. You cannot give Him your heart if you don't know what your heart is. You cannot give Him your soul if you've never considered what your soul actually is. You cannot give Him your mind if you've been told to check it at the door.

But before we go there, I need to ask you something.

Have you been loving a counterfeit? Have you been settling for feelings instead of covenant?

Have you been offering sentiment instead of active devotion? Have you been loving God for what He gives instead of for who He is?

If so, there's no condemnation here. There's only an invitation. An invitation to turn from the counterfeit and embrace the real. An invitation to let God redefine love for you. An invitation to begin loving Him the way He actually commands to be loved.

It will cost you everything. I'm not going to pretend it won't. It will cost you your illusions. It will cost you your comfortable arrangements. It will cost you the version of God you invented to keep yourself safe. It will cost you the life you've been building that didn't include Him at the centre.

But it will give you something worth having. It will give you *Him*. And He is enough. He has always been enough. He will always be enough.

Let's begin.

PART THREE:
"WITH ALL YOUR HEART"

Chapter 4: The Heart in Hebrew Thought

We have to start here.

Because if you don't understand what Jesus meant when He said "heart," you will misunderstand everything that follows. And I can promise you, with absolute certainty, that you *don't* understand what Jesus meant when He said "heart." Not because you're not intelligent. Not because you haven't read your Bible. But because you live in the twenty-first century, and Jesus was speaking to a first-century Jewish audience, and the word "heart" has changed its meaning so dramatically over the centuries that we are practically speaking a different language.

When Jesus said "heart," the people listening to Him did not think primarily of emotion.

When you hear "heart," you think of emotion. You think of feelings. You think of the warm, fuzzy part of you that gets moved by a beautiful song or a touching story or a moment of worship that breaks through your defences. That's what "heart" means to you. It's the opposite of "head." It's feeling versus thinking. It's the part of you that loves versus the part of you that calculates.

That is not what Jesus meant.

Not even close.

The Hebrew Word: *Lev*

The word Jesus was quoting—because He was quoting Deuteronomy, which was written in Hebrew—is *lev*. And *lev* is one of the most comprehensive words in the entire Old Testament.

If I were to translate *lev* into English, I would need multiple words. I would need to say: the heart is the centre of your entire inner life. It is the seat of your thoughts. It is the seat of your will. It is the seat of your desires. It is the seat of your moral decisions. It is the place where you deliberate, where you choose, where you decide what you want and what you will do to get it.

The heart, in Hebrew thought, is not the opposite of the mind. It includes the mind. The heart is where you think. When the Old Testament says someone "thought in their heart," it's not using poetic language. It's describing how the ancient Hebrews understood cognition. They didn't separate thinking from feeling the way we do. They understood the heart as the control centre of the entire person—the place where thinking, feeling, and choosing all happen together.

This changes everything.

Because when Jesus commands you to love God with all your heart, He is not commanding you to feel a certain way. He is commanding you to bring your entire inner life—every thought, every desire, every decision, every moral choice, every deliberation, every intention—under the lordship of God. He is commanding you to let God be the centre of everything that happens in the control room of your soul.

The Heart as the Seat of Thought

Let me show you what I mean.

Throughout the Old Testament, the heart is consistently described as the place where thinking happens. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Not "as he thinks in his head." As he thinks in his *heart*. The heart is where thoughts occur. The heart is where you reason, where you ponder, where you reflect, where you come to conclusions.

When the Old Testament describes someone as wise, it says they have a "wise heart." When it describes someone as foolish, it says they are "foolish in heart." The heart is not the seat of irrational emotion; it is the seat of understanding. It is the place where you process reality. It is the organ of perception, the lens through which you see the world and make sense of it.

This is why Proverbs 4:23—a verse you probably know—says: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Everything. Your actions. Your words. Your habits. Your character. All of it flows from the heart. Because the heart is the source. It is the wellspring. It is the control room. Whatever is happening in your heart is going to show up in your life. Not eventually. Immediately. Because everything you do flows from your heart.

If you have anger in your heart, it will flow out of you in your words and your actions. If you have lust in your heart, it will flow out of you in what you look at and what you pursue. If you have fear in your heart, it will flow out of you in your decisions and your relationships. If you have love for God in your heart, it will flow out of you in everything you do. Because the heart is the source. And everything flows from it.

The Heart as the Seat of Will

The heart is also the place where choices are made.

When the Old Testament talks about someone deciding to do something, it says they "set their heart" to do it. When it talks about someone being stubborn, it says they "hardened their heart." When it talks about someone being committed, it says they "turned their heart" toward God. The heart is not passive. It is active. It is the place where you deliberate, where you weigh options, where you make decisions, where you choose your path.

This is crucial for understanding what it means to love God with all your heart. Because if the heart is the seat of the will, then loving God with all your heart means bending your will toward God. It means choosing God. It means setting your heart on God and keeping it set on God regardless of what other options present themselves.

Think about the language of the Old Testament. When God calls His people to return to Him, He says, "Circumcise your hearts." He doesn't mean "feel more emotional about Me." He means *cut away everything in your will that is opposed to Me*. Make a decisive, surgical choice to remove the stubbornness, the rebellion, the self-will that has taken root in your heart. Choose Me. Decide for Me. Set your will toward Me and don't look back.

When God promises to transform His people, He says, "I will give you a new heart." He doesn't mean "I will give you new feelings." He means *I will give you a new will. I will give you a new centre of decision-making. I will reorient your entire inner life so that you want what I want, choose what I choose, desire what I desire.*

This is what it means to love God with all your heart. It means your will is bent toward God. It means you trust Him to do what He says. It means you are willing to sacrifice for Him. It means you want to obey His commands—not because you have to, but because your heart, your will, your centre of decision-making has been reoriented toward Him.

The Heart as the Seat of Desire

The heart is also the place where desire lives.

When the Old Testament talks about what you want, it talks about what you desire in your heart. When it talks about longing, it talks about the heart longing. When it talks about craving, it talks about the heart craving. The heart is not just the place where you think and choose; it is the place where you want. It is the engine of your desire. It is the source of your longing.

And here's the thing about desire: you don't control what you desire. Not directly. You can't just decide to want something. You can decide to pursue something. You can decide to act on a desire. But the desire itself—the longing, the craving, the pull toward something—is deeper than your conscious will. It's something that happens in the heart.

This is why the state of your heart is so important. Because what you desire in your heart will determine what you pursue. And what you pursue will determine the shape of your life. If your heart desires God, you will pursue God. If your heart desires comfort, you will pursue comfort. If your heart desires approval, you will pursue approval. If your heart desires pleasure, you will pursue pleasure. What you desire in your heart—not what you say you desire, not what you wish you desired, but what you actually, functionally desire—will determine everything about your life.

This is why loving God with all your heart means bringing your desires under His lordship. Not just your thoughts. Not just your choices. Your desires. The deep, often unconscious longings that drive you. The things you reach for when you're tired, when you're lonely, when you're afraid, when you're bored. The things you turn to when no one is watching. The things that you would pursue if you knew no one would ever find out.

Those desires—the ones in your heart—must be reoriented toward God. Not suppressed. Not denied. Reoriented. Because the heart is the seat of desire. And if your desires are not set on God, you are not loving God with all your heart. You may be loving Him with your thoughts. You may be loving Him with your will. But your heart—the deep engine of your desire—is still pulling you toward something else.

The Heart as the Seat of Moral Decision

Finally, the heart is the place where moral decisions are made.

When the Old Testament talks about sin, it talks about the heart being the source of sin. When it talks about righteousness, it talks about the heart being pure. When it talks about judgment, it talks about God knowing the heart. The heart is not morally neutral. It is the centre of your moral life. It is where you become either righteous or wicked, not by what you do, but by what you are at the deepest level.

This is what Jesus was getting at when He said that it's not what goes into a person that defiles them, but what comes out of the heart. Because out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. The heart is the source. It is the root. It is the place where sin originates, long before it ever shows up in your actions.

And this is why loving God with all your heart is not just about doing the right things. It's about *being* the right kind of person at the deepest level. It's about your heart—your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral centre—being so thoroughly oriented toward God that righteousness flows out of you the way water flows from a spring. Not because you're trying hard. Because your heart has been transformed. Because you love God with *all* your heart, and everything else flows from that.

The Modern Problem

Here's the problem we face.

We have been taught—by our culture, by our education, by the very structure of the way we think—to separate the heart from the mind. We have been taught that the heart is for feeling and the mind is for thinking. We have been taught that faith is a matter of the heart and reason is a matter of the mind. We have been taught that if you want to love God, you need to feel something in your heart, and if you want to understand God, you need to think something in your mind.

The ancient Hebrews would have had no idea what you were talking about.

For them, the heart included the mind. Thinking was something you did in your heart. Reason was a function of the heart. Understanding was a matter of the heart. When you loved God with all your heart, you loved Him with all your thinking. When you loved God with all your heart, you loved Him with all your reasoning. When you loved God with all your heart, you loved Him with all your understanding.

This is not a minor difference. This is a massive, foundational difference that affects everything about how we understand the command to love God.

Because if we have separated heart from mind, we will try to love God with our hearts while keeping our minds to ourselves. We will try to feel something for God while thinking whatever we want. We will try to be passionate in worship while being sceptical in our studies. We will try to have a "heart relationship" with God while keeping our intellects at a safe distance, as if reason were somehow incompatible with faith.

This is not biblical love. This is a distortion created by a modern dualism that the Bible does not recognize.

To love God with all your heart is to love God with all your thinking. It is to bring your intellect into submission to God. It is to think about God, think about His world, think about His Word, think about His will, think about His ways, with the full force of your rational capacity, and to do it as an act of love. Not as a cold, detached exercise. As love. As the kind of love that engages your entire inner life—your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral centre—in the pursuit of God.

What This Means for You

I need you to hear this.

You cannot love God with your heart if you are not thinking about God. You cannot love God with your heart if you are not choosing God. You cannot love God with your heart if you are not desiring God. You cannot love God with your heart if you are not bringing your entire inner life—the control room of your soul—under the lordship of God.

The heart is not a small thing. It is not a compartment. It is not a part of you that you can set aside while you live the rest of your life. The heart is the centre. It is the source. It is the control room. And when Jesus commands you to love God with all your heart, He is commanding you to bring the very centre of your existence into alignment with God. To let God be the source. To let God be the control. To let God be the centre of everything that happens in the deepest places of who you are.

This is not optional. This is not for the super-spiritual. This is not for people who have more time or more discipline or more natural devotion. This is the command. The greatest command. The one that everything else hangs on.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Not with some of your heart. Not with the parts of your heart that you're not using for other things. Not with the leftovers after you've given the rest to your career, your family, your ambitions, your fears. All. All your heart. All your thoughts. All your choices. All your desires. All your moral decisions. All of it.

This is what it means to love God.

And this is only the beginning. Because the heart is not the only thing you're commanded to love with. There's also the soul. And the soul is something we have lost entirely.

Chapter 5: Surrendering the Whole Inner Being

We have established what the heart is.

Not the sentimental organ of modern poetry. Not the emotional centre that feels warm when the worship music swells. The lev. The control room. The seat of thought, will, desire, and moral decision. The place where you become who you actually are before any of it shows up in your actions.

Now we have to ask the question that no one wants to ask: *What state is your heart in?*

Because here's the thing about the heart. You can't just decide it's fine. You can't assume it's healthy because you go to church, because you believe the right things, because you're not committing any obvious sins. The heart is deceptive. The Bible says so explicitly. Jeremiah 17:9—a verse we love to quote when we're talking about other people's hearts but never when we're talking about our own—says:

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Your heart lies to you. It tells you you're fine when you're not. It tells you you're loving God when you're actually loving a dozen other things and giving God whatever's left. It tells you your desires are pure when they're divided. It tells you your will is bent toward God when it's actually bent toward comfort, approval, security, and a hundred other gods wearing the mask of Christianity.

You cannot trust your heart to tell you the truth about your heart.

This is why the command to love God with all your heart is not a suggestion you can casually implement. It is a demand that forces you to go deeper than you want to go, to look at things you don't want to look at, to admit things you have spent your entire spiritual life pretending aren't true.

We have to go there. Because you cannot love God with all your heart if you don't know what's actually in your heart. And you cannot know what's actually in your heart until you let God show you. Which means you have to be willing to see things you have been avoiding. Possibly for decades.

The Divided Heart

The great plague of the modern Christian is not atheism. It is not scepticism. It is not even outright sin, at least not the kind we think of when we say "sin." The great plague of the modern Christian is a divided heart.

We have learned, without even realizing we learned it, to compartmentalize. We have learned to give God the parts of our hearts that we're willing to surrender while keeping the rest for ourselves. We have learned to be religious in some areas and secular in others, as if God were the Lord of Sunday but not of Monday, the Lord of our prayers but not of our bank accounts, the Lord of our church attendance but not of our secret thoughts.

This is not love. This is partition.

Imagine a man who tells his wife he loves her with all his heart, but he spends his evenings with another woman. Imagine he tells her she's the most important person in his life, but he gives his best hours, his best energy, his best attention to someone else. Imagine he says he's committed to her, but his heart is divided between her and a dozen other loves that he refuses to give up.

Would you call that love? Of course not. You would call it adultery. You would call it betrayal. You would call it what it is: a heart that is not surrendered.

This is exactly what we do to God.

We say we love Him. We sing songs about how much we love Him. We post verses about how much we love Him. But our hearts are divided. We love God *and* we love comfort. We love God *and* we love approval. We love God *and* we love security. We love God *and* we love our careers, our reputations, our plans, our dreams, our secret indulgences, our petty idols that we refuse to name as idols.

And because we have learned to call this "balance" instead of "betrayal," we feel no shame. We feel no urgency. We feel no need to repent. We have normalized a divided heart and called it the Christian life.

It is not the Christian life. It is the opposite of the Christian life. The Christian life is a life of wholehearted devotion to God. Not partial. Not compartmentalized. Not balanced between God and the world. *Wholehearted.*

Jesus said it Himself: "No one can serve two masters." Not "it's difficult to serve two masters." Not "it's challenging to balance two masters." *No one can serve two masters.* Because you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. There is no third option. There is no peaceful coexistence. There is no "balance" where God gets His share and the world gets its share and everyone is happy.

You cannot serve God and money. You cannot serve God and comfort. You cannot serve God and approval. You cannot serve God and your carefully curated life. You cannot serve God and anything else. Because God is not a compartment. He is not a part of your life. He is your life. And if He is not your *everything*, He is not your Lord. And if He is not your Lord, He is not your God. And if He is not your God, you are not loving Him with all your heart. You are loving Him with a part of your heart, which is to say you are not loving Him at all.

The Heart That Must Be Guarded

This is why Proverbs 4:23 is one of the most urgent verses in all of Scripture.

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

Above all else. Not "consider guarding your heart." Not "add heart-guarding to your list of spiritual disciplines." *Above all else.* Nothing is more important. Nothing is more urgent.

Nothing is more essential to your life with God than guarding your heart.

Why? Because everything you do flows from your heart. Your actions. Your words. Your habits. Your character. Your relationships. Your life. All of it flows from your heart. If your heart is divided, your life will be divided. If your heart is compromised, your life will be compromised. If your heart is given over to idols, your life will be given over to idols. Because the heart is the source. And everything flows from it.

So what does it mean to guard your heart?

It means you are vigilant. It means you are watchful. It means you pay attention to what is happening in the deepest places of your soul. It means you don't assume your heart is fine. It means you regularly—daily, even—ask God to show you what's actually in there. The desires you're not admitting. The idols you're not naming. The divided loyalties you've normalized. The areas where you've given God a seat at the table but not the head of the table.

Guarding your heart means you are ruthless with what you allow in. You don't let your heart be shaped by the world. You don't let your desires be formed by advertising, by entertainment, by the values of a culture that is hostile to God. You don't let your will be bent by the constant pressure to conform, to compromise, to fit in. You guard your heart because your heart is the most valuable thing you have—not because it's pure, but because it's the control room, and if the enemy takes the control room, the war is lost.

This is why the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart. Because if your heart is surrendered to God—fully, completely, without reservation—everything else will follow. If your heart is set on God, your actions will follow. Your words will follow. Your habits will follow. Your character will follow. Because everything flows from the heart.

But if your heart is divided—if it's pulled in a dozen directions, if it's given to God in some areas and given to the world in others—your life will be divided. And you will spend your entire Christian life trying to compensate for a divided heart with religious activity. You will pray more, read your Bible more, go to church more, serve more, give more, trying to make up for the fact that your heart is not actually surrendered. And it will never work. Because everything flows from the heart. And if the heart is not surrendered, nothing else will be.

The Surrendered Will

Let me get specific.

Loving God with all your heart means your will is bent toward God. It means that when you have to make a decision—any decision, from the trivial to the life-altering—your default setting is to choose what God wants. Not what you want. Not what's easiest. Not what's most comfortable. Not what will make you look good. What God wants.

This is not natural. This is not how you were born. Your natural will is bent toward yourself. You are born with a heart that wants what it wants, that pursues its own desires, that chooses its own comfort over God's commands. This is the condition of every human being apart from the transforming work of God.

But when you love God with all your heart, something shifts. Your will is reoriented. Not perfectly—not in this life—but truly. You begin to want what God wants. You begin to choose what God commands. Not because you have to, but because your heart has been changed and now you *want* to. You still struggle. You still fail. You still have moments when your old will reasserts itself and you choose what you want instead of what God wants. But the overall direction of your life, the deep orientation of your will, is toward God.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Denying yourself is not about denying that you exist. It's about denying your self-will. It's about saying no to what you want when what you want conflicts with what God wants. It's about bending your will toward God until God's will becomes what you want.

And this is not a one-time decision. This is a daily, hourly, moment-by-moment reorientation. Because your will doesn't stay bent. It drifts. It returns to its default setting. It has to be bent back, again and again, through the discipline of choosing God, choosing obedience, choosing surrender.

This is what it means to love God with all your heart.

The Purified Desires

Loving God with all your heart also means your desires are set on God.

This is harder than the will. Because you can choose to obey even when you don't want to. You can choose to do the right thing even when your desires are pulling you in the wrong direction. That's what obedience is. That's what discipline is. That's what taking up your cross means.

But love is not just about what you do. It's about what you want. And God is not satisfied with obedience that comes from a divided heart. He wants your desires. He wants your longings. He wants the deep, driving engine of your soul to be oriented toward Him.

This is where many Christians give up. They try to obey. They try to do the right things. But they never deal with their desires. They never ask God to change what they want. So they spend their lives in a kind of grudging obedience, doing what God commands but secretly wanting something else. And it exhausts them. Because fighting your desires is exhausting. Trying to obey when your heart is pulling you in the opposite direction is like swimming against a current. You can do it for a while, but eventually you tire out.

The solution is not to try harder. The solution is to let God change what you want.

This is the promise of the new covenant. God says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." He doesn't say, "I will give you more willpower." He doesn't say, "I will give you better discipline." He says, "I will give you a new heart." He will change what you want. He will reorient your desires. He will make you want Him.

This is what it means to love God with all your heart. It means your desires—not just your actions, not just your choices, but your actual wants—are set on God. You want Him. You long for Him. You desire Him above everything else. Not because you're trying to be spiritual. Because He has changed your heart.

How to Know If Your Heart Is Divided

I want to give you a few diagnostic questions. Not to condemn you. To help you see.

If you're willing to see.

First: *What do you think about when your mind is free?* Not when you're working, not when you're in a meeting, not when you're doing something that requires your attention. When your mind is free—when you're driving, when you're lying in bed, when you're doing something mindless—what do you think about? What do you return to? What do you dwell on?

Because whatever you think about when your mind is free is what your heart actually desires. If you think about your career, your heart desires success. If you think about your relationships, your heart desires approval. If you think about your comfort, your heart desires ease. If you think about God, your heart desires God. What do you think about when no one is making you think about anything?

Second: *What do you spend your money on?* Not what you say is important. What you actually spend your money on. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Jesus said that. He wasn't being metaphorical. He was telling you that your spending reveals your heart. If you spend your money on comfort, your heart desires comfort. If you spend your money on status, your heart desires status. If you spend your money on God's kingdom, your heart desires God's kingdom. What does your spending say about your heart?

Third: *What do you do when you're tired?* When you're exhausted, when you're depleted, when you have nothing left to give—what do you turn to? What do you reach for? Because when you're tired, your defences are down. Your discipline is low. And what you do when you're tired reveals what your heart actually wants. Do you turn to God? Do you turn to Scripture? Do you turn to prayer? Or do you turn to entertainment, to food, to distraction, to anything that will make you feel better without requiring anything from you?

Fourth: *What makes you angry?* Not what makes you mildly annoyed. What makes you truly angry? Because your anger reveals what you love. If you get angry when your plans are disrupted, you love your plans. If you get angry when you're disrespected, you love your reputation. If you get angry when God's name is blasphemed, you love God. What makes you angry reveals what your heart is attached to.

Fifth: *What are you afraid of?* Fear is the flip side of love. What you fear losing reveals what you love. If you fear losing your health, you love your health. If you fear losing your security, you love your security. If you fear losing your relationships, you love your relationships. If you fear losing God, you love God. What are you afraid of?

I'm not asking you to answer these questions out loud. I'm asking you to answer them in your heart. And I'm asking you to be honest. Because you cannot love God with all your heart if your heart is divided. And you cannot un-divide your heart if you refuse to see what's actually in it.

The Uncomfortable Truth

Here's the uncomfortable truth.

Most Christians reading this book have divided hearts. They love God, yes. They genuinely love God. But they also love a dozen other things. And they have normalized this division. They have learned to call it "being human." They have learned to call it "struggling with sin." They have learned to call it "the Christian life."

It is not the Christian life. It is a life of divided loyalty. And divided loyalty is not love. It is the opposite of love. Love is wholehearted. Love is undivided. Love is all-in.

If you are married, imagine telling your spouse that you love them, but your heart is also devoted to someone else. Imagine telling them that you're committed to them, but you also have other lovers on the side. Imagine telling them that they're important to you, but you also have other people who are just as important.

Would they call that love? Would anyone call that love? Of course not. They would call it betrayal.

This is what we do to God. And we have the audacity to call it love.

I'm not saying this to shame you. I'm saying it because I've done it. I've done it for years. I've loved God and loved comfort. I've loved God and loved approval. I've loved God and loved my plans. I've loved God and loved the life I built for myself. And I called it love. And God, in His mercy, showed me what it actually was: a divided heart. A heart that was not fully surrendered. A heart that loved God but loved other things more.

And when He showed me, I had a choice. I could keep pretending. I could keep calling it love. I could keep going to church and singing songs and doing all the religious things that made me feel like my divided heart was fine.

Or I could repent.

I could stop pretending. I could admit that my heart was divided. I could confess that I had given God a part of my heart but not all of it. I could ask Him to show me the idols I was clinging to, the desires I was protecting, the areas where my will was still bent toward myself instead of toward Him.

And then I could surrender. Not partially. Not reluctantly. Not while keeping one hand on what I was giving up. Actually surrender. Give Him everything. Let Him have it all.

I'm not going to tell you that I did it perfectly. I'm still doing it. Every day. Because the heart doesn't stay surrendered. It drifts. It divides. It has to be brought back, again and again, to the place of wholehearted devotion.

But I can tell you this: the moments when my heart has been undivided—when I have loved God with all of it, when my thoughts, my will, my desires, my moral centre have all been bent toward Him—those moments have been the closest thing to heaven I have ever experienced on earth. There is nothing like it. Nothing. Not success. Not comfort. Not approval. Not anything the world can offer. To love God with an undivided heart is to taste what we were created for. It is to be, for a moment, what we will be for eternity.

The Call to Surrender

So here is the call.

Surrender your heart. Not a part of it. Not the parts you're willing to give up. All of it. Every thought. Every desire. Every decision. Every moral choice. Every secret longing. Every hidden idol. Every area where you have been holding back, keeping something for yourself, refusing to let God be Lord.

Surrender it.

Not because God needs it. He doesn't. He is self-sufficient. He lacks nothing. Your surrender doesn't complete Him. It completes you. Because you were created to love God with all your heart. And until you do, you will be divided. You will be pulled in a dozen directions. You will be exhausted by the constant tension between what you say you love and what you actually love.

Surrender it.

Not because it's easy. It's not. It's the hardest thing you will ever do. Because your heart is the thing you most want to protect. It's the thing you've been guarding—not against the world, but against God. You've been keeping it for yourself. You've been holding back. You've been giving God access to some rooms but keeping the door closed to others.

Open the doors. All of them. Let God in. Let Him see what's in there. Let Him clean it out. Let Him reorient your thoughts, bend your will, purify your desires, transform your moral centre. Let Him give you a new heart.

Because this is what it means to love God with all your heart. Not to try harder. Not to do more. To surrender. To give Him everything. To let Him be Lord of the control room. To let Him be the centre of your entire inner life.

This is the greatest commandment. And it is the only way to live.

We have talked about the heart. Now we must talk about the soul. Because loving God with all your heart is not enough. You must love Him with all your soul as well. And the soul is something we have lost entirely. We don't even know what it means anymore. Which means we don't even know what we've been commanded to do.

We need to recover the soul.

PART FOUR:
"AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL"

Chapter 6: What Is the Soul?

We have a problem.

The word "soul" has become almost meaningless in modern English. We use it for everything. We talk about "soul music" and "soul food." We say someone is a "good soul" or that a place has "soul." We talk about "selling your soul" or "saving your soul." We use the word so casually, so broadly, that it has lost any precise meaning. It has become a vague spiritual term that could mean almost anything.

And because we don't know what the soul is, we don't know what it means to love God with all our soul.

This is not a minor problem. This is a catastrophic problem. Because the greatest commandment in all of Scripture commands you to love God with something you don't even understand. And if you don't understand what you're commanded to love with, you cannot obey the command. You will think you're obeying when you're not. You will offer God something you think is your soul when it's actually something else entirely. And you will go through your entire Christian life never actually doing what Jesus commanded.

We cannot let that happen.

So we have to go back. We have to go back to the original language, the original context, the original meaning of the word that Jesus used when He quoted Deuteronomy. We have to recover the biblical understanding of the soul. Because until we do, we are trying to build a house without a foundation.

The Hebrew Word: Nephesh

The word Jesus was quoting—again, from Deuteronomy, again, from the Hebrew—is *nephesh*.

And *nephesh* is one of the most fascinating words in the entire Old Testament. It appears over 750 times. It is translated in various ways: soul, life, self, person, desire, appetite, creature, being. It is a word that refuses to be pinned down to a single English equivalent because it describes something that we don't have a single word for.

If I were to try to capture what *nephesh* means, I would say it is you as a *living being*. It is the life that animates your body. It is the self that experiences existence. It is the thing that makes you a person rather than a corpse. It is your life—not just the fact that you are alive, but the whole experience of being alive. Your breath. Your blood. Your desires. Your appetites. Your individuality. Your existence.

The *nephesh* is what you are.

When God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He had a body. A physical form. But it was not alive. It was a sculpture. It was a shape. It was not a person. Then God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And Adam became a *living nephesh*. A living soul. A living being. A person. The *nephesh* is what Adam became when God breathed life into the dust.

This is crucial. Because in Hebrew thought, you *have* a body. But you are a soul. Your soul is not a part of you that exists separately from your body. It is not a ghost in a machine. It is not an immortal essence that is temporarily housed in flesh. You are your soul. Your soul is the whole living being that God created when He breathed life into the dust.

This is why the command to love God with all your soul is so radical. It is not a command to love God with one part of you while the rest of you does something else. It is a command to love God with *your entire existence*. With the whole of who you are. With your life itself.

The Soul as Your Life

The most common translation of *nephesh* in the Old Testament is not "soul." It is "life."

When someone is in danger, the text says their *nephesh* is threatened. When David is running from Saul, he cries out to God to protect his *nephesh*. When Jesus says, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" He is not talking about losing some ethereal part of yourself while your body continues to exist. He is talking about losing your *life*. Your existence. Your self. The thing that makes you you.

When the Old Testament commands you to love God with all your soul, it is commanding you to love God with all your life. Not with the spiritual part of your life while the physical part belongs to you. Not with the eternal part of your life while the temporal part is your own. With *all* of your life. The whole thing. The breath in your lungs. The blood in your veins. The waking hours. The sleeping hours.

The working hours. The resting hours. The years you have on this earth, however many or few they may be.

This is not a small command. It is not a command that leaves room for compartmentalization. It is a command that takes your entire existence and demands that it be offered to God as an act of love.

The Soul as Your Self

The *nephesh* is also the self. It is the "I" that experiences the world. It is the centre of your personal identity. When the Old Testament wants to talk about someone's inner experience, it talks about the *nephesh*. When the psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," he is not talking to a separate part of himself. He is addressing the totality of who he is. He is saying, "Everything that I am, bless the Lord."

When the Old Testament talks about desire, it talks about the *nephesh* desiring. When it talks about longing, it talks about the *nephesh* longing. When it talks about appetite, it talks about the *nephesh* being hungry or thirsty. The *nephesh* is the seat of your deepest longings. It is the part of you that reaches out for something beyond yourself. It is the part of you that is not satisfied with food, with comfort, with success, with anything less than God Himself.

This is why Augustine famously prayed, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." He was speaking of the *nephesh*. The soul. The self. The thing that God created to find its fulfilment only in Him. The thing that will never be satisfied with anything less than God.

And here is the tragedy of the modern world. We spend our lives trying to satisfy the soul with things that cannot satisfy the soul. We feed it entertainment, and it remains hungry. We feed it success, and it remains hungry. We feed it relationships, and it remains hungry. We feed it pleasure, and it remains hungry. We feed it everything the world has to offer, and it remains hungry. Because the soul was made for God. And nothing but God will ever satisfy it.

This is what it means to love God with all your soul. It means you stop trying to satisfy your soul with anything less than God. It means you recognize that your deepest longings, the desires that keep you up at night, the hunger that drives you to pursue a hundred different things—all of it is meant to be directed toward God. It means you stop looking for life in the things of the world and start finding it in Him.

The Soul as Your Desire

Let me push on this because it is crucial.

The *nephesh* is the seat of desire. It is the part of you that wants. It is the part of you that reaches. It is the part of you that is never fully satisfied with what you have, that is always reaching for something more, that is always hungry, always thirsty, always longing.

This is not a flaw. This is by design.

God created you with a soul that longs. He created you with appetites that cannot be fully satisfied by anything in this world. He created you with a hunger that will not be filled by food, a thirst that will not be quenched by drink, a longing that will not be satisfied by any human love, any achievement, any possession, any experience. He created you to long for Him.

And here is the great sin of the human heart: we try to satisfy the soul's longing with anything *but* God.

We take the desire for significance and we try to satisfy it with career success. We take the desire for security and we try to satisfy it with money. We take the desire for love and we try to satisfy it with human relationships. We take the desire for transcendence and we try to satisfy it with entertainment, with art, with experiences, with anything that will lift us out of the mundane for a moment. We take the desire for God and we try to satisfy it with a hundred idols, none of which can do what only God can do.

This is why the command to love God with all your soul is so urgent. Because your soul is already loving something. It is already desiring something. It is already reaching for something. It is already hungry and thirsty for something. The question is not whether your soul will love. The question is what your soul will love.

If you do not consciously, deliberately, intentionally love God with all your soul, your soul will love something else. It will attach itself to idols. It will pour out its longing on things that cannot satisfy. It will waste itself on the world, pursuing what cannot be caught, grasping what cannot be held, longing for what cannot fulfil.

To love God with all your soul is to take the deepest desires of your being—the desires that drive you, the longings that keep you awake, the hungers that nothing in this world can satisfy—and to direct them toward God. It is to say to Him: "You are what I want. You are what I long for. You are what I hunger and thirst for. Not Your blessings. Not Your gifts. Not what You can do for me. You. I want You."

The Soul as Your Freedom

There is one more aspect of the soul that we need to understand.

The *nephesh* is also the seat of your personhood. It is what makes you a distinct individual. It is the thing that is uniquely *you*. And one of the most fundamental aspects of personhood is freedom. The freedom to choose. The freedom to act. The freedom to be.

When God created you with a soul, He created you with the capacity to make real choices. You are not a robot. You are not a puppet. You are not a character in a story that God is writing where your choices are illusions. You have a soul. You have a self. You have the capacity to choose, to decide, to act, to be.

And here is the terrifying thing: you can use that freedom to love God, or you can use it to love something else. God does not force your love. He commands it. He demands it. He is worthy of it. But He does not force it. Because love that is forced is not love. It is coercion. And God is not interested in coerced love. He is interested in the free, willing, wholehearted love of souls who choose Him.

This is why the command to love God with all your soul is both an invitation and a demand. It is an invitation to use your freedom to choose the one thing that will actually satisfy you. It is a demand to stop wasting your freedom on idols that will only leave you empty. It is a call to take your soul—your life, your self, your desires, your freedom—and to give it all to God. Not because He needs it. Because He is worthy of it. And because your soul will never find rest until it rests in Him.

What This Means for You

Let me bring this down to where you live.

You have a soul. You have a life. You have a self. You have desires. You have freedom. All of it is the *nephesh*. All of it is what God created when He breathed life into you.

And you are commanded to love God with all of it.

Not with the part of your life that you call "spiritual." With *all* of your life. The parts that feel sacred and the parts that feel mundane. The hours you spend at work and the hours you spend at rest. The decisions you make about your career and the decisions you make about your weekend.

The way you treat your family and the way you treat strangers. The thoughts you think when you're alone and the words you speak when you're with others. All of it. All of your life. Every moment. Every breath. Every desire. Every choice. All of it is to be offered to God as an act of love.

This is not a command to add "loving God" to your list of things to do. It is a command to let loving God *be* the thing you do in everything. To let your love for God be the lens through which you see your entire existence. To let your love for God be the motivation for every choice, the fuel for every action, the goal of every pursuit.

When you love God with all your soul, your life becomes a single, unified act of worship. Not because you're always thinking about God in a religious way. But because your love for God has so thoroughly saturated your existence that everything you do is done in the context of that love. You work because you love God. You rest because you love God. You eat because you love God. You relate to others because you love God.

You make decisions because you love God. Your life is no longer divided into sacred and secular, spiritual and mundane. It is all sacred. It is all spiritual. Because it is all done in love for God.

This is what it means to love God with all your soul. It means your entire existence—every part of it, every moment of it—is lived as an expression of your love for God.

The Cost of Loving with Your Soul

But we have to be honest about what this costs.

Because if you love God with all your soul—with your entire life, with your whole self, with all your desires and all your freedom—you cannot also love the world. You cannot also live for yourself. You cannot also pursue your own plans, your own dreams, your own ambitions, apart from God. You cannot hold back any part of your life for yourself.

This is where the command becomes terrifying.

Because your soul is what you most want to protect. It's your life. It's your self. It's the thing you cling to more than anything else. You will give up possessions, relationships, comfort, even safety, before you give up your life. Your soul is the thing you naturally, instinctively, desperately want to preserve.

And God says: give it to Me. Love Me with it. Not just with your time. Not just with your resources. With your very life. With your self. With the thing you most want to keep for yourself.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." He was speaking of the soul. The *nephesh*. The life you're trying so hard to preserve, the self you're trying so hard to protect, the existence you're trying so hard to hold onto—if you try to keep it, you will lose it. But if you give it to God, if you love Him with it, if you let it be consumed in love for Him, you will find it. You will find it preserved, transformed, glorified, in Him.

Loving God with all your soul is the most costly thing you will ever do. It will cost you your life. Not metaphorically. Not symbolically. Actually. It will cost you the life you have been trying to build for yourself. It will cost you the self you have been trying to protect. It will cost you the desires you have been trying to satisfy with the world. It will cost you everything you have.

And it will give you everything worth having. It will give you God. It will give you the satisfaction of desires you didn't even know you had. It will give you a life that death cannot touch. It will give you a self that is more truly yourself than the self you were trying so hard to protect. It will give you what you were created for.

A Question for Your Soul

I want to ask you a question. A question for your soul. A question that cuts through all the religious activity, all the church attendance, all the Bible reading, all the spiritual disciplines, all the things you do to prove to yourself and others that you love God.

Do you actually want God?

Not what He can give you. Not what He can do for you. Not the blessings, not the peace, not the joy, not the purpose, not the sense of meaning, not the community, not the identity, not the hope. Not any of the things that come with loving God. *God Himself.*

Do you want Him? Do you long for Him? Do you desire Him? Is He what your soul is reaching for when you wake up in the middle of the night and feel the weight of existence pressing down on you? Is He what you hunger for when everything else has left you empty? Is He what you thirst for when you've drunk deeply from every other well and found them all dry?

If you are honest, you may have to say no. You may have to admit that what you want is not God Himself but what God gives. You may have to confess that you have been using God as a means to an end—the end being your own happiness, your own peace, your own fulfilment. You may have to acknowledge that your soul has been directed toward a hundred things, and God has been one of them, but not *the* one.

If that is true, then you are not loving God with all your soul. You are loving what God gives. And that is not love. That is transaction. That is using God. That is the very thing we talked about in Chapter 2.

So here is the call: repent. Turn from your idolatry. Turn from using God to get what you want. Turn from seeking the gifts instead of the Giver. And ask God to give you what you cannot give yourself: a soul that loves Him. A soul that longs for Him. A soul that desires Him above everything else. A soul that is satisfied with nothing less than Him.

This is not something you can manufacture. You cannot make yourself want God. You can choose to seek Him. You can choose to pursue Him. You can choose to direct your soul toward Him. But the desire itself—the deep, driving, soul-level longing for God—is a gift. It is something He must give you.

Ask Him for it. Ask Him to give you a soul that loves Him. Ask Him to reorient your deepest desires toward Himself. Ask Him to satisfy the hunger of your soul with Himself.

And keep asking. Because this is the prayer He loves to answer. This is the prayer that aligns you with the purpose for which you were created. This is the prayer that begins to fulfil the greatest commandment in your life.

Where We Go From Here

We have talked about the heart. We have talked about the soul. There is one more thing. One more part of the command that we have neglected, especially in modern Christianity. One more part that we have been told to ignore, to set aside, to treat as less important than the heart and the soul.

The mind.

We have been told that faith is about feeling, not thinking. We have been told that loving God is about the heart and the soul, but the mind is for sceptics, for intellectuals, for people who need to have all their questions answered before they can believe. We have been told that if you love God, you should stop asking questions and just believe.

This is not biblical. This is not what Jesus commanded. He said love God with all your mind. And if you have been told that your *mind* is not welcome in your relationship with God, you have been told a lie. A lie that has crippled generations of believers. A lie that has driven countless people away from faith because they thought they had to choose between their intellect and their love for God.

We need to recover the mind. Not as an add-on to the Christian life. As an essential part of it. Because you cannot love God with all your mind if you don't know what your mind is for. And you cannot love God with all your mind if you've been told to check it at the door.

Let's recover the mind.

Chapter 7: Loving God with Your Existence

Before we move to the mind—and we will get there—I need to press into this a little deeper. Because the soul is not something you can understand in a single chapter. It is too vast. Too mysterious. Too central to everything you are.

We have defined the soul. We have said it is your life, your self, your desires, your freedom. But definitions are not enough. You cannot love God with your soul by knowing what the word means. You have to actually do it. And doing it requires that you understand what it looks like to love God with your existence.

So let me show you.

The Soul That Hungers

There is a scene in the Old Testament that haunts me. It is found in Psalm 63. David is in the wilderness of Judah. He is running for his life. His son Absalom has usurped the throne. His enemies are closing in. He has lost everything—his kingdom, his home, his safety, his comfort. He is alone in the desert, hiding in caves, sleeping on rocks, eating whatever he can find.

And in the middle of this—in the middle of the most desperate, stripped-down, exposed moment of his life—he writes these words:

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

Notice what David does not say. He does not say, "I thirst for deliverance." He does not say, "I long for my kingdom back." He does not say, "I need safety, comfort, security." He says, "I thirst for you." His whole being—his *nephesh*, his soul, his very life—longs for God.

This is the soul that loves God.

David is not in a position where loving God is easy. He is not in a comfortable home with a full stomach and a secure future. He is in the wilderness. He is in the desert. He has nothing. And in that nothing, his soul reaches out for the only thing that matters. Not what God can give him. God Himself.

This is what it means to love God with all your soul. It means that when everything else is stripped away—when the comforts are gone, when the blessings dry up, when the life you built for yourself collapses—your soul still reaches for God. Not as a last resort. Not as a desperate plea for rescue. As the thing you actually want. As the one thing you cannot live without.

Most of us have never been in that position. We have never been stripped down to nothing. We have never been in the wilderness with nothing but our souls and God. And because we have never been there, we don't know what our souls actually want. We think we want God. But we've never been tested. We've never had to choose between God and everything else.

The wilderness is where you find out what your soul really loves. Because in the wilderness, there is nothing to distract you. No comfort to numb you. No success to validate you. No plans to occupy you. Just you and your soul and the question: *Do I actually want God? Or do I just want what God gives?*

The Soul That Surrenders

There is another scene. This one is in the New Testament. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knows what is coming. He knows the betrayal, the trial, the scourging, the nails, the cross. He knows He is about to bear the weight of every sin that has ever been committed or ever will be committed. He knows He is about to experience the full fury of God's wrath against sin. He knows He is about to be separated from the Father in a way He has never known in all of eternity.

And in that moment—in the moment when His soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, in the moment when He is sweating drops of blood, in the moment when every fibre of His being is crying out for another way—He prays:

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

This is the soul that loves God.

Jesus is not pretending that He wants to suffer.

He is honest about His desire. He asks for the cup to pass. He does not want to go through what He is about to go through. His soul recoils from the agony that awaits Him.

But His love for the Father is greater than His love for His own comfort. His soul is surrendered to God. Not reluctantly. Not grudgingly. Completely. He will do what the Father wills, even when it costs Him everything.

This is what it means to love God with all your soul. It means your soul is surrendered. It means that when your desires conflict with God's will, your desire for God wins. It means that when your comfort and God's glory are in tension, you choose God's glory. It means that when your life and God's purposes are at odds, you give up your life.

This is not natural. This is not easy. This is not something you can do in your own strength. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul. This is what happens when you love God with all your soul—when your deepest desire is for God, and every other desire is subordinated to that one.

The Soul That Waits

There is one more aspect of loving God with your soul that we need to see.

The soul that loves God is a soul that waits.

We live in a culture that does not know how to wait. We want everything now. We want answers now. We want relief now. We want satisfaction now. We want God to act now. And when He doesn't, we assume something is wrong. We assume He doesn't care. We assume He isn't listening. We assume our love is being rejected.

But the soul that loves God knows how to wait.

Psalm 130: "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."

Do you see it? The soul waits. The soul that loves God does not demand immediate answers. Does not demand immediate relief. Does not demand that God act on its timetable. The soul that loves God waits. Not passively. Not in resignation. In hope. In expectation. In trust.

The watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem waited for the morning. They knew the morning would come. They didn't know when. They couldn't make it come faster. But they waited. They watched. They trusted that the darkness would not last forever.

This is what it means to love God with your soul. It means you trust God even when He doesn't act when you want Him to act. It means you wait for Him even when waiting is hard. It means you do not give up on Him when He seems silent. It means you keep your soul oriented toward Him, hoping in Him, trusting in Him, even when everything in you wants to demand that He do something now.

The soul that loves God is a soul that can wait. Because it knows that God is worth waiting for. It knows that God's timing is perfect. It knows that the morning will come. And it is willing to wait in the darkness, with nothing but its love for God, until it does.

The Soul That Finds Its Rest

One more thing.

The soul that loves God is a soul that finds its rest in God.

Augustine was right. Our souls are restless until they rest in God. Because our souls were made for God. They were made to find their satisfaction in Him. They were made to find their peace in Him. They were made to find their home in Him.

And until they do, they will be restless. They will wander. They will search. They will try to find rest in a hundred things that cannot provide rest. They will work and strive and pursue and achieve, hoping that this time, finally, they will find what they are looking for. And they will come up empty. Every time. Because nothing but God can satisfy the soul.

This is why Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Not rest from work. Not rest from responsibility. Rest for your *souls*. Your souls are weary. Your souls are burdened. Your souls have been trying to find rest in the world, and they have exhausted themselves in the pursuit. And Jesus says, "Come to Me. Bring your weary soul to Me. And I will give you rest."

This is what it means to love God with all your soul. It means you stop trying to find rest anywhere else. It means you stop looking to the world to satisfy the longings that only God can satisfy. It means you bring your weary, restless, searching soul to God and say, "You are my rest. You are my peace. You are my home. I stop looking for life anywhere else. I find it in You."

A Practical Word

Let me be practical for a moment.

Loving God with all your soul is not a mystical abstraction. It is not something that only happens in moments of intense spiritual experience. It is something that happens in the ordinary, mundane, everyday moments of your life.

It happens when you wake up in the morning and the first thing you do is turn your soul toward God. Not because you feel like it. Because you love Him.

It happens when you go to work and you do your work as an act of worship, offering your labour to God because He is worthy and because your work is an expression of your love for Him.

It happens when you relate to other people—your spouse, your children, your co-workers, your neighbours, your enemies—and you treat them the way God has treated you, because your love for God flows out in love for others.

It happens when you face suffering, when you are tempted, when you are tired, when you are lonely, when you are afraid—and in those moments, you turn to God instead of turning to the world. You bring your soul to Him instead of trying to soothe it with the world's counterfeit comforts.

It happens when you die. When you take your last breath and your soul leaves your body and you stand before God, and you discover that loving Him with all your soul was not a waste. It was the only thing that mattered.

Loving God with all your soul is not a moment. It is a life. It is the orientation of your entire existence toward God. It is the decision, made again and again, to live for Him, to desire Him, to trust Him, to wait for Him, to rest in Him. It is the offering of your life—every part of it, every moment of it—to the God who gave you life in the first place.

A Question to End

I want to end with a question. A question you have to answer not with your words but with your life.

Are you loving God with your soul?

Not with your words. Not with your intentions. Not with what you say you believe. With your actual life. With your actual self. With the deepest longings of your being. Are you loving God with your soul?

If you are not, you are not keeping the greatest commandment. And if you are not keeping the greatest commandment, everything else in your Christian life is built on sand. You can have the right doctrine. You can have the right practices. You can have the right church. You can have all the right things. And if you are not loving God with all your soul, it is nothing.

But if you are—if your soul is oriented toward God, if your deepest longings are for Him, if your life is offered to Him as an act of love—then everything else will follow. Not because you have it all figured out. Because you have the one thing that matters. You have love for God. And everything else is just the fruit of that love.

So I ask you again. Not as a test. As an invitation.

Love God with your soul.

Let your life be an offering. Let your desires be directed toward Him. Let your freedom be used to choose Him. Let your waiting be filled with hope in Him. Let your restless soul find its rest in Him.

This is the second part of the greatest commandment. And it is not optional.

Now we come to the mind. The part we have neglected. The part we have been told to set aside. The part that has been treated as optional, or even suspect, in too much of the church.

We need to recover the mind. Because you cannot love God with all your mind if you don't know what your mind is for. And you cannot love God with all your mind if you have been taught that thinking and believing are opposed to each other.

Let's recover the mind.

PART FIVE:
"AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND"

Chapter 8: The Mind as Worship

We have arrived at the most neglected part of the greatest commandment.

If you grew up in the kind of Christianity I grew up in, you were taught—implicitly if not explicitly—that the mind is the enemy of faith. You were taught that thinking too much will lead you astray. You were taught that questions are dangerous. You were taught that doubt is the opposite of belief. You were taught that if you really loved God, you would stop asking so many questions and just believe.

I was taught that. Not in so many words. But the message was clear. The intellectuals were the ones who lost their faith. The thinkers were the ones who ended up in seminary and came out atheists. The people who asked questions were trouble. The safe Christians were the ones who didn't think too much, who just accepted what they were told, who felt their way through faith instead of thinking their way through it.

This is a lie.

It is a lie that has done incalculable damage to the church. It has driven away countless people who were created to love God with their minds and were told that their minds were not welcome. It has produced a generation of Christians who are intellectually stunted, unable to defend their faith, unable to engage with the culture, unable to think clearly about God because they were told that thinking about God is somehow less spiritual than feeling about God. It has created a divide between the heart and the mind that does not exist in Scripture. And it has robbed us of one-third of the greatest commandment.

Because Jesus did not say, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul—and if you have time, maybe also with your mind." He said with *all* your mind. The mind is not optional. It is not secondary. It is not less important than the heart or the soul. It is essential. It is commanded. It is part of what it means to love God.

If you are not loving God with your mind, you are not loving God with everything you have. You are loving Him with a part of yourself while keeping another part for yourself. You are violating the very command you claim to obey. And you are missing out on one of the deepest, richest, most satisfying dimensions of the Christian life.

We need to recover the mind. Not as an add-on. Not as something for the intellectuals. As an essential part of what it means to love God.

The Mind in Scripture

Let's start with the obvious: the Bible never sets the mind against faith.

In fact, the Bible consistently presents the mind as central to the life of faith. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He included the mind. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your *mind*." Not by the renewing of your feelings. Not by the renewing of your experiences. By the renewing of your *mind*. Because transformation happens in the mind. If your mind is not being renewed, you are not being transformed.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Every thought. Not just some thoughts. Not just the thoughts that feel spiritual. Every thought. Your thoughts about God. Your thoughts about the world. Your thoughts about yourself. Your thoughts about your work, your relationships, your future, your past. All of it is to be brought under the lordship of Christ. Because loving God with your mind means that even your thoughts—the things you think when no one else knows what you're thinking—belong to Him.

When Peter wrote to the early church, he said, "Prepare your minds for action." Not your hearts. Not your souls. Your *minds*. Because the Christian life is not a passive drift. It is an active engagement. It requires preparation. It requires thinking. It requires using your mind to understand what God is doing and what He requires of you.

The Bible is not anti-intellectual. It is profoundly intellectual. It calls us to think. To reason. To understand. To grow in knowledge. To love God with our minds. The idea that faith and thinking are opposed to each other is not biblical. It is pagan. It comes from Greek philosophy, not from Scripture. The Greeks said that the mind was the realm of reason and the heart was the realm of emotion, and never the twain shall meet. The Hebrews said the mind is part of the heart. The mind is where you think, yes. But thinking is something you do in your heart, as an act of love for God.

We have been shaped more by Greek philosophy than we realize. We have divided the human person into compartments: heart for feeling, soul for being, mind for thinking. And we have assigned different levels of spiritual importance to each. The heart is the most spiritual. The soul is next. The mind is last, maybe even suspect.

This is not biblical. This is not Christian. This is a cultural distortion that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, from Romanticism, from a thousand sources that are not Scripture. And it is time to reject it. Because you cannot love God with all

your mind if you think your mind is less spiritual than your heart. You cannot love God with all your mind if you think thinking about God is somehow a lower form of devotion than feeling about God. You cannot love God with all your mind if you have been told that your intellect is an enemy rather than an instrument.

Your mind is a gift from God. It was created by God. It was given to you for a purpose. And that purpose is to love God. To know Him. To understand Him. To think His thoughts after Him. To bring every thought captive to obedience to Christ. To be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Your mind is not an enemy. It is an instrument. And it is time to pick it up and use it for what it was made for.

What the Mind Is

So what is the mind?

If the heart is the control room—the seat of thought, will, desire, and moral decision—the mind is the faculty of thought. It is where you reason. It is where you analyse. It is where you understand. It is where you ask questions. It is where you wrestle with ideas. It is where you grow in knowledge. It is where you move from confusion to clarity, from ignorance to understanding, from shallow belief to deep conviction.

The mind is not the enemy of faith. The mind is the workshop of faith. It is where faith is forged. It is where doubts are faced. It is where questions are answered. It is where shallow beliefs become deep convictions. It is where you move from believing what you were told to believing what you have understood.

A faith that has not passed through the mind is not a mature faith. It is a borrowed faith. It is someone else's faith that you are wearing. And it will not survive the first real storm. Because when someone challenges you, when you encounter a difficulty you cannot resolve, when you face a question you cannot answer, your borrowed faith will crumble. You will have nothing to stand on. Because you never actually thought about it. You never actually understood it. You never actually made it your own.

This is why so many young people leave the faith when they go to college. They were raised in churches that taught them what to believe but not how to think. They were given answers but not the tools to find answers for themselves. They were told to believe but not taught to understand. And when they encountered

professors and classmates who challenged their faith, they had nothing to say. Their faith was not their own. It was borrowed. And when it was tested, it failed.

This is a tragedy. And it is a tragedy that could have been avoided if the church had taken seriously the command to love God with the mind. If we had taught our people to think, to question, to wrestle, to understand. If we had shown them that faith and reason are not enemies but allies. If we had modelled what it looks like to love God with the mind.

The Mind as the Place of Understanding

One of the primary functions of the mind is understanding.

The Bible is full of calls to understanding. "Get wisdom," Proverbs says. "Get understanding." Not because wisdom and understanding are optional. Because they are essential to the life of faith. You cannot love what you do not know. You cannot follow what you do not understand. You cannot obey a command you have not grasped. Understanding is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

This is why the Old Testament describes wisdom as something to be pursued more than silver or gold. Because wisdom is the ability to see things as God sees them. It is the capacity to understand what is true, what is good, what is real. It is the skill of living in alignment with the way the world actually is. And you cannot have wisdom without using your mind.

The mind is where understanding happens. It is where you take the raw data of Scripture, the raw data of experience, the raw data of God's revelation, and you begin to see how it all fits together. It is where you move from knowing facts to grasping truth. It is where you move from having information to having insight. It is where you move from being a child who believes what he is told to being an adult who has wrestled with God and come to know Him for yourself.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. It means you do not settle for a shallow, borrowed, second-hand faith. It means you pursue understanding. You ask questions. You wrestle with difficulties. You study Scripture not just to feel something but to understand something. You read books, you listen to sermons, you engage with people who think differently than you do, not because you're trying to prove something but because you want to understand. You want to know God. Not just know *about* God. Know *God*. And knowing God requires using your mind.

The Mind as the Place of Discernment

The mind is also the place of discernment.

We live in a world that is constantly trying to shape us. Every commercial, every social media post, every movie, every song, every conversation is trying to tell us what is true, what is valuable, what is worth pursuing. And if we do not use our minds to discern, we will be shaped by the world without even realizing it. We will absorb its values, its assumptions, its worldview. We will think we are thinking for ourselves when we are actually just echoing what we have been told.

This is why the Bible calls us to discernment. To test everything. To hold fast to what is good. To reject what is evil. To not be conformed to the pattern of this world. And you cannot do this without using your mind.

Discernment is not a feeling. It is not a vague sense of peace or lack of peace. Discernment is the ability to distinguish truth from error, good from evil, what is from God from what is not. And it requires the mind. It requires you to think. To analyse. To compare what you are hearing with what Scripture says. To ask whether this teaching aligns with the historic faith. To consider whether this practice is consistent with the character of God.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. It means you do not passively accept everything you hear. You do not assume that something is true because it comes from a Christian source or because it feels spiritual. You test it. You examine it. You use your mind to discern whether it is actually true. Because you love God, and you will not let your mind be captured by lies that dishonour Him.

The Mind as the Place of Doubt

One more thing about the mind before we move on.

The mind is where doubt lives. And doubt is not the enemy of faith. It is the crucible of faith.

If you have never doubted, you have never thought. If you have never wrestled with questions, you have never used your mind. If you have never struggled to understand, you have never grown. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. It is the evidence that you are thinking. And thinking is what you do when you love God with your mind.

The problem is not doubt. The problem is what you do with doubt. If you ignore it, it will fester. If you suppress it, it will grow. If you pretend it isn't there, it will eventually explode. But if you bring it to God—if you take your doubts and lay them before Him,

if you use your mind to seek answers, if you wrestle with the questions honestly and faithfully—doubt can become the gateway to deeper faith.

Look at the Psalms. The psalmists doubted. They questioned. They cried out to God with raw honesty: "Why have you forsaken me?" "How long, O Lord?" "Why do the wicked prosper?" They didn't suppress their doubts. They brought them to God. And in the bringing, their faith was deepened. Their doubts became the raw material for a more mature, more robust, more real faith.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. It means you bring your doubts to Him.

You bring your questions to Him. You bring your confusion, your frustration, your intellectual struggles. You don't hide them. You don't pretend they aren't there. You bring them to God and you say, "I don't understand. Help me understand. I don't know. Help me know. I am struggling. Help me trust."

This is not a lack of faith. This is faith wrestling. This is love for God that refuses to settle for easy answers, that insists on knowing Him truly, that will not be satisfied with a shallow faith that avoids the hard questions. This is what it looks like to love God with your mind.

A Word to Those Who Have Been Told Their Minds Are Not Welcome

If you have been told that your mind is not welcome in your relationship with God, I want to speak to you directly.

That was a lie. It was a lie told by people who were afraid of questions, who had settled for a shallow faith, who did not know how to love God with their own minds and so told you not to love God with yours. They meant well, perhaps. They were protecting you, they thought. But they did you a disservice. They set you up for a faith that could not withstand scrutiny. They taught you to suppress the very faculty God gave you to know Him.

Your mind is not a threat to your faith. Your mind is the tool God gave you to understand your faith. To deepen your faith. To defend your faith. To grow in your faith. To love Him with everything you have, including your intellect.

You are not sinning when you ask questions. You are not being unfaithful when you doubt. You are not betraying God when you struggle to understand. You are using

the mind He gave you to pursue the knowledge of Him. And that is not a threat to your faith. It is an expression of your love.

So ask your questions. Wrestle with your doubts. Pursue understanding. Read books. Study Scripture. Learn theology. Engage with people who disagree with you. Use your mind. Not because you are trying to prove something. Because you love God. And you want to know Him. And you cannot know Him without using the mind He gave you.

The Mind as Worship

Here is what I want you to see.

Using your mind for God—thinking about God, studying God, wrestling with questions about God, growing in your understanding of God—is not a distraction from worship. It *is* worship. It is loving God with your mind. It is offering your intellect to Him as an act of devotion.

We have a narrow view of worship. We think worship is singing songs, maybe praying, maybe reading the Bible. And all of those things can be worship. But worship is not limited to those things. Worship is anything you do that expresses your love for God. Including thinking.

When you sit down to study Scripture and you use your mind to understand what it means, that is worship. When you read a book about God and you wrestle with the ideas, that is worship. When you have a conversation with someone who challenges your faith and you engage thoughtfully, that is worship. When you doubt and you bring your doubts to God and you seek answers, that is worship. When you learn something new about God and your mind expands to comprehend more of who He is, that is worship.

Because worship is not just feeling. Worship is not just singing. Worship is not just being in a certain place at a certain time doing certain things. Worship is the response of your entire being to the worth of God. And your mind is part of your being. It is a significant part. It is the part that understands, that discerns, that reasons, that questions, that grows. And when you use it for God, you are worshipping Him.

This is what it means to love God with all your mind. It means your intellect is not a neutral tool that you use for secular purposes and occasionally turn toward God. It means your intellect is an instrument of worship. It means thinking about God is an

act of devotion. It means studying, learning, questioning, understanding—all of it—is part of what it means to love Him.

Where We Go From Here

We have established that the mind is essential to loving God. We have seen that the Bible calls us to use our minds, to grow in understanding, to develop discernment, to wrestle with doubts. We have seen that the mind is not the enemy of faith but the workshop of faith.

But we are not done. Because there is a difference between using your mind and loving God with your mind. You can use your mind for God without actually loving God. You can study theology without loving God. You can learn doctrine without loving God. You can defend the faith without loving God. You can have all the right answers and still not love God with your mind.

So we need to go deeper. We need to ask what it actually looks like to *love* God with your mind. Not just use your mind for God. Not just think about God. But to love Him with your thinking. To make your intellect an instrument of love.

That is what comes next. Because the mind is not just a tool. It is a faculty of love. And unless you understand that, you will miss the heart of what Jesus commanded.

Let's go deeper.

Chapter 9: Bringing Every Thought Captive

We have established that the mind is essential to loving God. We have seen that the Bible calls us to use our minds, to grow in understanding, to develop discernment, to wrestle with doubts. But we are not done. Because there is a difference between using your mind and loving God with your mind. You can use your mind for God without actually loving God. You can study theology without loving God. You can learn doctrine without loving God. You can defend the faith without loving God. You can have all the right answers and still not love God with your mind.

I have met people like this. Perhaps you have too. They can quote Scripture. They can explain the finer points of theology. They can win arguments with sceptics. But there is no warmth in them. No love. Their knowledge is cold. Their orthodoxy is brittle. They have filled their minds with truth, but their minds have not been transformed by love. They know about God, but they do not know God. They have used their minds for God, but they have not loved God with their minds.

This is a danger we must face. Because the command is not to have a mind full of facts about God. The command is to *love* God with your mind. And love changes everything. Love transforms the way you think. Love reorients your intellect. Love takes the raw material of knowledge and turns it into worship.

So we need to go deeper. We need to ask what it actually looks like to love God with your mind. Not just use your mind for God. Not just think about God. But to love Him with your thinking. To make your intellect an instrument of love.

The Difference Between Knowing About and Knowing

Let me start with a distinction that is crucial.

There is a difference between knowing *about* God and knowing *God*. You can know about a person without knowing them. You can read their biography, study their work, memorize their quotes, and still not know them. Knowing about someone is not the same as knowing them. Knowing about someone is information. Knowing someone is relationship.

This is true with God as well. You can know about God—His attributes, His works, His commands—without knowing Him. You can have a mind full of theology and a heart empty of love. You can be orthodox in your beliefs and cold in your affections.

You can defend the faith with precision and never actually taste the sweetness of the God you are defending.

Loving God with your mind means your knowledge of God is not just information. It is relational. It is knowledge that leads to love. It is understanding that leads to worship. It is truth that leads to transformation. It is not cold facts stored in a database. It is warm, living, personal knowledge of the God who made you and saved you and loves you.

This is what the apostle Paul was talking about when he said, "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." He didn't say "knowing about Christ." He said "knowing Christ." Personal knowledge. Relational knowledge. The kind of knowledge that is inseparable from love.

Loving God with your mind means you pursue knowledge of God not as an end in itself but as a means to deeper love. You study Scripture not to win arguments but to know the One who speaks. You learn theology not to impress others but to understand the God you worship. You wrestle with questions not to prove your intellectual superiority but to draw closer to the One who holds all the answers. Your mind is not a filing cabinet for facts about God. It is a bridge to relationship with God.

Bringing Every Thought Captive

Now we need to talk about what this actually looks like in practice.

The apostle Paul gives us a picture of what it means to love God with the mind in 2 Corinthians 10:5. He says, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Every thought.

Not just the thoughts that feel spiritual. Not just the thoughts you have in church or during your quiet time. Every thought. The thoughts you have when you're driving. The thoughts you have when you're lying in bed at night. The thoughts you have when you're at work. The thoughts you have when you're bored. The thoughts you have when you're angry. The thoughts you have when you're tempted. The thoughts you have when you're afraid. Every thought is to be taken captive and made obedient to Christ.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. It means you do not let your thoughts run wild. You do not let them wander into territory that dishonours God. You

do not let them dwell on things that are false, or impure, or unworthy. You take them captive. You bring them under the lordship of Christ. You submit every thought to the authority of God.

This is not something you do once. This is something you do moment by moment, thought by thought, for the rest of your life. Because your thoughts will not stay captive. They will escape. They will rebel. They will wander. You have to keep bringing them back. Keep taking them captive. Keep submitting them to Christ.

This is hard work. It is exhausting work. It is the work of a lifetime. But it is the work of love. Because you do not let your thoughts run wild when you love someone. You guard your thoughts about them. You protect your mind from anything that would dishonour them. You keep your attention focused on them. This is what love does. And it is what love for God does with the mind.

The Battle for the Mind

Let me be honest with you. Your mind is a battlefield.

There is a war being waged for your thoughts. The enemy wants your mind. He wants to fill it with lies. He wants to distract it with trivia. He wants to corrupt it with impurity. He wants to capture it with fear. He wants to control it with anxiety. He wants to make it so full of noise that there is no room for God. Because if he can control your mind, he can control your life. Everything flows from the heart, yes. But the heart thinks. And if the enemy can control your thinking, he can control your desires. He can control your choices. He can control your actions. He can control your life.

This is why Paul says, "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Your mind must be renewed. It must be transformed. Because the world is constantly trying to shape your thinking. Every day, from every direction, the world is trying to press you into its mold. It wants you to think the way it thinks. To value what it values. To desire what it desires. To believe what it believes. And if you are not actively, intentionally, aggressively renewing your mind, you will be conformed. Not because you want to be. Because the pressure is constant and relentless.

Loving God with your mind means you fight back. You take your thoughts captive. You renew your mind. You fill it with truth. You dwell on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy. You set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. You do not let the world shape your thinking.

You let God shape your thinking. Through His Word. Through prayer. Through the fellowship of believers. Through the discipline of learning, studying, reflecting, meditating.

This is not passive. This is active. This is war. And you are either fighting or you are losing. There is no neutral ground in the battle for the mind.

What You Think About

Here is a simple test to see whether you are loving God with your mind.

What do you think about?

Not what you think about when you're trying to think about God. What you think about when you're not trying. What occupies your mind in the ordinary moments of your day. What you return to again and again. What you dwell on when you have nothing else demanding your attention.

Because what you think about reveals what you love. If you think about your career, you love your career. If you think about your relationships, you love your relationships. If you think about your fears, you love your safety. If you think about your resentments, you love your grievances. If you think about your pleasures, you love your pleasures. If you think about God, you love God.

It really is that simple. Your thoughts are the trail of crumbs that lead back to the heart of what you love. Follow your thoughts and you will find your loves. And if your thoughts are not regularly, consistently, habitually dwelling on God, you are not loving God with your mind. You may be loving Him with your heart. You may be loving Him with your soul. But you are not loving Him with your mind. Because your mind is elsewhere. It is occupied with other things. And whatever occupies your mind is what you love.

This is hard to hear. I know it is. Because most of us spend most of our mental energy on things that are not God. We think about our work. We think about our families. We think about our problems. We think about our plans. We think about our entertainment. We think about a thousand things that are not God. And we think about God occasionally. In moments. In snatches. When we are in church or reading our Bibles or praying. But the rest of the time, our minds are elsewhere. And we have convinced ourselves that this is normal. That this is just how life works. That God doesn't expect us to think about Him all the time.

But He does. Not in a way that makes it impossible to do anything else. But in a way that makes Him the centre of everything else. You can think about your work and love God with your mind, if your thinking about your work is done in the context of your love for God. You can think about your family and love God with your mind, if your thinking about your family is shaped by your love for God. You can think about your problems and love God with your mind, if your thinking about your problems is filtered through your trust in God. The issue is not what you think about. The issue is whether your thinking is captive to Christ. Whether your thoughts are submitted to Him. Whether your mind is oriented toward Him even when you are thinking about other things.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. It means your mind is not a compartment that you close off when you are not doing religious things. It means your mind is always, in everything, oriented toward God. Not thinking about God every second—that would be impossible—but thinking about everything in relation to God. Seeing your work in light of God. Seeing your family in light of God. Seeing your problems in light of God. Seeing your plans in light of God. Seeing everything in light of God. Because your mind is captive to Christ. And everything you think about is thought about in His presence, under His authority, in light of His truth.

The Mind and Temptation

Let me show you why this matters practically.

Temptation begins in the mind. Every sin you have ever committed began as a thought. Not a fully formed intention. Not a deliberate choice. A thought. A suggestion. An image. A desire that you allowed to linger in your mind instead of taking it captive.

This is why loving God with your mind is essential to holiness. Because if you do not take your thoughts captive, your thoughts will take you captive. They will lead you where you do not want to go. They will whisper lies that you will eventually believe. They will suggest desires that you will eventually act on. The mind is the gateway to the life. And if you do not guard the gate, the enemy will walk right in.

This is what James meant when he said, "Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." Notice where temptation begins. It begins with desire. And desire begins in the mind. A thought. An image. A suggestion. If you take it captive immediately, the temptation dies. But if you let it linger, if you entertain it, if you let it take root in your mind, it will grow. It will conceive. It will give birth to sin. And sin will give birth to death.

Loving God with your mind means you do not let temptation linger. You do not entertain impure thoughts. You do not dwell on resentments. You do not rehearse your fears. You do not feed your anxieties. You take every thought captive. You bring it to Christ. You submit it to His authority. You say, "This thought does not belong here. This thought is not obedient to Christ. I will not let it stay." And you replace it with something true. Something noble. Something pure. Something lovely. Something that honours God.

This is not easy. This is not something you do once and it's done. This is a battle. A daily, hourly, moment-by-moment battle. But it is the battle of love. Because you love God. And you will not let your mind be captured by thoughts that dishonour Him.

The Mind and Anxiety

Let me give you another practical example.

Anxiety is a mental battle. It is the mind spinning out of control, imagining worst-case scenarios, dwelling on what might happen, rehearsing fears, projecting catastrophes. Anxiety is the mind that is not captive to Christ. It is the mind that has been captured by fear.

And the cure for anxiety is not to try harder not to be anxious. The cure is to love God with your mind. To take your anxious thoughts captive and bring them to Christ. To replace them with what is true. To trust God with the things you cannot control. To set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. To remember that God is sovereign, that He is good, that He is faithful, that He will never leave you or forsake you.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Do you see it? Peace guards your mind. Not your circumstances. Not your efforts. Peace. The peace of God. And that peace comes when you bring your anxious thoughts to God and trust Him with them.

Loving God with your mind means you do not let anxiety control you. You bring it to God. You submit it to Him. You trust Him with the things that frighten you. You fill your mind with truth instead of fear. You set your mind on God instead of on the things that threaten you. This is not denial. This is not pretending that real dangers don't exist. This is trusting God in the face of danger. This is loving God with your mind even when your circumstances tempt you to fear.

The Mind and Doubt

One more area where loving God with your mind is essential: doubt.

Doubt is not the opposite of faith. It is the struggle of faith. Every believer doubts. Every believer has questions. Every believer wrestles with things they do not understand. This is not a sign that you are not a Christian. It is a sign that you are thinking. And thinking is what you do when you love God with your mind.

The problem is not doubt. The problem is what you do with doubt. If you ignore it, it will fester. If you suppress it, it will grow. If you pretend it isn't there, it will eventually explode. But if you bring it to God—if you take your doubts captive and make them obedient to Christ—doubt can become the gateway to deeper faith.

This is what the psalmists did. They doubted. They questioned. They cried out to God with raw honesty. "Why have you forsaken me?" "How long, O Lord?" "Why do the wicked prosper?" They didn't suppress their doubts. They brought them to God. And in the bringing, their doubts were answered. Not always with a direct answer. But with something better: the presence of God. They wrestled with God, and they came out of the wrestling with their faith intact, deepened, strengthened.

Loving God with your mind means you do not run from doubt. You bring it to God. You ask your questions. You wrestle with your struggles. You seek understanding. You pursue truth. You do not settle for easy answers that avoid the hard questions. You use your mind to pursue God even when pursuing Him is hard. Because you love Him. And you will not let doubt keep you from Him.

The Mind as a Faculty of Love

Let me bring this to a close.

Your mind is not a cold, neutral, impersonal faculty. It is a faculty of love. It is part of who you are. And when you love God, you love Him with your mind. Your thoughts become part of your devotion. Your questions become part of your worship. Your struggles become part of your pursuit of Him. Your intellectual life is not separate from your spiritual life. It is part of your spiritual life. It is the life of the mind offered to God as an act of love.

This is what it means to love God with all your mind. It means your mind is not your own. It belongs to God. Your thoughts are not your own. They belong to God. Your intellect is not your own. It belongs to God. You use it for Him. You submit it to Him. You fill it with truth. You guard it from lies. You bring every thought captive to obedience to Christ. You think about God. You think about His world. You think about His truth. You think about His will. And you do it all as an act of love.

Because you love God. And when you love someone, you think about them. You want to know them. You want to understand them. You want to please them. You want to honour them. You think about what they would want. You think about what would make them happy. You think about what would bring them joy. You think about them because you love them.

This is what it means to love God with your mind. You think about Him because you love Him. You seek to understand Him because you love Him. You bring your thoughts captive to Him because you love Him. Your mind becomes an instrument of your love. And every thought becomes an opportunity to love Him more.

Where We Go From Here

We have now examined the three parts of the greatest commandment: heart, soul, mind. We have seen what it means to love God with the whole inner being, with the entire life and self, with the intellect and thoughts. But we are not done. Because these three are not separate. They are one. The command is not to love God with your heart, and separately with your soul, and separately with your mind. The command is to love God with *all* of it. With the whole person. With no division, no compartmentalization, no holding back.

This is where we must go next. Because the greatest tragedy of modern Christianity is not that we fail to love God with our hearts, or our souls, or our minds. It is that we have divided ourselves into compartments and given God one of them while keeping the rest for ourselves. We have fragmented our lives into sacred and secular, spiritual and physical, religious and ordinary. And we have called this fragmentation normal. We have called it balance. We have called it wisdom.

It is not wisdom. It is the opposite of wisdom. It is the failure to love God with all of who we are. And it is the next distortion we must confront.

Let's go there.

PART SIX:
THE WHOLE PERSON

Chapter 10: No Division, No Compartmentalization

We have made a mistake.

It is a mistake so common, so deeply embedded in our way of thinking, that we do not even recognize it as a mistake. We think it is normal. We think it is wisdom. We think it is simply the way life works. And it is destroying our ability to love God.

The mistake is this: we have divided ourselves into compartments.

We have divided our lives into sacred and secular. God gets Sunday morning. The rest of the week belongs to us. We have divided our selves into spiritual and physical. God gets our hearts and souls. Our minds, our bodies, our time, our money, our ambitions, our relationships—those are ours. We have divided our existence into the parts that matter to God and the parts that don't. Worship matters. Work doesn't. Prayer matters. Play doesn't. Church matters. The rest of life is just... life.

We have learned this division so thoroughly that we do not even question it. We assume it is true. We assume that God is interested in our spiritual lives, but our work, our hobbies, our friendships, our finances, our bodies, our minds—those are our domain. We can invite God into them if we want. We can ask Him to bless them. But they are not, in themselves, spiritual. They are secular. And the secular is separate from the sacred.

This is not biblical. This is not Christian. This is a pagan division that we have inherited from Greek philosophy and absorbed so deeply that we think it is in the Bible. It is not. The Bible knows nothing of a sacred-secular divide. The Bible knows nothing of a spiritual life that is separate from the rest of life. The Bible knows nothing of a God who is Lord of some parts of your existence and not Lord of all of it.

The God of the Bible is Lord of everything. He created everything. He sustains everything. He redeems everything. He claims everything. There is not a square inch of your life that He does not say, "Mine." There is not a moment of your day that He does not claim as His. There is not a thought in your mind, a desire in your heart, a choice in your will, a moment of your existence that does not belong to Him.

And the command to love Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, is a command to recognize that. To live in that reality. To stop dividing your life into compartments and start living as a whole person whose entire existence is an act of love for God.

The Lie of Compartmentalization

Let me name this lie clearly.

The lie is that your life can be divided into parts, and God is Lord of some parts while you are lord of the others. The lie is that your spiritual life is one compartment, and the rest of your life is separate. The lie is that you can love God with your heart on Sunday and love the world with your hands on Monday. The lie is that God cares about your worship but not your work, your prayers but not your play, your Bible reading but not your bank account.

This lie is pervasive. It is preached from pulpits that never connect Sunday's sermon to Monday's work. It is taught in churches that measure success by attendance and giving but never ask what their people are doing with the rest of their week. It is assumed in the lives of Christians who spend an hour on Sunday feeling spiritual and the rest of the week living exactly like the world.

And it is devastating.

Because when you divide your life into compartments, you are not loving God with all of who you are. You are loving Him with a part of who you are. The rest of you is given to something else. You may not call it that. You may call it "balance." You may call it "being realistic." You may call it "living in the real world." But what it is, is a divided heart. A divided soul. A divided mind. And a divided life is not a life of love. It is a life of partition.

Jesus was clear about this. "No one can serve two masters." Not "it's difficult to serve two masters." Not "it's challenging to balance two masters." *No one can serve two masters*. Because you will hate the one and love the other. You will be devoted to the one and despise the other. There is no third option. There is no peaceful coexistence. There is no way to serve God and anything else. If you are serving anything else, you are not serving God. If your life is divided, your love is divided. And divided love is not love.

The Sacred-Secular Divide Is Not in the Bible

Let me show you where this lie comes from.

It comes from Greek philosophy. The Greeks divided reality into two realms: the spiritual and the material. The spiritual was good, eternal, real. The material was inferior, temporary, less real. The goal of life was to escape the material and ascend to the spiritual. This is Platonism. This is Gnosticism. This is not Christianity.

The Bible has no such division. In the Bible, God creates the material world and calls it good. He takes on flesh—material, physical flesh—in the person of Jesus Christ. He promises to raise our bodies—physical, material bodies—from the dead. He is making a new heaven and a new earth—a new material creation. The material is not evil. The material is not less real. The material is created by God, redeemed by God, and will be glorified by God.

This means there is no sacred-secular divide. All of life is sacred. All of life belongs to God. All of life is to be lived in love for God. Your work is sacred. Your rest is sacred. Your eating and drinking are sacred. Your relationships are sacred. Your finances are sacred. Your body is sacred. Your mind is sacred. Everything belongs to God. Everything is to be offered to God. Everything is an opportunity to love God.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Not just the spiritual things. Not just the religious things. Eating. Drinking. The most mundane, ordinary, everyday activities. Do them for the glory of God. Because there is no part of your life that is outside of God's lordship. There is no part of your life that cannot be an act of worship.

This is also what Paul meant when he said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Your work is not secular. Your work is worship. When you work, you are serving the Lord. Not just when you are doing religious work. When you are doing any work. Because there is no sacred-secular divide. All work done in love for God is sacred.

The Whole Person

The command to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, is a command to love Him with your whole person. Not with a part. Not with the parts you designate as spiritual. With the whole of who you are.

Your heart. Your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral decisions. All of it.

Your soul. Your life, your self, your existence, your breath, your being. All of it.

Your mind. Your intellect, your reason, your questions, your doubts, your understanding. All of it.

There is no part of you that is excluded. There is no part of you that is optional. There is no part of you that you can keep for yourself while giving God the rest. The command is total. The command is comprehensive. The command leaves nothing out.

This is why Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with *all* your heart, *all* your soul, *all* your mind. He was not giving you a list of parts to check off. He was telling you that love for God is not a compartment. It is not something you add to your life. It is the reorientation of your entire existence. It is the taking of everything you are and everything you have and offering it to God as an act of love.

The Unity of the Person

One of the things we lose when we divide ourselves into compartments is the unity of the person. We start to think that our hearts, souls, and minds are separate parts that operate independently. We think we can love God with our hearts while our minds wander. We think we can love God with our souls while our wills rebel. We think we can love God with our minds while our desires run after other things.

This is not how the Bible understands the human person.

In biblical thought, you are not a collection of parts. You are a unity. Your heart, soul, and mind are not separate compartments. They are different aspects of the same unified self. When you love God with your heart, your mind is involved. When you love God with your mind, your soul is involved. When you love God with your soul, your heart is involved. You cannot separate them. You cannot love God with one while withholding another. Because you are one person. And when you love, you love with all of who you are.

This is why the command is not three commands. It is one command. Love God with your whole being. Love God with everything you have. Love God with every aspect of who you are. Do not divide yourself. Do not compartmentalize. Do not give God part of you while keeping the rest for yourself. Love Him with all of it. Because He is worthy of all of it. And because you are one person, and you cannot give Him less than everything without giving Him nothing at all.

What This Looks Like

Let me show you what this looks like in practice.

Loving God with all your heart means your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral decisions are all oriented toward God. You think about Him. You choose Him. You want Him. You decide for Him. Not occasionally. Not when it's convenient. As the orientation of your entire inner life.

Loving God with all your soul means your life, your existence, your breath, your being are all offered to God. You live for Him. You exist for Him. Your life is not your own. It is His. Every moment. Every breath. Every beat of your heart. All of it is His.

Loving God with all your mind means your intellect, your reason, your questions, your doubts, your understanding are all submitted to God. You think His thoughts after Him. You bring every thought captive to Him. You use your mind to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him. Your intellect is not your own. It is His.

And these are not separate. They are one. You do not love God with your heart on Sunday and your mind on Monday. You love God with your whole being every day. Your work is an expression of your love for God. Your rest is an expression of your love for God. Your relationships are expressions of your love for God. Your finances are expressions of your love for God. Your body is an expression of your love for God. Everything you do, everything you are, everything you have—all of it is caught up in the single, unified act of loving God with everything you have.

This is what it means to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. It means your entire existence becomes an act of love. There is no part of you that is not loving Him. There is no moment of your life that is not caught up in love for Him. There is no compartment that you keep for yourself. Everything belongs to Him. Everything is offered to Him. Everything is love.

The Cost of Wholeness

I need to be honest with you about what this costs.

It costs your division. It costs your compartmentalization. It costs the parts of your life that you have kept for yourself. It costs the areas where you have told God He is not welcome. It costs the things you have been doing with your time, your money, your body, your mind, that you have not submitted to Him. It costs the life you have been building for yourself that does not have Him at the centre.

This is not a small cost. This is everything you have. Because you have been living a divided life. You have been giving God part of yourself while keeping the rest. You have been loving Him with some of your heart, some of your soul, some of your mind, while the rest of you has been loving other things. And now the command comes: love Him with *all* of it. Not with the parts you're willing to give up. With the parts you have been protecting. With the parts you thought were yours. With everything.

This is why the greatest commandment is the hardest commandment. Because it demands everything. It demands the parts of your life you thought you could keep. It demands the compartments you thought were safe. It demands the areas where you have been living for yourself. It demands everything.

And it offers you something in return. It offers you wholeness. It offers you integrity. It offers you a life that is not divided, not fragmented, not pulled in a dozen directions. It offers you a life that is unified, cantered, coherent. It offers you the freedom of having no compartments to protect, no parts to hide, no areas where you are living for yourself while pretending to live for God. It offers you the simplicity of a single love that governs everything you are and everything you do.

This is what Jesus meant when He said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Denying yourself is not denying that you exist. It is denying your right to live for yourself. It is giving up your claim on your own life. It is saying, "I am not my own. I belong to God. And everything I am, everything I have, everything I do, belongs to Him."

This is what it means to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. It means you stop living for yourself. You stop dividing your life between what belongs to God and what belongs to you. You give Him everything. And you discover, in the giving, that you have lost nothing worth keeping. And gained everything worth having.

A Picture of Wholeness

I want to give you a picture of what this looks like. It is found in the life of Jesus.

Jesus loved the Father with all His heart. His thoughts were the Father's thoughts. His will was the Father's will. His desires were the Father's desires. He said, "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me." He said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me." His heart was undivided. His love was total.

Jesus loved the Father with all His soul. His life was offered to the Father. From the moment He was born to the moment He died, He lived for the Father. He said, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." His life was not His own. It was given to the Father. And He gave it freely, completely, without reservation.

Jesus loved the Father with all His mind. He knew the Scriptures. He understood the Father's will. He could answer every question, refute every error, explain every truth. His mind was filled with the things of God. His thoughts were shaped by the Word of God. He used His intellect to serve the Father, to teach the people, to fulfil His mission.

And these were not separate. In Jesus, they were one. His heart, His soul, His mind—all of it was unified in love for the Father. Everything He did, everything He said, everything He was, was an expression of that love. There was no division in Him. There was no compartment. There was no part of His life that was not caught up in love for the Father.

This is what we are called to. Not to be Jesus.

To be like Jesus. To love the Father with the same undivided, total, wholehearted love that Jesus loved the Father. To have no compartments. No divisions. No areas of our lives that we keep for ourselves. To be whole. To be one. To be unified in love for God.

This is the greatest commandment. And this is the life it calls us to.

Where We Go From Here

We have now seen the command in its fullness. Heart, soul, mind—all of it. No division. No compartmentalization. No holding back. Love God with everything you have. Love God with everything you are. Love God with your whole life, your whole self, your whole existence.

But we cannot end here. Because knowing the command is not enough. The church knows the command. Or at least, it knows the words. It can recite Matthew 22:37. It can sing songs about loving God. It can preach sermons about the greatest commandment. And yet the church is not loving God. Not with all its heart. Not with all its soul. Not with all its mind. The church has lost what it means to love God. And until we face that, until we name what has been lost, we will never recover it.

So we must turn to the church. We must speak to the people of God. We must name what has happened. We must call out the darkness. And we must leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

This is what comes next. A call to the church. A call out of the darkness. A call back to the greatest commandment.

PART SEVEN:
A CALL TO THE CHURCH

Chapter 11: What the Modern Church Has Lost

I need to say something that will make some of you angry.

That's fine. Anger is better than apathy. Anger means you're still paying attention. Apathy means you've already given up.

Here it is: the modern church—at least in the Western world—has largely abandoned the greatest commandment. We have not abandoned it in theory. We still quote it. We still sing about it. We still nod our heads when it's read from the pulpit. But we have abandoned it in practice. We have replaced it with something else. Something easier. Something less demanding. Something that doesn't require everything we have.

We have replaced love for God with religious activity. We measure our spirituality by attendance, by giving, by service, by Bible reading, by prayer. All of these are good things. All of these are meant to be expressions of love for God. But we have made them substitutes for love. We have convinced ourselves that if we do the right things, we must love God. And we have stopped asking whether our hearts are actually engaged. Whether our souls are actually surrendered. Whether our minds are actually captivated.

We have replaced love for God with emotional experience. We chase the feeling of God's presence. We measure the quality of worship by how it makes us feel. We assume that if we feel something, we must be loving God. And we have stopped asking whether our feelings are connected to a life of obedience. Whether our emotions are rooted in a will that is bent toward God. Whether our experiences are producing actual transformation.

We have replaced love for God with intellectual assent. We believe the right doctrines. We affirm the right creeds. We defend the right positions. And we assume that because we believe the right things, we must love God. But we have stopped asking whether our beliefs are shaping our lives. Whether our orthodoxy is producing orthopraxy. Whether our minds are filled with truth while our hearts are filled with everything but God.

This is what the modern church has lost. We have lost the actual, lived, wholehearted love for God that Jesus called the greatest commandment. We have replaced it with substitutes that look like love but are not love. And we have done it so gradually, so subtly, that we don't even realize what we've lost.

The Shift from Lordship to Consumerism

Let me tell you how this happened.

Over the last several decades, the Western church has undergone a fundamental shift. We may not have noticed it. It happened slowly. But it happened. And it has changed everything.

We shifted from a model of Christianity centered on the lordship of Christ to a model centered on the consumer. We started asking, "What do people want?" instead of asking, "What does God require?" We started measuring success by attendance instead of by discipleship. We started designing services to attract the unchurched instead of to equip the saints. We started preaching messages that make people feel good instead of messages that confront sin and call to repentance.

And in the process, we lost the greatest commandment.

Because the greatest commandment is not consumer-friendly. It does not ask what you want. It does not cater to your preferences. It does not make you feel good about yourself. It demands everything. It confronts your sin. It calls you to die. It tells you that your life is not your own. It tells you that you exist to love God, not to be entertained by Him.

This is not a message that fills seats. This is not a message that builds mega churches. This is not a message that sells books or draws crowds or goes viral on social media. This is a message that empties churches. This is a message that offends. This is a message that drives people away. Which is why so many churches have abandoned it.

But here's the thing: the message that empties churches is also the message that makes disciples. The message that offends is also the message that saves. The message that drives people away is also the message that brings people to life. Because it is the truth. And the truth is what sets people free. Even when it costs everything.

We have traded the truth for comfort. We have traded the greatest commandment for felt needs. We have traded the lordship of Christ for the preferences of consumers. And we have filled our churches with people who are not disciples. Who have never been confronted with the demand to love God with everything. Who have been taught that Christianity is about what God can do for them, not about what they can give to God.

This is what the modern church has lost. And until we recover it, we are not the church. We are something else wearing the church's clothes.

The Silence on the Greatest Commandment

Let me ask you a question.

When was the last time you heard a sermon on the greatest commandment? Not a sermon that mentioned it in passing. Not a sermon that quoted it as a proof text. A sermon that actually taught what it means to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. A sermon that confronted you with the demand to love God with everything. A sermon that made you uncomfortable because you realized you were not keeping the greatest commandment.

If you are like most Christians, you cannot remember. Because most pastors do not preach on the greatest commandment. They preach on other things. Important things. True things. But not this. Not the command that Jesus said was the greatest. Not the command that everything else hangs on.

Why? Because it is hard to preach. Because it confronts people. Because it makes them uncomfortable. Because it demands something that most people in the pews are not willing to give. Because it is easier to preach about grace, or about blessing, or about purpose, or about anything other than the radical, all-consuming demand to love God with everything you have.

But when we do not preach the greatest commandment, we are not preaching the gospel. We are preaching something less. Something easier. Something that does not save. Because the gospel is not just that God loves you. The gospel is that God is worthy of your love. And He demands it. And He will not be satisfied with anything less than everything.

We have been silent on the greatest commandment. And our silence has produced a generation of Christians who do not know what it means to love God. Who think that loving God is a feeling. Who think that loving God is showing up on Sunday. Who think that loving God is believing the right things. Who have never been confronted with the demand to love God with their whole being. Who have never been called to surrender everything.

This silence is a sin. It is a sin against God, who commanded us to love Him. It is a sin against the church, which is starving for the very thing we have refused to preach. It is a sin against the world, which will never believe that God is worthy of love until they see a people who actually love Him with everything they have.

The Darkness We Must Name

Let me name the darkness.

The modern church is full of people who do not love God. They think they do. They would say they do. They would be offended if you suggested they didn't. But they don't. Not with all their heart. Not with all their soul. Not with all their mind.

They love their comfort. They love their families. They love their careers. They love their hobbies.

They love their reputations. They love their safety. They love their plans. They love their dreams. They love a thousand things more than they love God. And they have never been called to repent of this. They have never been told that this is not love. They have been told that it's okay to love God and love other things. They have been told that God understands. They have been told that He doesn't expect too much.

This is a lie. It is a lie from the pit of hell. And we have believed it.

God does expect too much. By human standards, He expects everything. He expects your heart. He expects your soul. He expects your mind. He expects your time, your money, your body, your relationships, your dreams, your plans, your life. He expects all of it. And He will not settle for less. Not because He is demanding. Because He is worthy. And because anything less than everything is not love.

The darkness is that we have convinced ourselves that partial love is acceptable. That God is fine with being one of many loves in our hearts. That He doesn't really expect us to love Him with everything because He knows we have other things to do. That the greatest commandment is an ideal, not a demand. That it's something we can aspire to without actually doing.

This is darkness. And we need to call it what it is: sin. It is sin to claim to love God while loving other things more. It is sin to give God a part of your heart while keeping the rest for yourself. It is sin to live a divided life and call it Christianity. It is sin to know the greatest commandment and not keep it.

I am not saying this to condemn you. I am saying it because I have done it. I have lived this divided life. I have given God part of my heart while keeping the rest. I have loved my comfort more than I loved God. I have loved my plans more than I loved God. I have loved my reputation more than I loved God. And I called it Christianity. And God, in His mercy, showed me what it was: sin.

And He called me to repent. To turn from my divided heart. To love Him with everything. To stop pretending that partial love is enough. To give Him all of it. Every compartment. Every area I had kept for myself. Everything.

This is what the church needs. Not more programs. Not more activities. Not more comfortable sermons that make us feel good about ourselves. Repentance. Repentance from the sin of not loving God with everything. Repentance from the sin of living a divided life. Repentance from the sin of treating the greatest commandment as optional.

What We Have Lost

Let me tell you what we have lost.

We have lost the fire of first love. The early church loved God with a passion that turned the world upside down. They were not divided. They were not compartmentalized. They did not give God part of their lives while keeping the rest. They gave Him everything. They sold their possessions. They faced persecution. They died. Because they loved God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind. And that love was so powerful, so compelling, so irresistible that it transformed everything.

We have lost that. We have lost the passion. We have lost the fire. We have lost the willingness to give everything. We have settled for a comfortable Christianity that costs us nothing and produces nothing. We have built churches that are full of activity and empty of love. We have filled our schedules with religious things while our hearts are far from God.

We have lost the unity that comes from a single love. When you love God with everything, you are not pulled in a dozen directions. You are unified. You are centered. You are whole. Your life has a single organizing principle: love for God. Everything else falls into place. Your work, your relationships, your finances, your time—all of it is caught up in the single, unified act of loving God. There is no division. There is no compartment. There is no conflict between sacred and secular. It is all sacred. It is all love.

We have lost that. We are fragmented. We are divided. We are pulled in a dozen directions. We live our lives in compartments, giving God one while keeping the rest. And we are exhausted by the effort of keeping all the compartments straight. We are tired of pretending that we love God when our hearts are elsewhere. We are weary of the divided life.

We have lost the witness that comes from wholehearted love. The world is not impressed by Christians who love God with part of their hearts while loving the world with the rest. The world is not convinced by Christians who live exactly like them except on Sunday morning. The world is not drawn to a Christianity that costs nothing and changes nothing.

But the world is drawn to wholehearted love. When the world sees people who love God with everything—who give up comfort, who sacrifice, who suffer, who die, because they love God—the world takes notice. The world is convicted. The world is drawn. This is how the early church grew. Not through programs. Not through marketing. Through the witness of people who loved God more than they loved their own lives.

We have lost that. We have lost the witness of wholehearted love. We have replaced it with a Christianity that looks like the world, acts like the world, loves what the world loves. And we wonder why the world is not convinced.

A Call to Face the Truth

I need to ask you something. And I need you to be honest.

Have you been loving God with all your heart? Not with part of it. Not with the part you're willing to give. With all of it.

Have you been loving God with all your soul? With your life, your existence, your being? Or have you been holding back, keeping your life for yourself, giving God only the parts that don't cost you anything?

Have you been loving God with all your mind? With your intellect, your thoughts, your questions, your understanding? Or have you been keeping your mind for yourself, thinking what you want to think, believing what you want to believe, while giving God only your heart?

If you are honest, you may have to say no. You may have to admit that you have not been keeping the greatest commandment. You may have to confess that you have been loving God with part of you while keeping the rest for yourself. You may have to acknowledge that your life is divided, that your heart is pulled in a dozen directions, that you have settled for a Christianity that does not demand everything.

If that is true, then you are not alone. This is the condition of the modern church. This is what we have lost. This is the darkness we are in.

But here is the good news: darkness is not the end. Darkness is where God begins. He speaks light into darkness. He calls what is dead to life. He takes divided hearts and makes them whole. He calls us out of the darkness and into the light.

This is what comes next. A call out of the darkness. Not a call to try harder. Not a call to do more. A call to repent. To turn. To surrender. To give God everything. To stop living a divided life and start loving Him with all that you are.

This is the call of the greatest commandment. And this is the call of the Holy Spirit to the church in this hour.

Let's answer it.

Chapter 12: Called Out of Darkness

I have spent this entire book telling you what you are not doing.

You are not loving God with all your heart. You are not loving God with all your soul. You are not loving God with all your mind. You are living a divided life. You have compartmentalized. You have settled for substitutes. You have been part of a church that has lost the greatest commandment and doesn't even know it's gone.

If you have made it this far, you are either angry at me or angry at yourself. Maybe both.

Anger is fine. Anger means you are paying attention. But anger is not the destination. Conviction is not the destination. The destination is repentance. And repentance is not feeling bad about your sin. Repentance is turning from your sin. Repentance is changing direction. Repentance is leaving the darkness and walking into the light.

This is what I am calling you to do. Not to feel guilty. Not to wallow in shame. Not to add another layer of religious activity to your already cluttered life. To turn. To surrender. To give God everything. To stop living a divided life and start loving Him with all that you are.

This is not a call to try harder. You have been trying harder. That is part of the problem. You have been trying to love God with a divided heart, and it has exhausted you. You have been trying to give God part of yourself while keeping the rest, and it has left you empty. You have been trying to live a Christian life without actually loving God with everything, and it has not worked.

Trying harder will not work. What you need is not more effort. What you need is surrender. What you need is to stop holding back. What you need is to give God everything. Not because you are strong enough to do it. Because He is strong enough to take it.

The Nature of Repentance

Let me be clear about what I am calling you to.

I am calling you to repent.

Repentance is a word we have lost. We have made it mean "feeling sorry for your sins." That is part of it, but it is not the whole thing. Repentance is not just feeling bad. Repentance is turning. It is changing your mind. It is changing your direction. It is turning away from what you have been doing and turning toward God.

The Greek word for repentance is metanoia. It means a change of mind. A fundamental reorientation. A new way of thinking that leads to a new way of living. Repentance is not just saying, "I'm sorry I haven't loved you with all my heart." Repentance is actually beginning to love God with all your heart. It is not just confessing that you have been living a divided life. It is actually giving God the parts you have been keeping for yourself.

This is what I am calling you to do. Not to feel bad. Not to try harder. To turn. To reorient. To give God everything. To stop holding back. To stop compartmentalizing. To stop living a divided life. To love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. Not because you have finally figured out how to do it. Because you have finally stopped pretending you can do it on your own.

Repentance is not something you do once. It is something you do again and again. Every day. Every moment. Because your heart does not stay turned. It drifts. It returns to its default setting. It divides itself again. And you have to turn again. You have to repent again. You have to give God everything again.

This is not failure. This is faithfulness. This is the life of wholehearted love. Not a life where you love God perfectly. A life where you keep coming back to Him. Where you keep giving Him everything. Where you keep turning from your divided heart and turning toward Him.

What Surrender Looks Like

Let me tell you what I am calling you to surrender.

I am calling you to surrender your heart. Your thoughts, your will, your desires, your moral decisions. All of it. Stop keeping any of it for yourself. Give it all to God. Let Him shape your thoughts. Let Him bend your will. Let Him purify your desires. Let Him guide your decisions. Do not hold back any corner of your inner life. Let God be Lord of all of it.

This means you stop thinking what you want to think. You start thinking what God wants you to think. You fill your mind with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy. You take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. You do not let your mind wander where it should not go. You do not dwell on what dishonours God. You think about God. You think about His Word. You think about His world. You think about His will. You love Him with your mind.

This means you stop wanting what you want. You start wanting what God wants. You ask Him to change your desires. You let Him give you a new heart. You stop trying to satisfy your soul with the world and start finding your satisfaction in Him. You desire Him. You long for Him. You hunger and thirst for Him. You love Him with your soul.

This means you stop choosing what you want. You start choosing what God commands. You bend your will toward Him. You say yes to what He says yes to. You say no to what He says no to. You obey even when obedience is hard. You trust even when trust doesn't make sense. You follow even when the path is unclear. You love Him with your will.

This is what surrender looks like. It is not a one-time event. It is a lifetime of turning, of giving, of surrendering, of loving.

What Surrender Costs

I need to be honest with you about what this costs.

It costs your autonomy. You are not your own. You belong to God. You do not get to decide what you think, what you want, what you choose. You submit to Him. You trust Him. You obey Him. This is hard for people who have been taught that freedom means doing what you want. Freedom is not doing what you want. Freedom is wanting what you should want. And wanting what you should want comes from surrendering your will to God.

It costs your comfort. Loving God with everything will cost you your comfort. It will cost you the life you have built for yourself. It will cost you the plans you have made. It will cost you the things you have been holding onto. Because God will ask for them. He will ask for your time. He will ask for your money. He will ask for your relationships. He will ask for your dreams. He will ask for your life. And you will have to give them.

It costs your reputation. When you love God with everything, you will look foolish to the world. You will make choices that don't make sense. You will prioritize things the world does not prioritize. You will give when the world says keep. You will serve when the world says advance. You will humble yourself when the world says promote yourself. You will look like a fool. And that is fine. Because the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. And you are called to be a fool for Christ.

It costs your life. This is the ultimate cost. Loving God with everything will cost you your life. Not necessarily your physical life—though it might. But certainly your life as you have known it. The life you built for yourself. The life where you were in control. The life where you decided what was important. The life where you loved God with part of your heart while keeping the rest for yourself. That life is over. You are giving it up. You are dying to it. And you are being raised to a new life. A life where God is everything. A life where love is whole. A life where you are not divided.

This is what surrender costs. Everything.

What Surrender Gains

But I also need to tell you what surrender gains.

It gains you God. Not His blessings. Not His gifts. Not what He can do for you. Him. You gain God Himself. You gain the One for whom your soul was made. You gain the One who satisfies every longing. You gain the One who is better than life. You gain the One who is worth more than everything you have given up.

It gains you wholeness. No more division. No more compartments. No more living one way on Sunday and another way on Monday. No more pretending. No more hiding. No more exhaustion from trying to keep all the compartments straight. You become one. Unified. Whole. Your life is no longer a collection of separate parts. It is a single, unified act of love for God.

It gains you freedom. Not the freedom to do what you want. The freedom to want what you should want. The freedom to love what is worthy of love. The freedom to be who you were created to be. The freedom of no longer being pulled in a dozen directions. The freedom of a single love that governs everything.

It gains you peace. Not the peace of circumstances. The peace of knowing that you are doing what you were made to do. The peace of loving God with everything. The peace of no longer holding back. The peace of surrender. The peace that passes understanding.

It gains you joy. Not the joy of getting what you want. The joy of wanting what God wants. The joy of loving God. The joy of knowing Him. The joy of being known by Him. The joy that is not dependent on circumstances. The joy that is rooted in God Himself.

This is what surrender gains. Everything worth having.

The Call

I am calling you to surrender. Not because I have it figured out. I don't. Not because I have done it perfectly. I haven't. I am calling you because I have tasted what it means to love God with everything. And I know that it is the only thing worth doing. And I know that the church is dying because we have not done it. And I know that the Holy Spirit is moving in this moment to call us out of the darkness and into the light.

So here is the call.

Stop holding back. Stop compartmentalizing. Stop living a divided life. Stop pretending that partial love is enough. Stop settling for substitutes. Stop trying to love God with part of your heart while keeping the rest for yourself.

Give Him everything. Your heart. Your soul. Your mind. Your thoughts. Your desires. Your choices. Your life. Your time. Your money. Your relationships. Your dreams. Your plans. Your future. Everything.

Not because you have to. Because you want to. Because He is worthy. Because He is better than everything you are giving up. Because He is what your soul has been longing for. Because loving Him with everything is what you were made for.

Do it now. Do not wait until you feel ready. You will never feel ready. Do not wait until you have it figured out. You will never have it figured out. Do it now. Turn. Surrender. Give Him everything.

This is the greatest commandment. This is the life you were created for. This is the call of the Holy Spirit to the church in this hour.

Leaving the Rest to the Holy Spirit

I have done what I was called to do. I have written what I was given to write. I have called out the darkness. I have named the sin. I have proclaimed the command. I have called you to surrender.

I cannot make you do it. I cannot make you love God. I cannot make you surrender your heart, your soul, your mind. I can only call. The rest is between you and God. The rest is the work of the Holy Spirit.

So I will leave it there. I have planted the seed. I have watered it. God will give the growth. Or not. That is His business. My business was to be faithful to what I was given. And I have been.

If you have heard this call—if you have felt the weight of the greatest commandment, if you have seen your divided heart, if you have tasted the emptiness of partial love, if you are ready to surrender everything—then do it. Not tomorrow. Not when you have it figured out. Now. Turn. Surrender. Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind.

If you have not heard it—if you are still comfortable, still divided, still holding back—then I pray that the Holy Spirit will do what I cannot do. That He will open your eyes. That He will soften your heart. That He will break through your defences. That He will call you out of the darkness and into the light.

This is the greatest commandment. This is what we were made for. This is the life that is truly life.

Let those who have ears, hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

A Prayer for Those Who Are Ready

If you are ready to surrender, let me pray for you. Not a prayer you repeat. A prayer you make your own.

God, I have been living a divided life. I have loved You with part of my heart while keeping the rest for myself. I have loved my comfort more than I have loved You. I have loved my plans more than I have loved You. I have loved my reputation more than I have loved You. I have loved a thousand things more than I have loved You.

I repent. I turn. I surrender.

Here is my heart. Every thought, every desire, every choice. Take it. Make it Yours. I want to think what You want me to think. I want to want what You want me to want. I want to choose what You command. I love You with all my heart.

Here is my soul. My life, my breath, my existence. Take it. Make it Yours. I want to live for You. I want to exist for You. I want my life to be an act of love for You. I love You with all my soul.

Here is my mind. My intellect, my thoughts, my questions, my doubts. Take it. Make it Yours. I want to think Your thoughts after You. I want to bring every thought captive to Christ. I want to know You with all that I am. I love You with all my mind.

I am Yours. Not part of me. All of me. I give You everything. I hold nothing back.

This is the greatest commandment. This is what I was made for. This is my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Where We Go From Here

We have come to the end of the call. But we are not at the end of the book. Because surrender is not the end. It is the beginning. The beginning of a life of wholehearted love. The beginning of living the greatest commandment.

So we must turn to what comes next. How do you live this life? How do you love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, not just in a moment of surrender, but in the ordinary, everyday moments of your life? How do you keep loving when the feeling fades? How do you keep surrendering when the world pulls you back? How do you live the greatest commandment in the mundane Tuesday afternoons and the sleepless nights and the moments when everything in you wants to turn back?

This is what comes next. Practical steps. Not a program. Not a formula. But a way of life. A way of living that keeps you turned toward God. A way of loving that endures.

Let's go there.

PART EIGHT:
LIVING THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Chapter 13: Practical Steps for the Believer

We have come to the place where words are not enough.

You have read the call. You have felt the weight of the greatest commandment. You have seen your divided heart. Perhaps you have surrendered. Perhaps you have prayed the prayer. Perhaps you have given God everything—or at least, you have said you have.

But now comes the hard part. The part where words become flesh. The part where surrender becomes life. The part where you have to actually love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, not just in a moment of spiritual intensity, but in the ordinary, mundane, exhausting, beautiful mess of your actual life.

Because surrender is not a moment. It is a life. It is not something you do once and then you're done. It is something you do again and again, moment by moment, day by day, for the rest of your life. The heart that you surrendered this morning will need to be surrendered again this afternoon. The soul you gave to God today will try to take itself back tomorrow. The mind you submitted to Christ in prayer will wander away before you finish reading this sentence.

This is not failure. This is the nature of life in a fallen world with a heart that is not yet fully redeemed. The question is not whether you will drift. You will. The question is what you will do when you drift. Will you let yourself drift further? Will you pretend you haven't drifted? Or will you turn back? Will you surrender again? Will you love again? Will you keep coming back to the greatest commandment, again and again, for the rest of your life?

This chapter is about that. Not about a one-time moment of surrender. About a lifetime of turning. About the practical, concrete, daily habits that keep you oriented toward God. About the disciplines of love. About the practices that help you love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, not in theory, but in the actual, lived reality of your life.

The Discipline of the Heart

Let's start with the heart.

If you are going to love God with all your heart, you need to pay attention to your heart. You need to know what is in there. You need to guard it. You need to cultivate it. You need to bring it to God again and again, because it will wander. It will divide. It will attach itself to things that are not God. And you have to keep bringing it back.

1. Examine Your Heart Regularly

You cannot love God with a heart you never examine. You cannot surrender what you do not see. You cannot repent of what you refuse to acknowledge. So you must develop the habit of looking at your heart. Of asking yourself hard questions. Of letting God show you what is actually in there.

This is not self-absorption. This is not navel-gazing. This is the work of loving God. Because your heart is the control room. And if you do not know what is happening in the control room, you cannot love God from it.

So ask yourself the questions I gave you earlier. What do you think about when your mind is free? What do you spend your money on? What do you do when you're tired? What makes you angry? What are you afraid of? These questions reveal your heart. They show you what you actually love. And they give you something to bring to God.

Bring it to Him. Not to feel guilty. To be honest. To say, "Here is what I found in my heart. Here is what I love more than You. Here is where my heart has wandered. Take it. Clean it. Turn it back toward You."

Do this regularly. Daily. Because your heart changes daily. It is not the same today as it was yesterday. It has already begun to wander. It has already begun to attach itself to new things. You need to examine it again, bring it to God again, surrender it again.

2. Guard Your Heart

Examination is not enough. You also need to guard. You need to be vigilant about what you allow into your heart. Because your heart is not a fortress. It is a city with open gates. And if you do not guard the gates, the enemy will walk right in.

What are you allowing into your heart? What are you watching? What are you listening to? What are you reading? What are you dwelling on? What are you giving your attention to? These things shape your heart. They form your desires. They bend your will. They fill your mind. And if you are not careful, they will fill your heart with everything but God.

This does not mean you live in a cave. It does not mean you avoid the world. It means you are discerning. You know that not everything is good for you. You know that some things will poison your heart. You know that you cannot fill your heart with the world and expect it to love God. So you guard. You are careful. You say no to things that would pull your heart away from God. You say yes to things that would draw your heart toward Him.

This is not legalism. This is love. When you love someone, you guard your heart for them. You do not let other things take the place that belongs to them. You protect your affection. You keep it pure. You keep it for them. This is what it means to guard your heart for God.

3. Cultivate Your Heart

Examination and guarding are not enough. You also need to cultivate. A heart that is not growing is dying. A heart that is not being filled with God is being filled with something else. So you must actively, intentionally, consistently cultivate your heart. You must fill it with the things of God. You must feed it on the Word of God. You must water it with prayer. You must let it be warmed by the presence of God in worship.

This is what the spiritual disciplines are for. Not to earn God's favour. Not to check boxes. To cultivate your heart. To keep it soft. To keep it turned toward God. To fill it with what will help it love.

Read Scripture not to get through a chapter, but to know God. Pray not to check off a spiritual duty, but to be with God. Worship not to feel something, but to give God what He is worth. These are the practices that cultivate a heart that loves.

Do not neglect them. They are not optional. They are not for the super-spiritual. They are for you. They are the means by which God keeps your heart soft, your desires pure, your will bent toward Him. Neglect them, and your heart will harden. Your desires will wander. Your will will rebel. You will stop loving God with all your heart, not because you decide to, but because you stopped cultivating the soil of your soul.

The Discipline of the Soul

Now let's talk about the soul.

If you are going to love God with all your soul, you need to offer your life to God. Not part of it. Not the parts you're willing to give up. All of it.

Your time. Your body. Your relationships. Your work. Your rest. Your money. Your dreams. Your plans. Your future. Everything.

1. Offer Your Life as a Living Sacrifice

Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."

Your body. Not just your soul. Not just your spirit. Your body. Your physical, material, flesh-and-blood existence. Offer it to God. Your hands. Your feet. Your eyes. Your ears. Your mouth. Your sexuality. Your sleep. Your food. Your work. Your rest. All of it. Offer it to God.

This is what it means to love God with your soul. Your soul is your life. Your life is lived in your body. And your body belongs to God. So offer it to Him. Not in a moment of spiritual intensity. In the ordinary moments of your life. When you wake up, offer your body to God. When you go to work, offer your work to God. When you eat, offer your eating to God. When you rest, offer your rest to God. When you sleep, offer your sleep to God. Your life is not your own. It belongs to Him. Live like it.

2. Surrender Your Time

Time is the stuff of life. How you spend your time is how you spend your life. And if you are going to love God with all your soul, you need to give Him your time. Not just an hour on Sunday. Not just a few minutes in the morning. Your time. All of it.

This does not mean you spend every moment in prayer. It means your time belongs to God. You use it for His purposes. You steward it for His glory. You do not waste it on things that do not matter. You do not squander it on things that dishonour Him. You use your time to love Him, to serve Him, to know Him, to make Him known.

This will require you to say no to things. Good things. Things you want to do. Things you have always done. Because your time is not infinite. And if you give it to one thing, you cannot give it to another. So you have to choose.

You have to decide what is worth your time. And if you love God with all your soul, you will use your time for what matters most.

3. Surrender Your Relationships

Your relationships are part of your soul. They are part of your life. And if you are going to love God with all your soul, you need to give Him your relationships. Not by neglecting them. By offering them to Him. By loving people as an expression of your love for God. By letting your relationships be shaped by your relationship with Him.

This means you love people the way God loves people. You forgive the way God forgives. You serve the way God serves. You speak the truth the way God speaks truth. Your relationships become an expression of your love for God.

It also means you are willing to lose relationships for God. If someone is pulling you away from God, you may have to let them go. If a relationship is causing you to compromise your love for God, you may have to end it. This is hard. It is costly. But it is what it means to love God with all your soul. Your love for God must be greater than your love for any person. Not because God is jealous. Because He is worthy. And because any relationship that pulls you away from God is not love. It is idolatry.

4. Surrender Your Possessions

Your money. Your stuff. Your possessions. These are part of your life. And if you are going to love God with all your soul, you need to give them to God. Not by giving them all away—though He may call you to do that. By holding them loosely. By using them for His purposes. By not letting them own you.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Your possessions reveal your heart. If you are holding onto them tightly, your heart is attached to them. If you are using them for God, your heart is attached to God. So surrender your possessions. Give generously. Live simply. Use what you have for the kingdom. Do not let your stuff be a rival to your love for God.

5. Surrender Your Dreams

Your dreams. Your plans. Your ambitions. Your vision for your life. These are part of your soul. And if you are going to love God with all your soul, you need to give them to God. Not by not having dreams. By holding them loosely. By being willing to give them up if God asks. By letting God shape them, redirect them, even destroy them if He wants.

This is one of the hardest surrenders. Because your dreams feel like you. They feel like your identity. They feel like what you were made for. But you were not made for your dreams. You were made for God. And if your dreams are not aligned with His will, they need to go. Not because God is cruel. Because He loves you. And He will not let you settle for a lesser life when He has called you to Himself.

So give Him your dreams. Lay them on the altar. Be willing to walk away from them. Be willing to have them transformed. Be willing to follow wherever He leads, even if it is not where you planned to go. This is what it means to love God with all your soul.

The Discipline of the Mind

Finally, the mind.

If you are going to love God with all your mind, you need to use your mind for God. You need to fill it with truth. You need to bring your thoughts captive. You need to think about God, think about His world, think about His will. You need to make your intellect an instrument of love.

1. Fill Your Mind with Scripture

You cannot love God with your mind if your mind is empty of God. You need to fill it with His Word. Not just read it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Chew on it. Let it sink into your mind until it shapes the way you think.

This is what the psalmist meant when he said, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Not in his emotions. In his heart—the seat of his thoughts. He filled his mind with Scripture so that Scripture would shape his thoughts, his desires, his choices.

Do this. Memorize verses. Meditate on passages. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. Fill your mind with Scripture so that your mind is shaped by Scripture. So that when you think about anything, you think about it through the lens of God's Word.

2. Bring Every Thought Captive

You cannot love God with your mind if you let your thoughts run wild. You need to take them captive. You need to submit them to Christ. You need to reject the thoughts that dishonour God and replace them with thoughts that honour Him.

This is a battle. It is a battle you fight every day, every hour, every moment. Because your thoughts will wander. They will dwell on things that do not matter. They will entertain temptations. They will rehearse resentments. They will feed anxieties. And you have to take them captive. You have to say, "This thought does not belong here. I will not let it stay." And you have to replace it with something true. Something noble. Something pure. Something lovely. Something that honours God.

This is not easy. It takes practice. It takes discipline. It takes the help of the Holy Spirit. But it is essential. Because you cannot love God with your mind if your mind is full of things that are not God.

3. Pursue Understanding

You cannot love God with your mind if you are content not to understand. God has given you a mind to know Him. Use it. Study theology. Read books. Ask questions. Wrestle with difficult doctrines. Pursue understanding. Not because you need to have all the answers. Because you love God. And you want to know Him. And you cannot know Him without understanding.

This means you do not settle for a shallow faith. You do not stay in spiritual infancy. You grow. You learn. You dig deeper. You ask hard questions. You wrestle with difficult passages. You pursue understanding as an act of love.

4. Engage the World with Your Mind

You cannot love God with your mind if you hide from the world. God has called you to be in the world, to engage with it, to think about it, to understand it. Not to be conformed to it. To engage it. To think Christianly about everything. To see the world through the lens of God's truth.

This means you think about your work theologically. You think about culture critically. You think about politics biblically. You think about art, music, literature, science, history, philosophy—everything—through the lens of your love for God. Your mind is not a compartment you close off when you are not doing religious things. It is an instrument of love that engages everything in light of God.

5. Wrestle with Doubt

Finally, you cannot love God with your mind if you are afraid of doubt. Doubt is not the enemy of faith. It is the struggle of faith. And if you love God, you will wrestle with your doubts. You will bring them to Him. You will seek answers. You will not settle for easy answers that avoid the hard questions.

So do not run from doubt. Do not suppress it. Do not pretend it isn't there. Bring it to God. Wrestle with it. Use your mind to pursue truth even when pursuing truth is hard. This is what it means to love God with your mind. Not to have all the answers. To seek them. To pursue understanding. To trust God even when you do not understand. To keep seeking, keep asking, keep knocking, because you love Him and you want to know Him.

The Rhythm of Surrender

Let me give you a rhythm to live by.

Every morning, when you wake up, surrender your heart, your soul, your mind to God. Say to Him, "I am Yours. Not part of me. All of me. My thoughts, my desires, my choices, my life, my mind. All of it. Take it. Use it. Bend it toward You."

Throughout the day, pay attention to your heart. Notice when it wanders. Notice when it attaches itself to things that are not God. Notice when your mind drifts. Notice when your soul starts to pull back from surrender. And when you notice, turn back. Surrender again. Bring your wandering heart back to God. Take your drifting mind captive. Offer your life again.

Every evening, before you sleep, examine your heart. Where did you wander? What did you love more than God? Where did you hold back? Confess it. Bring it to God. Receive His forgiveness. Surrender again. And sleep in the peace of knowing that you belong to Him.

This is the rhythm of surrender. This is the rhythm of love. This is the rhythm of the greatest commandment. Not a one-time event. A lifetime of turning. A lifetime of giving. A lifetime of loving.

A Word of Grace

Before I close this chapter, I need to say something.

You will fail at this. You will have days when you do not examine your heart. You will have days when you do not guard it. You will have days when you do not cultivate it. You will have days when your soul is not surrendered. You will have days when your mind is not captive. You will have days when you love God with part of your heart, part of your soul, part of your mind, and keep the rest for yourself.

When that happens, do not despair. Do not give up. Do not conclude that you cannot love God with everything. Turn back. Surrender again. Come back to the greatest commandment. Come back to the One who is worthy of your love. Come back to the One who has loved you with an everlasting love. Come back to the One who has given everything for you.

His love for you is not dependent on your love for Him. He loved you when you did not love Him at all. He loved you when you were His enemy. He loved you when you were running from Him. He loved you to the cross. He loved you to death. He loved you to life.

And because He has loved you, you can love Him. Not perfectly. Not without failure. But truly. Wholeheartedly. With all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. Not because you are strong enough. Because He is faithful. And He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.

So do not give up. Keep turning. Keep surrendering. Keep loving. This is the greatest commandment. This is the life you were made for. This is the life that is truly life.

Where We Go From Here

We have come to the end of the practical steps. But we are not at the end of the book. Because all of this—the examination, the surrender, the disciplines—is not something you do in your own strength. It is something you do in response to God. It is something you do in the power of the Spirit. It is something you do as an act of worship.

So we need to pray. Not just any prayer. A prayer that reorients your entire life. A prayer that brings you back to the greatest commandment. A prayer that surrenders your heart, your soul, your mind to God again.

This is what comes next. A prayer for the church. A prayer for you. A prayer that everything in this book becomes more than words on a page. That it becomes life. That it becomes love. That it becomes the greatest commandment lived out in your actual, ordinary, everyday life.

Let's pray.

Chapter 14: A Prayer for the Church

I have written many words in this book.

Words about the greatest commandment. Words about what love is and what it is not. Words about the heart, the soul, the mind. Words about the divided life. Words about the call to surrender. Words about the disciplines of love.

But words are not enough.

You can read every word of this book. You can agree with every word of this book. You can nod your head at every chapter, underline every sentence, memorize every quote. And still not love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. Because knowing is not loving. Agreeing is not surrendering. Reading about love is not loving.

What you need is not more words. What you need is to encounter God. To be confronted by His holiness. To be overwhelmed by His love. To be broken by His grace. To be swept up into the reality of who He is and who you are in relation to Him.

This is what prayer is for. Prayer is not a religious duty. It is not a spiritual discipline you add to your list. It is the place where words become encounter. It is the place where knowledge becomes surrender. It is the place where you stop reading about love and actually love.

So I am going to pray. Not for you. With you. I am going to lead you in a prayer that reorients your entire life toward the greatest commandment. A prayer that surrenders your heart, your soul, your mind to God. A prayer that does what words alone cannot do: it brings you into the presence of God and invites you to give Him everything.

This is not a prayer you recite. It is a prayer you pray. You make it your own. You let it become the cry of your heart. You let it be the moment when your life turns toward God and does not turn back.

Let us pray.

A Prayer of Surrender

Father, I come to You. Not because I have kept the greatest commandment. Because I have not. Not because I have loved You with all my heart. Because I have loved a thousand things more. Not because I have loved You with all my soul. Because I have kept my life for myself. Not because I have loved You with all my mind. Because I have let my thoughts wander where they should not go.

I come because You have called me. You have commanded me to love You. You have made me for love. And I have not loved. I have settled for substitutes. I have given You part of my heart while keeping the rest for myself. I have lived a divided life. I have compartmentalized. I have held back.

I repent. I turn. I surrender.

Here is my heart. Every thought. Every desire. Every choice. The thoughts I think when no one is watching. The desires I have been afraid to name. The choices I have made for myself instead of for You. Here they are. Take them. Clean them. Bend them toward You. I want to think what You want me to think. I want to want what You want me to want. I want to choose what You command. I love You with all my heart.

Here is my soul. My life. My breath. My existence. The days I have lived for myself. The years I have spent on things that do not matter. The life I have tried to build apart from You. Here it is. Take it. Make it Yours. I want to live for You. I want to exist for You. I want my life to be an act of love for You. I love You with all my soul.

Here is my mind. My intellect. My thoughts. My questions. My doubts. The things I have believed that are not true. The things I have refused to believe that are true. The questions I have been afraid to ask. The doubts I have suppressed. Here they are. Take them. Make them Yours. I want to think Your thoughts after You. I want to bring every thought captive to Christ. I want to know You with all that I am. I love You with all my mind.

I am Yours. Not part of me. All of me. I give You everything. I hold nothing back.

This is the greatest commandment. This is what I was made for. This is my life.

But I cannot do this on my own. I cannot keep my heart turned toward You. I cannot keep my soul surrendered. I cannot keep my mind captive. I need You. I need Your Spirit. I need Your grace. I need Your help every moment of every day.

So I ask You: give me a new heart. A heart that loves You. A heart that is not divided. A heart that is bent toward You and stays bent. Take my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh. A heart that loves You with all that it is.

Give me a new soul. A life that is Yours. A life that is offered to You as a living sacrifice. A life that is not my own. Take my life and make it Yours. Let every moment, every breath, every beat of my heart be an act of love for You.

Give me a new mind. A mind that is captive to Christ. A mind that is filled with Your truth. A mind that thinks Your thoughts. Take my mind and renew it. Transform me by the renewing of my mind. Let me know You, understand You, love You with all that I think and reason and question and doubt.

And when I fail—when my heart wanders, when my soul pulls back, when my mind drifts—bring me back. Do not let me stay in my failure. Do not let me settle for a divided life. Keep calling me. Keep drawing me. Keep turning me back toward You.

This is my prayer. This is my surrender. This is my life.

In the name of Jesus, who loved me with all His heart, all His soul, all His mind, all His strength. Amen.

A Prayer for the Church

And Father, I pray not only for myself. I pray for Your church. For the people of God who have lost the greatest commandment. For the Christians who are living divided lives. For the churches that have replaced love for You with programs and activities and comfortable sermons that cost nothing and change nothing.

Lord, have mercy on Your church.

We have not loved You with all our hearts. We have loved our comfort more. We have loved our reputations more. We have loved our plans more. We have loved a thousand things more than we have loved You. Forgive us. Turn us. Bring us back to the greatest commandment.

We have not loved You with all our souls. We have kept our lives for ourselves. We have spent our time on things that do not matter. We have used our resources for our own comfort. We have lived as if we belonged to ourselves. Forgive us. Turn us. Bring us back to the greatest commandment.

We have not loved You with all our minds. We have checked our intellects at the door. We have been afraid of questions. We have settled for a shallow faith. We have not loved You with the minds You gave us. Forgive us. Turn us. Bring us back to the greatest commandment.

Raise up a generation who will love You with everything. Who will not settle for divided hearts. Who will not compartmentalize. Who will not hold back. Who will give You everything because You are worthy of everything.

Let Your church be known not by its programs, not by its buildings, not by its cultural relevance, but by its love for You. Let the world see a people who love You with all their hearts, all their souls, all their minds, and be drawn to the God who is worthy of such love.

Do it, Lord. Do what only You can do. Turn Your church back to the greatest commandment. Turn us back. Turn me back. Again and again. Until we love You with everything we have and everything we are.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Liturgy of Reorientation

Let me give you something to pray every day.

Not because prayer is a duty. Because you need to be reoriented. Every day. Your heart will wander. Your soul will drift. Your mind will be captured by a thousand things that are not God. And you need to bring yourself back. Again and again. This liturgy is a tool for that. A way of turning your heart, your soul, your mind toward God every day. Not because God needs your prayers. Because you need to pray. You need to reorient. You need to surrender again.

Pray this in the morning when you wake up. Pray it in the evening before you sleep. Pray it in the moments when you feel yourself drifting. Let it become the rhythm of your life.

Morning Reorientation

Good morning, Father.

I am Yours. Not part of me. All of me. My heart, my soul, my mind. Everything I am, everything I have, everything I will do today. It is Yours.

Here is my heart. My thoughts, my desires, my choices. I surrender them to You. Let me think what You want me to think. Let me want what You want me to want. Let me choose what You command. I love You with all my heart.

Here is my soul. My life, my breath, my existence. I surrender it to You. Let me live for You today. Let every moment be an act of love. Let my work, my rest, my words, my silence, all be for You. I love You with all my soul.

Here is my mind. My intellect, my thoughts, my questions, my doubts. I surrender it to You. Let me think Your thoughts. Let me see the world through Your eyes. Let me know You with all that I am. I love You with all my mind.

I am Yours. All of me. Keep me today. Turn me back when I wander. Bring me back when I drift. Let me love You with everything I have and everything I am.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Evening Reorientation

Good evening, Father.

Here I am. I have wandered. I have drifted. I have loved other things more than I have loved You. Forgive me.

Show me where my heart wandered today. What did I desire more than You? What did I choose for myself instead of for You? Where did I hold back? I bring it to You. Clean it. Turn me back.

Show me where my soul pulled back today. Where did I live for myself instead of for You? Where did I spend my time on things that do not matter? Where did I keep my life for myself? I bring it to You. Clean it. Turn me back.

Show me where my mind drifted today. What thoughts did I let linger that should have been taken captive? What did I dwell on that dishonored You? What did I believe that was not true? I bring it to You. Clean it. Turn me back.

I am Yours. Not part of me. All of me. Even when I wander. Even when I drift. Even when I fail. I am Yours. Keep me. Hold me. Turn me back again.

I love You. Not as I should. Not as I will. But truly. With all my heart, all my soul, all my mind. Help me love You more.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Last Word

We are coming to the end of this book. But we are not coming to the end of the greatest commandment. The greatest commandment is not a book. It is not a teaching. It is not a chapter in your Bible. It is your life. It is the command that governs everything. It is the love that defines your existence. It is the purpose for which you were created.

You were created to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. Not as a duty. As your life. Not as something you do. As something you are. You are a lover of God. That is your identity. That is your purpose. That is your joy.

So go. Not to do more. To love more. Not to try harder. To surrender deeper. Not to earn God's favour. To give Him what He is worth.

Love Him with all your heart. Let your thoughts be His thoughts. Let your desires be His desires.

Let your choices be His commands. Let your inner life be a sanctuary where He is worshiped.

Love Him with all your soul. Let your life be His. Let your time be His. Let your body be His. Let your relationships, your work, your rest, your money, your dreams—all of it—be offered to Him as an act of love.

Love Him with all your mind. Let your intellect be captive to Christ. Let your thoughts be filled with His truth. Let your questions be brought to Him. Let your doubts become the crucible of deeper faith. Let your mind be an instrument of love.

This is the greatest commandment. This is the life you were made for. This is the life that is truly life.

Go. Love God with everything you have and everything you are.

And let the rest be His.

One Thing That Remains

We have come to the end.

But endings are not what they seem. An ending is not a stopping place. It is a launching place. It is the moment when everything you have read, everything you have considered, everything you have wrestled with, becomes either a memory or a life. It can stay in the pages of this book, a collection of words you once read and agreed with and moved on from. Or it can become the organizing reality of your existence—the lens through which you see everything, the command that governs every moment, the love that defines who you are.

That choice is yours. No one can make it for you. Not me. Not your pastor. Not your spouse. Not your small group. You have to choose. You have to decide whether the greatest commandment will be the greatest command in your life, or whether it will join the ranks of all the other truths you have heard and nodded at and never actually lived.

I have done what I was called to do. I have written what I was given to write. I have called you out of the darkness. I have named the divided heart. I have proclaimed the command to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. I have shown you what love is and what it is not. I have given you the disciplines, the practices, the rhythms that will help you keep turning toward God. I have prayed with you. I have called you to surrender.

Now the rest is between you and God. The rest is the work of the Holy Spirit. The rest is the choice you make when you close this book and walk back into your life. Will you love God with everything? Or will you go back to the divided life? Will you surrender your heart, your soul, your mind? Or will you keep holding back, keep compartmentalizing, keep giving God part of you while keeping the rest for yourself?

I do not know what you will choose. But I know what you were made for. You were made to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. That is your purpose. That is your joy. That is the life that is truly life. Everything else—every other command, every other duty, every other pursuit—hangs on this. And if you miss this, you miss everything.

So do not miss it. Do not let this truth slip through your fingers. Do not let the greatest commandment become one more thing you know but do not do. Do not let the call to surrender become a memory instead of a life.

Love God. With all your heart. With all your soul. With all your mind. Not because you have to. Because He is worthy. Not because it is a duty. Because it is joy. Not because you are trying to earn something. Because He has already given everything.

Love Him. And let that love be the one thing that remains.

What Remains

There is a moment in the Gospels that haunts me. It is found in John 21. After the resurrection, Jesus appears to His disciples by the sea. They have been fishing. They have caught nothing. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the other side, and they catch so many fish they cannot haul the net in. And then they realize: it is the Lord.

They come to shore. Jesus has made breakfast for them. They eat. And then Jesus turns to Peter. Peter, who denied Him three times. Peter, who went back to fishing because he did not know what else to do. Peter, who failed the greatest test of his life.

And Jesus asks him a question. Not a complicated question. Not a theological question. Not a question about what Peter believes or what Peter plans to do. A simple question. A devastating question. The only question that matters.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Three times He asks it. Once for each denial.

Once for each failure. And each time Peter answers: *"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."* And each time Jesus gives him a command: *"Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep."*

Do you see it? Everything comes back to love. Peter's failure was not that he denied Jesus. Peter's failure was that he did not love Jesus enough to die for Him. And Jesus restores him not by asking about his plans, not by asking about his beliefs, not by asking about his commitment. He asks about his love. Because love is the foundation. Love is the one thing. Love is what everything else hangs on.

This is what remains. Not your plans. Not your achievements. Not your reputation. Not your legacy. Not the church you built or the family you raised or the career you pursued. Love. Did you love God? With all your heart? With all your soul?

With all your mind? That is the question you will answer. Not on a page. Not in a book. Before the One who is Love. Before the One who loved you first. Before the One who gave everything for you.

What will you say?

The One Thing

I have spent this entire book telling you that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. And I believe that with everything in me. But I need to tell you something else. Something that makes the greatest commandment possible. Something that turns it from a crushing demand into a joyful response.

You can love God because He first loved you.

You can love God with all your heart because He has given you a new heart. Not the divided heart you were born with. A heart that is capable of love. A heart that is bent toward Him. A heart that can love because it has been loved.

You can love God with all your soul because He has given you new life. Not the life you were living for yourself. A life that is hidden with Christ in God. A life that is not your own. A life that can be offered because it has been given.

You can love God with all your mind because He has given you the mind of Christ. Not the darkened mind that cannot understand. A mind that is being renewed. A mind that can know because it has been known.

The greatest commandment is not a burden. It is a response. It is not a demand that crushes you. It is an invitation that frees you. Because you are not trying to earn love. You are responding to love. You are not trying to make God love you. You are loving Him because He already does.

This is why the greatest commandment is not the end. It is the beginning. The beginning of a life of love. The beginning of a life of surrender. The beginning of a life that is not your own. The beginning of the life you were made for.

A Final Word

I do not know where you are as you read these words.

Maybe you are exhausted. You have been trying to love God with part of your heart while keeping the rest for yourself. You have been trying to live a divided life. You have been trying to serve two masters. And you are tired. You are tired of pretending. You are tired of compartmentalizing. You are tired of the exhaustion that comes from a divided heart.

Maybe you are convicted. The words of this book have cut through your defences. You have seen your divided heart. You have seen your substitutes. You have seen your sin. And you do not know what to do with what you have seen. You know you need to surrender. You know you need to love God with everything. But you do not know if you can. You do not know if you have it in you.

Maybe you are hungry. You have tasted the emptiness of partial love. You have tried to satisfy your soul with the world. You have tried to fill your heart with things that are not God. And you are hungry for something real. Something that will satisfy. Something that will last. Something that is worth everything.

Wherever you are, I want you to hear this: the greatest commandment is not beyond you. It is not something you have to achieve. It is something you receive. You receive a new heart that loves God. You receive a new life that is offered to God. You receive a new mind that knows God. And then you live from what you have received.

So stop trying to love God with a divided heart. Surrender. Give Him everything. Stop trying to live a life that is not yours. Offer it to Him. Stop trying to think thoughts that are not captive. Bring them to Christ.

And then keep coming back. Every morning. Every evening. Every moment when you feel yourself drifting. Keep coming back to the greatest commandment. Keep coming back to love. Keep coming back to the One who loved you first.

This is the one thing that remains. Not your achievements. Not your reputation. Not your legacy. Love. Love for God. Love that is whole. Love that is undivided. Love that is everything.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the greatest commandment. This is your life. This is what remains.

Soli Deo Gloria

Appendix: Key Scriptures for Meditation

The following Scriptures are not for quick reading. They are for meditation. For sitting with. For letting sink into your heart, your soul, your mind. They are the foundation upon which everything in this book is built. Return to them again and again. Let them shape you. Let them call you back to the greatest commandment.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Matthew 22:34–40

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Psalms 73:23–28

"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds."

Proverbs 4:20–27

"My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

Romans 12:1–2

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

2 Corinthians 10:3–5

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Philippians 4:4–9

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

John 14:15–21

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

1 John 4:7–21

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister."

Revelation 2:1–7

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

A Final Invitation

If you have read this book and felt the weight of the greatest commandment, if you have seen your divided heart and you want to surrender, if you are ready to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind—then do it. Not tomorrow. Not when you have it figured out.

Now. Turn. Surrender. Give Him everything.

And then keep turning. Keep surrendering. Keep giving. Every day. Every moment. For the rest of your life.

This is the greatest commandment. This is your life. This is what remains.

Go. Love God with everything you have and everything you are.

And let the rest be His.