

THE GREATEST COMMAND



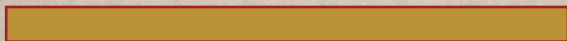
A SCRIPTURE STUDY

on

What Jesus Said Matters Most

and

Why Everything Else Depends on It



THE GREATEST COMMAND



**A SCRIPTURE STUDY ON WHAT JESUS PLACED FIRST
AND WHY EVERYTHING ELSE DEPENDS ON IT**



If we asked Christ,

***“What is Your command for us,
above all other instruction?”***

How do you think He would answer?

Christ has answered,
both explicitly and repeatedly.

He declares all other laws
are hung on this very command.

Jesus describes this command as

First. Greatest.

With no other commandment greater.

Let us take Christ at His Word and seek to
study and understand His command humbly
in the hierarchy He places it.



AN INVITATION
**to the curious, the questioning,
or the secular-minded reader**

**This study is a simple analysis of the instruction
Jesus placed as explicitly first and greatest.**

This command is not a “one-off,” but is instead repeated multiple times. Every major Christian denomination agrees that this instruction by Christ’s own words is placed first, that all other laws hang upon it, and that there is no greater command above it.

Whether or not you believe in Jesus as Lord, few can deny the impact His words have had on our world (including the calendar we live by). Understanding what your neighbor believes is a worthwhile endeavor—and that understanding makes it much easier to love them, should you choose to do so.

This study doesn’t require belief, but it does require attention. You’ll encounter some ancient Greek, a bit of context, and a careful walk through the instruction Jesus said matters most.

You’re invited to follow along: not as a convert, but as a student of one of the most influential teachers in history. No pressure to believe. Just a challenge to understand.

P.S.

To my firm atheists (of whom I once was), I can promise by the end of this study that you will gain a clearer, more principled understanding than many Christians you might encounter in debate as to what their own King places first in hierarchy (and I hope it warms your heart).

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First Things First

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

—Jesus Christ, John 15:4

“We love because He first loved us.”

—The Disciple John, 1 John 4:19

This study is about the command Jesus placed first. Before we walk into it, one thing must be said plainly, because it is the ground the whole study stands on.

He was first.

Grace is prior in cause. Love is first in command. These do not compete — the second is only possible because of the first. Every step in this book is a response, not a purchase.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Read the next verse:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8–10)

That walking is the scope of this study.

This is a discipleship formation study, written for those who have chosen to follow Christ — and open to anyone who wants to see what He actually asks. You don’t have to believe it to understand it.

Not to earn our place in His Kingdom, but to take up our place in it, on earth as it is in heaven.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR
Beauty & Dissonance

Before we begin, I want to share a bit of the reasoning behind why I wrote this Bible study. It was born from the tension between beauty and dissonance.

The beauty lies in this:
Christ clearly places one command,
(two joined as one),
as the greatest.

Not just “great.” He calls this the first great command, and then sets this instruction within a logical framework where all other laws are hung in subordination. This structure is placed as the lens through which everything else should be seen and ordered.

Yet the dissonance I felt, especially among Christians, and particularly among Christian youth, was this:

I’ve often noticed that while we can quote various key verses from Bible studies or VBS programs, many struggle to answer a simple but powerful question.

What is the greatest thing Jesus told us to do?

When I ask, “Is there a command above all others?” I often get hesitant guesses that seem unsure. Yes, after some silence I will eventually get a “Love God... Love neighbor...make disciples,” but it rarely felt like a

well-worn path of principled understanding from a deep scriptural study that was, in fact, their first line of Command.

I felt a dissonance in their true understanding of the structure; that Jesus actually put something first and greater, nesting all the other maxims they’ve been collecting under one.

Now, I’m not trying to be stickler for word-for-word memorization. I care more about true meaning, and I believe Jesus did too. He frequently challenged legalism that missed the heart.

But even if you’re not focused on exact phrasing, understanding the weight, priority, and structure of Jesus’ greatest command should be something every follower of His grasps deeply... and first.

From my observation, the Great Command is often not taught this way. It’s given reverence as Scripture and seen as important, but one of many scriptures, and sometimes even treated like a given, a “no-brainer,” something so simple it doesn’t need much dedicated study.

But if we take Jesus at His Word, we must look more closely at His first and greatest command... and the deeper I’ve looked, the more beauty I’ve seen in how this command truly holds and structures everything else, just as Jesus states it does.

So in that tension, between the absolute weight of what Jesus said, and the dissonance of how relatively light it’s often treated, I felt compelled to write a systematic study on this command. I looked around and found very few studies that approached this Scripture as the structural centerpiece Jesus said it was. That absence only deepened my conviction.

This study is my response. It’s meant to be simple, but also deep. I’ll do my best to stay out of the way, letting the Scriptures speak, but I will sometimes offer a perspective or framework to guide reflection.

My hope is that, through humble and honest engagement, we can more fully align our lives around the command Jesus Christ placed first.



PART ONE

THE COMMAND

CHAPTER 1

Foundations

Where Jesus places this command, and why hierarchy matters

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Hierarchy

History

Harmony

Hierarchy

What if every command of God could be traced back to a foundational framework? And what if there were a core formula that helped reveal our next best move in every part of our walk of faith?

According to Jesus, there is.

When asked which commandment was the greatest, He answered without hesitation:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

— Jesus Christ, Matthew 22:37–40

Jesus made it clear that not all commands carry the same weight. Scripture is not a flat collection of equally ranked commands. He establishes a divine hierarchy, placing one command above all others.

If we misunderstand this hierarchy, we risk misreading the structure of Scripture itself.

Hierarchy Exists in Scripture

Some believe that because “*all Scripture is inspired*” (2 Timothy 3:16), every command must carry the same weight. But this is not what Scripture itself teaches. Jesus repeatedly establishes greater and lesser matters of the law:

Jesus declares a “greatest command.”

When Jesus states that “*all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (Matthew 22:40), He is showing us that if one command is the greatest, others—while still important—are secondary.

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees.

They obsessed over minor laws, while neglecting what matters most: “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law; justice, mercy, and faithfulness.*”

—Jesus Christ, Matthew 23:23

Paul explicitly ranks virtues.

Even among the highest of virtues, Paul declares Love the greatest: “*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*”

—The Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:13

This hierarchy is not a human invention. It comes directly from Christ and His apostles. The Holy Scriptures are perfect, and that perfection includes order and structure.

Not all commands are equal in weight—and Jesus Himself tells us what is most important.

Why This Matters

Hierarchy is built into creation. The sun is greater than the moon in light (Genesis 1:16). A foundation comes first, before the walls of a building (Luke 6:47–49).

Likewise, Love is greater than every other command, because every other command exists inside of it (Romans 13:9–10; Galatians 5:14).

Love is not just one virtue among many—it is the virtue that binds all others together (Colossians 3:14).

If we get Love wrong, we get everything wrong. Without Love, Paul says, “I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal... and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–2).

This is why we embark on this study—not to analyze isolated laws, traditions, or doctrines, but to uncover the foundational imperative of God’s Kingdom: His Greatest Command.

The Greatest Commandment is not just another rule. It is the First Rule—the key to understanding all of God’s commands (Mark 12:29–31).

If we are to truly “*seek first the kingdom of God*” (Matthew 6:33), we must first seek understanding of the King’s First Command.

History

The Roots of the Greatest Commandment

Understanding Scripture means understanding its history, where a teaching originates, how it was understood, and how it developed over time. The Great Commandment did not begin with Jesus' words in the Gospels. Jesus was quoting two foundational Old Testament passages:

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

—Moses, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (The Shema)

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

—Moses, Leviticus 19:18

These foundational Scriptures form the twin roots of the Greatest Commandment—Love God with your whole being, and Love your neighbor as yourself.

Leviticus 19:18 sits at the climax of a section where God gives Israel practical instructions for justice and compassion: don't steal, lie, oppress, or hate your brother in your heart. Instead, forgive and act righteously. The command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” summarizes the core principle animating this whole movement toward holiness.

The Shema: The Hebrew Foundation

Moses first received the Ten Commandments from God at Sinai as the foundation of Israel's covenant. Decades later, in his final days, he summed the heart of all the whole law into just one saying—the Shema, a conclusive call to Love the Lord with undivided devotion.

The Shema (“*Hear, O Israel*”) is the defining confession of the Jewish faith. It declares loyalty to God and calls for total devotion—loving Him with every part of one's being.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart (בְּלֵב *Levav*), with all your soul (נֶפֶשׁ *Nefesh*), and with all your strength (מְעוֹד *Me'od*).”

—Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (The Shema)

The Three Faculties to Love With in Hebrew Thought

Heart (*Levav*)

Intent, will, and desire—more than emotions, it encompasses thought, as well as wisdom, including what we might now call the “mind.”

Soul (*Nefesh*)

Not a disembodied spirit, but the whole person—their life, full identity, and being.

Strength (*Me'od*)

Much richer than the English word “strength,” this means “muchness”—loving God intensely with every resource, effort, and capacity one possesses.

In Hebrew, these words do not describe a disconnected list of parts of a person. Rather, they form a comprehensive framework for total devotion—a call to Love God with everything one is.

Harmony

The Theological Practice of Seeing the Full Picture

One of the fundamental principles of biblical study is **harmonization**: The practice of bringing together all scriptural accounts of a certain teaching to understand its full meaning.

This is not a poetic or abstract exercise; it is a necessary theological discipline.

We do not isolate a single word or verse out of its context, nor do we treat variations across Scriptural accounts as contradictions. Instead, we recognize that when God repeats a truth in multiple ways, He is inviting us to see it from every angle.

The Great Commandment is one of the most explicitly repeated teachings in all of Scripture. It appears in three of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke—each offering a slightly different phrasing, emphasis, or setting.

Additionally, Jesus quotes the Shema (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5**), rooting this command deeply within the Old Testament and reaffirming it in the New Testament.

Understanding Scriptural harmonization is crucial for this study because each Gospel account brings a unique dimension, giving us the most complete picture possible.

Why Harmonization Matters

Harmonization is not just useful for this study, it is a crucial tool for all biblical study:

It teaches us

to consider all relevant passages on a subject rather than isolating one.

It protects us

from misinterpretation, ensuring we grasp the depth of God's message.

It reveals to us

that Scripture is unified, with multiple voices reinforcing the same divine truth.

This is especially important for the Great Commandment—If God saw fit to repeat this command so many times, in so many ways, we should not ignore the fullness of what He is saying.

Just as a song is richer when played by multiple instruments, so too is God's Word clearer when we harmonize His message.

Throughout this study, we will use harmonization to bring together the key passages that illuminate the Great Commandment and its parts, helping us see the fullest picture of this Scriptural imperative in greater depth and context.

How To Read Scripture In Harmony

Some may ask, *"If the Bible is inspired by God, why don't the Gospel accounts say exactly the same thing?"*

Because identical repetition is not the purpose of the four Gospels. Multiple perspectives overlapping, and converging give fullness and depth of dimension to the Good news. The recurring themes give stability we can trust and the nuances of perspectives are features, not flaws.

By harmonizing the different accounts of the Great Commandment, we don't see contradiction, but instead complementation:

MATTHEW 22:37-40

Jesus responds directly to an expert of the Law, emphasizing Love as the foundation of all commands by stating, *“All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commands.”*

MARK 12:29-31

A teacher of the Law asks Jesus, *“of all the commandments, which is the most important?”* Jesus responds, beginning the Great command by quoting the opening of the Shema, *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one,”* reinforcing its Jewish roots.

LUKE 10:25-28

A lawyer states the command first, and Jesus affirms it—showing that this truth was already known, but often neglected—then teaches the story of the Good Samaritan by illustrating who our neighbor is and how to Love.

Each Gospel provides a distinct lens, deepening our understanding of what Jesus was teaching. If we only study one account, we miss the full voice of God on this command.

Jesus's Expansion: Why Four Terms?

Jesus fulfills prophecy as the final King (Christos), establishing His eternal Kingdom among us. Quoting the Shema, Jesus expands its framing with His own authority. The Gospels, written in Greek, faithfully record this four-faculty frame—Matthew preserving three of its terms, Mark and Luke all four (see this chapter's comparison table). Harmonized, they frame our whole person, including a fourth term—“mind” (Dianoia)—providing further clarity on how a person Loves God fully.

The Greek Terms Used in the Gospels were:

HEART (καρδιά *kardia*)

The core of a person, including emotions, desires, will, and intentions.

MIND (διάνοια *dianoia*)

Thoughts, reason, intellect, and understanding.

SOUL (ψυχή *psychē*)

One's whole life, self, and identity before God.

STRENGTH (ἰσχύς *ischys*)

Physical vigor, talents/abilities, as well as capacity for action.

This transition to a Greek four-part frame did not change the Shema's meaning. Rather, it clarified it for a Greek-speaking audience. In fact, Greek copies of the Shema were already rendering *levav* as “heart” in some manuscripts and “mind” in others—the clarity was waiting inside the word. The goal remains the same: to Love God with everything.

The Complete Framework

Jesus's teaching stands in continuity with the Law and Prophets. The command to Love is not new—it has always been the foundation of God's Law. However, Christ's words, recorded in Greek, make explicit the distinction between “mind” and “heart,” which in Hebrew were both captured in the single word *levav* (“heart”).

The Shema teaches total devotion: every part of oneself given to God. Jesus teaches this devotion of the whole person in a fourfold frame—emotions, intellect, actions, and life.

As we move forward in this study, we will examine each of these aspects—heart, soul, mind, and strength—and how they intersect with our Love for God, our neighbor, and ourselves. But before we dive into these details, we must first recognize: God calls us to Love Him completely.

The Great Commandment: Faculty Comparison

SCRIPTURAL SOURCE	KEY PHRASING
Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (The Shema)	"Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might."
Matthew 22:37	"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."
Mark 12:30	"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."
Luke 10:27	"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind."

The Great Commandment Faculties of Love:
Hebrew to Greek Comparative Reference

	HEBREW: DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5	GREEK: GOSPELS
HEART	<i>Levav</i> – thought, will, emotion, decision-making	<i>Kardia</i> – inner self, emotions, moral will, intentions
SOUL	<i>Nephesh</i> – entire living being, breath, life force, identity	<i>Psychē</i> – whole self; life, consciousness, spiritual and physical existence
MIGHT/ STRENGTH	<i>Me'od</i> – "muchness," total capacity, all one's resources and intensity	<i>Ischus</i> – physical ability, power, drive, active strength
MIND	<i>Not explicitly a separate term; conceptually included within Levav</i>	<i>Dianoia</i> – rational faculty; intellect, understanding, thought process

The Foundation of the
Greatest Command

As we conclude this foundational section, take a moment to reflect on what has been presented and why we began here. The principles of Hierarchy, History, and Harmony shape our understanding of Christ's Greatest Command. Consider these key takeaways and questions for further thought:

Hierarchy

Scripture itself is rich in Hierarchy. Jesus Himself declared that not all commands carry the same weight—across three Gospels, He affirms one command as the First and Greatest, the one within which every other command finds its meaning.

History

The Greatest Commandment is deeply rooted in Scripture, from the Shema in the Old Testament to Jesus' words in the New Testament. The transition from Hebrew to Greek highlights different aspects of devotion, deepening our understanding.

Harmony

The Bible does not contradict itself; rather, it complements, providing its fullest picture when all passages on a subject are considered together.

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas, either individually or in discussion with others. The goal is not just knowledge, but wisdom, that leads to Love in action. Don't feel pressured to answer every question. Choose the ones that stand out to you or spark good conversation.

1. Hierarchy

What currently drives the order of your daily life—schedules, priorities, or obligations? When you consider that Jesus placed one command above all others, how does that challenge or confirm the way you currently order your own life?

2. History

The Great Commandment did not begin with Jesus—He was quoting the ancient Shema from Deuteronomy 6. How does knowing that this command has deep roots in the Old Testament affect the weight you give it today? Are there other biblical texts that historical context has given you greater clarity on?

3. Harmony

Jesus' command appears in slightly different form across Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What does it say to you that all three Gospels preserve this teaching with such clarity and consistency? How might that shape the seriousness with which you approach it?

4. Application

Everything in this command revolves around Loving God and neighbor. Looking at your current environment, what are practical outlets for you to actively Love God this week?

5. Love in Action

Who are people you feel are your "Neighbor," and what might Love look like in your daily interactions with them?

CHAPTER 2

Divine Frameworks

Harmonizing four Gospel accounts into a single structure

Structure

Language

Action

Personally, I never found grammar and sentence structure very exciting in primary school, and I understand if the word “syntax” triggers some to want to mentally check out.

But, if there is one sentence to put under a mental magnifying glass above all others, the First and Greatest command of our King and Savior would be the one. This is a good moment to tap into your reserves, grab a cup of coffee, and truly examine it.

I promise to do my best to keep things concise, grounded, and not too heady. Let’s Love the Lord God with our mind (*Dianoia*) and dive into a deeper understanding of the harmonized Greatest Command:

Structure

What it looks like grammatically

Language

What each key word means in the original Greek

Action

How the command guides our daily lives in practice

.....

“If you Love me, you will keep my commandments.”

— Jesus Christ, John 14:15

.....

Structure

Harmonizing The Great Command

The Great Commandment is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they present a shared perspective (syn = together, optic = view), likely drawing from overlapping sources and eyewitness accounts.

We will harmonize how, across all three, Jesus declares Love for God and neighbor as the foundation of all God's law.

The Synoptic Gospels: A Unified Witness

“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 neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

—Matthew 22:36-40

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘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 mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

—Mark 12:29-31

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

—Luke 10:27-28

Harmonizing The New Command

The New Command is taught by Jesus in the Gospel of John. John offers a unique narrative structure and theological tone, yet it harmonizes beautifully into the whole Gospel narrative.

Jesus gives the New Commandment at the Last Supper. After revealing His coming sacrifice, He washes the disciples' feet. Calling them to do likewise for each other, Jesus says:

“A new¹ command I give you: Love one another. As I have Loved you, so you must Love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you Love one another.”

—John 13:34-35

This command does not compete with, or replace the Great Commandment, but deepens it. In perfect Love for the Father, Jesus embodied self-sacrificial Love and called His followers to do the same.

Jesus became the perfect model of what it is to Love the Lord God with all one's Heart, Mind, Strength, and Soul and to Love His neighbor even more than Himself, giving His own life.

He then calls us to do the same.

Together, the Great Command & the New Command present a harmonized vision of Love—rooted in the Shema, structured in the Synoptic Gospels, and demonstrated fully in Christ's life. Across all four Gospels, Love is the defining mark of true discipleship—the essence of God's will.

¹The greek term for “new” used here is *kainēn*, meaning fresh in quality; not a replacement.

Harmonized Structural Comparison

Let’s take a deeper look at the structural congruence between all four Gospels. It’s a beautiful sight to see them side by side. Do you see recurring themes? As a former atheist, I see stunning coherence—not contradiction—in each of these Gospel accounts.

The command Jesus places first and greatest, as well as His new command, both place the verb “love” [agapēseis G-25] as the primary action that animates the rest of the sentence like a hinge.

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
		"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"	
	"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.		"A new command I give you:
"Love the Lord your God	Love the Lord your God	"Love the Lord your God	
with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.	with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'	with all your heart, soul, and strength, and with all your mind;	
This is the first and greatest commandment.			
And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'	The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'	and Love your neighbor as yourself."	Love one another. As I have Loved you, so you must Love one another.
		"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied.	
All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."	There is no commandment greater than these."	"Do this and you will live."	By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you Love one another."
– Matthew 22:36-40	– Mark 12:29-31	– Luke 10:27-28	– John 13:34-35

Language

The Great Command:

Original Greek Language Outline

Across Matthew, Mark and Luke, the wording may shift slightly but the pattern remains clear and consistent. Let's go even deeper and harmonize what we just placed side by side into key phrases across all three Gospel accounts, and take a look at the original Greek that defines each section of this command structure.

Both Mark and Matthew have an explicit hierarchy declaration, labeling the priority/hierarchy of the command as:

The First (*Prote*) – In first order before others

Great (*Megale*) – Highest in hierarchy (*paired with prōtē in Matt 22:38 to mark this command as supreme*)

Command (*Entole*) – Instruction/order

Across all four Gospels, we then find our core imperative action—the one His disciples will be known by:

You Shall Love (*Agapeseis*) – The primary imperative verb that drives everything (*Strong's G25*)

All three Synoptics share the two direct objects, describing whom we are called to Love:

The first (*Prote*)

The Lord your God (*Kyrion ton Theon*)

The second (*Deutera*)

Neighbor (*Plēsion*)

Across the three Synoptic Gospels, four key nouns define the faculties we use to carry this Love out:

Heart (*Kardia*) – Our desires and emotions

Soul (*Psyche*) – Our life, eternal identity, and devotion

Mind (*Dianoia*) – Our thoughts and understanding

Strength (*Ischus*) – Our actions and resources

Across all three Synoptic Gospels, a very important additional modifier to each of the four faculties defines the portion or focus level that we engage within each faculty:

with All (*en hole*) – The whole portion of our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength

We are not supposed to share the devotion of these faculties, but give the whole of each of these areas. They are meant to display all that we can give.

Finally, Jesus declares in Matthew that the whole of the Old Testament witness—the Law (such as the Ten Commandments) and the Prophets who taught us God's Word—will now structurally nest underneath this First and Greatest Command:

On these two Commands (*en tautais dysin entolais*)

All (*Holos*)

The Law (*Ho Nomos*)

and The Prophets (*kai hoi Prophetai*)

Hangs (*Krematai*)

And in Mark, Jesus places all other Commands beneath this:

Greater than these (*Meizon touton*)

another commandment (*allē entolē*)

is none (*ouk estin*)

“There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And this is all spoken by Jesus Christ (Christos), the title for the Anointed King, to whom *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given”* (Matthew 28:18).

Distilling the Harmony

For study purposes, we can now distill the Gospel witness into its simplest structural form. This is not a replacement for the full biblical text, but a study outline that helps us see the command's core grammar and movement.

Great and New Commands—harmonized and integrated alongside their original language. Now unified into their simplest complete structure, we can synthesize them to look something like this:

The First (*Prōtē*) – In first order before others

Greatest (*Megalē*) – Highest in hierarchy

Command (*Entole*) – Instruction/order

Love (*Agapesies*) [*primary imperative*]

The Lord your God (*Kyrion ton Theon*) [*direct object*]

With All (*en hole*)

heart (*Kardia*)

soul (*Psyche*)

mind (*Dianoia*)

and strength (*Ischus*)

[*Four faculties expressing Love*]

And love (*agapēseis*) [*primary imperative*]

your neighbor (*Plēsion*) [*direct object*]

as yourself (*hōs seauton*) [*comparison clause*]

Which is deepened in lived example by the New Command (**John 13: 34**):

As I have loved you (*kathōs ēgapēsa hymas*)

Action

Love in Action

This breakdown may seem academic, but it is highly practical for us to examine our lives and ask precisely:

“What, first and foremost, does the Lord require of me?”

We must understand with our minds clearly that this is an instruction meant to be followed.

Just as studying the recipe of Bread does not satisfy the hungry, nor will reading the training protocol of a weightlifter build strength; Real caution should be taken that the beauty of this command does not become only intellectualized.

What first does the Lord require of you?

Keep this in mind as we move forward. Like a formula, everything in this study will branch from this framework. If this is the Greatest Command, then understanding it with precision is worth the effort.

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but wisdom that leads to love in action.

1. Go through the process of your own personal harmonization of the three records of the Great Command alongside each other. What similarities and differences do you notice? What are the key truths you see in the harmonized perspective?

2. Read the full chapter of John 13. What does it mean to Love as Christ Loved us?

3. Did the New Command contrast or complement the Great Command? Does seeing them alongside each other highlight anything new about their relationship?

4. How can the heart of Jesus' Love, exactly as He demonstrated it, intersect your current roles and environment? What does it mean to Love your neighbor not just "as yourself," but specifically as Christ Loved us?

5. Pick one (or more) of the following areas where your life intersects with others. How is Loving as Jesus Loved an even higher calling than simply loving as yourself?
Family, Romantic/Spouse, Friends, Neighborhood, Church, Business, Daily intersection with the Public, Social Media

CHAPTER 3

Defining Love

What did Jesus mean by “love”?



The Hierarchy of Love

Methods to Define Love

Studying Agape

The verb that all others hinge on in the Great Command is Love (*Agape*).

“By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you Love one another.”

—Jesus Christ, John 13:35

The Hierarchy of Love²

When we harmonize the Great Command alongside the New Command, a distinct framework emerges. Structurally, one word sets itself apart from all the others, acting as a load-bearing hinge: the primary verb dedicated to God and neighbor, which must intersect every aspect of our mind, heart, strength, and soul.

Love.

Love is placed as the central, defining verb in the command Jesus Christ places first and greatest.

Where does Scripture place Love in hierarchy?

*“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels,
but do not have Love₂₆,
I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*If I have the gift of prophecy
and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have a faith that can move mountains,
but do not have Love₂₆,
I am nothing.*

*If I give all I possess to the poor
and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,
but do not have Love₂₆,
I gain nothing.”*

– **Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:1–3**

²This section also serves as the first entry of Chapter 4’s Agapē Concordance, “The Hierarchy of Love.” We begin here because Scripture first shows us Love’s weight before we define its shape. See Journal entry on Page 101.

*“And now these three remain: faith, hope and Love₂₆.
But the greatest of these is Love₂₆.”*

– **Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:13**

*“And over all these virtues put on Love₂₆,
which binds them all together in perfect unity.”*

– **Apostle Paul, Colossians 3:14**

*“Whoever does not Love₂₅ does not know God,
because God is Love₂₆.”*

– **John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, 1 John 4:8**

According to the Scriptures, Love is the central command, the greatest virtue, and the defining mark of Christ’s disciples.

IF

Love is so important that Jesus uses it as the defining mark by which His disciples are known (John 13:35)...

THEN

How critically important is it that we accurately define what the word Love really means, exactly as Jesus spoke it?

Methods to Define Love

WHAT IS LOVE?

“Love,” in contemporary English, is a term that strikes our ears daily—in our homes, about town, and across our media.

The English word “love” is a catch-all for everything from the foundation of romance, to the way we feel when we are honored, to our desire for another slice of pizza.

Do you love pasta? Your wife? God...? Today, it’s all the same four letters.

So if love is the primary thing that God wants us to do, it’s probably important we define the “Love” Jesus Christ meant when He referred to it.

I have found that defining “Love” in today’s cultural context can be difficult, and even contentious at times, between people who all hold love in the highest regard and yet are certain others have it wrong.

In my pursuit of defining love, I have found three contemporary methods that individuals and groups follow.

METHOD 1:

Love Is Whatever You Believe It to Be

This is a radically subjective view of “love.” It can feel like the most compassionate perspective, and it is the easiest path (at first). There is no one to offend (as long as they agree). And if they disagree ... one can just say, “If you believe it, that’s love to you.”

This is where it feels easier, but “love” starts to lose clarity in meaning. When we step back, we see that by making “love” whatever we want to ascribe to it at the time, logically there is no true shape of love to pursue.

When we make “love” everything, true love inadvertently becomes nothing. The pursuit of affirmation, the avoidance of conflict, and the desire not to offend—done in the name of kindness—all carry a heavy cost. Consequently, this can result in turning a blind eye to both truths and deceptions when pursuing the genuine shape of our highest virtue: True Love.

METHOD 2:

Love Is Defined in Reverse, from Tradition or Personal Conviction

In this scenario, one does not fall into the postmodern view that “love” is anything you want it to be, but instead believes “love” has a true form—found by looking back toward one’s tradition, thoughtful self-evaluation, or maybe just a hot take that “felt right.”

One starts from what they already believe, and then reasons backward from one’s conclusion. This is the most common path, and one I have walked myself—as have many of us with deep faith and good intentions.

The individual may have had a strong feeling about love in their heart, and as they begin asking more structural questions about what the defining characteristics of “love” are—how to “love” well, or what being “in love”

is—they might cite personal experience, cultural narratives, something a respected person taught, or simply what “makes sense” to them. From that conclusion, they strengthen the coherence of what they already feel to be true about the word called “love.”

For institutions, various ideological or denominational traditions may define love by pointing to established doctrines or tradition itself as the first basis to systematically understand it. This impulse honors something real—tradition often preserves wisdom worth keeping.

However, the risk arises when the inherited definition is never re-examined against Scripture itself.

And because scriptural Love is so simply and explicitly referred to as “first and most important,” an institution can, in practice (potentially without realizing it), look back to whatever actions or ideals its own tradition has already placed “first and most important” in its doctrine, and treat those as the truest form of Love. The reasoning can quietly become circular.

In both cases, the conclusion comes first and the reasoning follows. As such, the definition of love is not humbly sought—it is defended.

METHOD 3:

Love Is Defined Straight from the Source, with Scripture Harmonized in Context

This is where we go straight to the source, time, and context of the word itself, and then methodically move outward. We do this with a keen understanding that no human is unbiased, and we must actively separate ourselves from the desire to make Jesus Christ’s intended meaning of Love match what we already believe or hope it to be.

For this method, we will center on the Agape love Jesus uses in His Great Command and confront five critical questions:

The Word and Its Context

- 1. What specific word did Jesus use in the Great Command that was translated into the English word “Love”?**
- 2. Did this word have a specific contextual use at the time it was spoken?**

Scriptural Harmonization

- 3. Is this same word used elsewhere in Scripture with contextual similarities?**
- 4. Is this word given a partial or full description in the Scriptures by Jesus or the Apostles (explicitly, implicitly, or narratively)?**
- 5. Can we put these descriptions together in harmony to see a fuller picture of how the Scriptures themselves describe what Love exactly looks like ... and what it doesn’t look like?**

And this is the method this Scripture study will take. We will begin with the word Jesus used, then follow that word through Scripture until the shape of Agape Love becomes clearer.

Studying Agape

The Word and its Context

What specific word did Jesus use in the Great Command that was translated into the English word “Love”?

Agapēseis .

Across all three Synoptic Gospels, the scriptural record carries the command in the same word: a form of Agapē. The command itself—“you shall Love”—is agapēseis, from the verb agapaō. We’ll set the full word family out plainly at the threshold of the concordance. Most importantly, this is the Shema’s own word: centuries before Christ, when the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek (the Septuagint), “you shall love (we’ahavta) the LORD your God” was already rendered agapēseis. From Moses to the lips of the King, one unbroken command—Agapē.

Did this word have a specific contextual use at the time it was spoken?

Yes.

And this is where it gets interesting. The Greatest Command was not spoken into a world with one flat word for “love.” Koine Greek carried several—eros, philia, storgē—each with its own shape and weight. That makes the witness of Scripture striking. Not eros. Not philia. Across hundreds of appearances, the New Testament passes over the familiar options and fills Agapē—the Shema’s word—with its fullest, self-giving, divine weight.

(We’ll lay all of these side by side and show how often each one actually appears in the New Testament when we open the concordance in Chapter 4.)

Scriptural Harmonization

Is this same word used elsewhere in Scripture with contextual similarities?

Yes.

Agapē runs richly through the New Testament, named and described in many lights, and demonstrated again and again by Jesus and the Apostles. A particular section where Agapē is used heavily in the Scriptures might already be rising to the surface of your mind.

Because this word carries so much structural weight across the entirety of the Scriptures, it forces us to ask a natural follow-up question: where exactly do the Scriptures define what this Love looks like?

Is this word given a partial or full description in the Scriptures by Jesus or the Apostles (explicitly, implicitly or narratively)?

Yes.

There is a wealth of description given by Jesus and the Apostles, whether explicitly, implicitly or narratively.

Scripture is rich—it provides direct descriptions, commands, traits, examples, warnings, demonstrations, and theological anchors of Agapē. It tells us what Love is, what Love is not, where Love comes from, how Love walks, whom Love moves toward, and what Love aims to accomplish.

I would be very cautious to state that there is just one explicit, singular, comprehensive definition of Love that closes the matter entirely. In particular, one passage gets treated this way more than any other—and it’s worth reflecting on before we go further.

Isn't 1 Corinthians 13 the Definition of Love?

We will very early on encounter the famous **1 Corinthians 13** description of Love, and rightfully so. It is the single, fullest, explicit illustration of the traits of Love from the Apostle Paul.

It tells us:

*Love is patient and kind.
It does not envy.
It does not boast.
It is not proud.
It does not dishonor others.
It is not self-seeking.
It is not easily angered.
It keeps no record of wrongs.
It rejoices with the truth.
It protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres.
It never fails.*

That is one of the clearest windows into the character of Christian Love in all of Scripture.

Yet Paul does not claim that his 1 Corinthians description is meant to be exhaustive, thus closing the book on Love.

Scripture itself, Paul included, shows us much more—where this Love comes from, whom we are to Love, and what it is finally for.

The Source

Where does Love come from? 1 Corinthians doesn't say. But John tells us plainly: "God is Love" (**1 John 4:8**).

Whom We Love

Whom are we to love? 1 Corinthians doesn't say. But Jesus tells us to Love even our enemies (**Luke 6:27**), and shows us narratively in the story of the Good Samaritan exactly what love of neighbor looks like (**Luke 10:25-37**).

The Aim

What is Love's ultimate goal? 1 Corinthians doesn't say. But elsewhere, Paul writes that the aim of Christian instruction is Love, and that speaking the truth in Love builds up the mature body of Christ (**1 Timothy 1:5; Ephesians 4:15-16**).

This does not take away from Paul's description in 1 Corinthians—it deepens and expands it, just as Paul himself prays that "you, being rooted and established in Love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the Love of Christ, and to know this Love that surpasses knowledge" (**Ephesians 3:18**).

We honor 1 Corinthians 13 most faithfully when we place it inside the whole Scriptural witness, not when we isolate it from that witness.

A trend I have noticed among modern Christians is to simply equate Love with only 1 Corinthians 13. There is a mild association with weddings, romantic Love, and a readiness for a quick fact-check on the matter if quizzed. But then the case for Love feels closed, and the book is placed back on the shelf for us to pursue more "practical" matters in theology.

Love's shape is much larger, as you will soon see, and far too important to shelve as a quick reference to just one verse.

Can we put these descriptions together in harmony to see a fuller picture of how the Scriptures themselves describe what Love exactly looks like ... and what it doesn't look like?

Yes—very much so.

Because of the sheer breadth of what Scripture says about Love, gathering it is not only wise, but it is also necessary. To look in only one place is to risk missing the whole.

And we have done this before. In our foundations, we harmonized the Great Command itself—laying Matthew, Mark, and Luke side by side so that no single account would stand in for the whole. We gathered the voices around one teaching to see its fuller shape.

Now we do the same thing—but with a single word.

Agapē.

When we gather the meaningful appearances of one word across Scripture and let them speak together, we are practicing a kind of word-level harmonization.

One of the classic tools for this is a concordance: a reference that gathers where a word appears so it can be studied across its many contexts. An exhaustive concordance, like Strong's, lists verses tied to a given Hebrew or Greek root word.

For this study, we will engage a focused, devotional concordance centered on *Agapē*—both in noun and verb form. It is arranged thematically, not alphabetically, so we can better understand, internalize, and orient our hearts toward the Love that defines discipleship.

We will examine key passages that reveal:

Where this Love comes from (**Source**),
What it looks like (**Traits**),
How it moves (**Walk**),
Whom it seeks (**Whom We Love**),
What distorts it (**Disordered Love**),
and Where it is going (**Aim**).

The goal is not to overwhelm. It is to let Scripture itself show us—in its own words, with one voice—what Jesus commanded us to become and to do when He said, “*You shall Love.*”

If *Agapē* is the very word by which Jesus said His disciples would be known, then it seems only right that a disciple should do the work of knowing *Agapē*.

This is exactly what we will do in the next chapter.

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but wisdom that leads to love in action.

1. The Hierarchy of Love

Read the Scriptures at the beginning of this chapter again (1 Corinthians 13:13, Colossians 3:14, 1 John 4:8). How does the extreme weight Scripture places on Love compare to where it currently sits in the hierarchy of your own daily life and priorities?

2. Methods for Defining Love

Method 1 highlighted the postmodern idea that “love is whatever you believe it to be.” Have you felt the pressure of this cultural attitude—the idea that love shouldn’t be rigidly defined, or that it exists solely in the eye of the beholder? Why is it dangerous to leave our highest virtue undefined?

3. Your Working Definition

Imagine someone who is entirely new to the Christian faith asks you what this highly important word means. They are patiently waiting for your answer. Based on what we have covered so far, what is your “working definition” of Agape Love?

4. 1 Corinthians 13

While we must guard against treating this as the only scriptural description of Love, it remains the fullest illustration of Love’s traits in the New Testament. Looking honestly at Paul’s list (patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, etc.):

Which of these traits have you witnessed powerfully used in your own life (either given or received)?

Which of these traits do you currently struggle with the most, or desperately need God to renew in you?

CHAPTER 4

The Scriptural Shape of Love

A Devotional Agapē Concordance



Hierarchy

Source

Traits

Walk

Who We Love

Disordered Love

Aim

“It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”

—King Solomon, Proverbs 25:2

We ended the last chapter with a simple conviction: if *Agapē* names the Love by which Jesus said His disciples would be known, then a disciple should do the work of knowing *Agapē*.

So let’s look directly at the scriptural shape of the word used in the Greek Gospel record. Think of this chapter as a field guide—the kind you keep on the shelf, thumb through, and return to.

Don’t worry—you do not need to be a Greek scholar to follow along. We are simply taking a 101-level look into the language in which Jesus’ words were preserved for the Church. Skim it for the idea, or sit with it and go deeper. That’s up to you.

Concordance Language

The specific word Jesus used in all 3 of the synoptic Gospels is *agapēseis*, meaning, “Thou shalt love” (KJV).

This is the second-person conjugation (think: *YOU shall love*) from the root verb *agapaō* (**G25**)—to actively love, or Love expressed in action.

This verb belongs to the same family as *Agapē* (**G26**): the noun for the Love itself we’ll trace through this study.

So, very simply:

Agapē (noun): **the Love**

Agapaō (verb): **to Love**

Agapēseis (the command form): **you shall Love**

Utilizing the Greek Translation

Jesus’ words were recorded in Koine Greek, which was the common Greek used across much of the Greco-Roman world during the New Testament era, roughly c. 300 BC–AD 300.

Jesus taught in a multilingual world where Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek all had a presence. The exact spoken language behind every Gospel scene is not always something we can reconstruct with certainty. For this study, we will follow the inspired Greek text of the New Testament as the faithful scriptural record of Jesus’ teaching.

So when this study says “Jesus used” or “Jesus said” *Agapē* or *agapaō*, it is speaking from within the language of the Gospel text—the Greek form in which His command has been preserved for the Church.

HISTORICAL BONUS:

Before Greek, there was Hebrew. The Old Testament word for love comes from the root *ahav* (אָהַב), the source of the noun *ahavah*, “love.” It is the love-root sounded in the original giving of the Shema—“You shall love (*we’ahavta*) the LORD your God” (**Deuteronomy 6:5**)—and the closest Hebrew ancestor to the *Agapē* Love we meet in the New Testament.

Landscape of Love (The Four Loves)

For greater Context, the ancient Greeks didn’t have one word for “love.” They had four distinct words, each with its own shape and weight. Understanding the landscape helps us see why Jesus reached for one over the rest.

EROS: Erotic or romantic love. The word saturated the surrounding Greco-Roman culture, yet it appears zero times in the New Testament text.

STORGĒ: The word for familial affection. In the New Testament, it appears only sparingly in compound forms:

- **astorgos** (“without natural affection”) – 2x (**Romans 1:31, 2 Timothy 3:3**)
- **philostorgos** (“tenderly affectionate”) – 1x (**Romans 12:10**)

PHILIA / PHILEŌ: Friendship affection between close companions. The verb *phileō* appears about 25 times; the related noun *philia* appears once (**James 4:4**). *Phileō* surfaces in a few crucial places alongside *agapē*—most famously when the risen Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” (**John 21:15–17**), moving between *agapaō* and *phileō*.

AGAPĒ (ἀγαπή): The love word used most extensively in the New Testament, and the term we will explore throughout this study. It is the Greek term for general, self-giving Love. However, the New Testament intensifies this Love as divine—the Love that God is (**1 John 4:8**), and the Love that Christ commands above all others.

The scope of our study will surround two key root words for Love:

G25 — ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*), The verb “to love.”

Pronounced *a.ga’PA.o* | Occurs 143 times in the New Testament

G26 — ἀγάπη (*agapē*), The noun “Love.”

Pronounced *ag-AH-pay* | Occurs 116 times in the New Testament

The “G” numbers come from Strong’s Concordance, which gives each Greek word its own catalog number. Because Greek words shift spelling with their grammar—tense, voice, mood, person, and number (the way “run” becomes “ran” or “running”)—we will note both the form as it appears in the verse and its base dictionary word, the lemma.

Concordance Structure

Before we begin, a quick reminder: a concordance is simply a tool that gathers where a specific word appears across Scripture so it can be studied in the harmony of all its light.

Because *Agapē* is so vast, we aren’t going to list these verses alphabetically. Instead, we have structured this as a non-exhaustive harmonization, gathering an expansive selection of key New Testament verses and organizing them by theme.

We will specifically be looking at New Testament verses that:

Explicitly describe Agape.

Think direct descriptions and commands (i.e., “Love is patient, love is kind”). This also includes explicit examples of what Love is not, allowing us to humbly infer what it is.

Implicitly describe Agape.

Narrative demonstrations and stories where Love is shown through action (i.e., Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, or the parable of the Good Samaritan).

Seven Sections of the Concordance

This concordance is not arranged alphabetically. It is arranged thematically, so we can walk through the Scriptural shape of Love in a way that can be studied, remembered, and walked out. It is arranged in seven sections:

- 1. The Hierarchy of Love³:** Why Love stands first and greatest.
- 2. The Source of Love:** Where Love comes from.
- 3. The Traits of Love:** What Love is, and what Love is not.
- 4. The Walk of Love:** How Love moves in action.
- 5. Whom We Love:** Who Love is commanded toward.
- 6. Disordered Love:** When Love goes wrong.
- 7. The Aim of Love:** What is Love for?

Don’t be intimidated. You do not have to conquer this all at once. Think of what follows as a tool for your shelf—a concordance you can read straight through, or open to any page and explore.

You are welcome to read the full concordance from start to end, but it is not required. For now, simply stroll through the seven sections. Let the Scriptures stand for themselves, but allow yourself to become curious about their surrounding context

At the end of each section of the concordance, your only task is to journal.

As you read, write down a stream of consciousness. Note what stands out to you in the different sections, what surprises you, or what is finally clicking into place. Feel free to hop back and forth—journal as you read, or wait until the end to reflect on the whole picture.

³The Hierarchy of Love was already given as the first entry of this concordance at the opening of Chapter 3. Remember: it is the first and most important, and all else is useless without it.



AGAPE CONCORDANCE

The Source of Love

We can and should think deeply about how to love God and our neighbor. But as we faithfully seek to understand Love and its ways more fully, we are naturally drawn to deeper questions about the nature of Agape Love. What is the origin of this virtue above all others? How can we marvel and learn by seeking to know Agape Love’s Source more deeply—and thus grow in true wisdom?

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Dear friends, let us Love ₂₅ one another, for Love ₂₆ comes from God. Everyone who Loves ₂₅ has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not Love ₂₅ does not know God, because God is Love ₂₆ . –1 John 4:7–8	God Is the Origin of Love ₂₅ (verb) God is Love ₂₆ (noun)
For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In Love ₂₆ he predestined us for adoption to sonship. –Ephesians 1:4–5	Love came from God before the creation of this world
For God so Loved ₂₅ the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. –John 3:16	Giving great gifts to His children (even to His children who have walked away)

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you Loved ₂₅ me before the creation of the world.” –John 17: 24	Jesus wants to be with us in God’s Love
...God’s Love ₂₆ has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. –Romans 5:5	God’s Love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit
Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere Love (philadelphia) for each other, Love ₂₅ one another deeply, from the heart. –1 Peter 1:22	Sincere Love for others comes from the depths of a purified Heart that Christ dwells within
God is Love ₂₆ . Whoever lives in Love ₂₆ lives in God, and God in them. –1 John 4:16	When we Love, God lives in Us
We Love ₂₅ because He first Loved ₂₅ us. –1 John 4:19	His Love is the cause; ours is the echo.

The Source of Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

The Traits of Love

Let's peer more deeply into the nature of Love to see precisely what true Agape Love does—and what it does not—look like. This gives us a rubric to reflect on our own actions and our beliefs about what Love should resemble, as well as the traits that are scripturally non-negotiable if we believe something to be true Love.

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
4 Love₂₆ is patient, Love₂₆ is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love₂₆ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love₂₆ never fails. —1 Corinthians 13: 4-8	Love throughout all scripture is patient and kind. A list of traits Love doesn't have strongly implies the opposing traits Love DOES have: Rejoices with others (Romans 12:14) Bridles its tongue (James 3:2-3) Is humble (Philip 2:3-8) Honors others (Romans 12:10) Is compassionate (Galatians 5:13) Is a peace maker (Matthew 5:9) Forgives 7x77 (Matthew 18:21-22) Delights in Good deeds (Romans 12:9) and rejoices with truth Consistently and unchangeably, LOVE PROTECTS, TRUSTS, HOPES and PERSEVERES LOVE IS VICTORIOUS

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly Loved₂₅, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on Love₂₆, which binds them all together in perfect unity. —Colossians 3:12-14	Over all, put on Love₂₆, which binds these virtues in perfect unity. (see verse 14) Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience Helping one another gracefully forgiving our inevitable trespasses Being bound connects Love with these traits, maintaining parallel coherence with 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5.
8 Above all, Love₂₆ each other deeply, because Love₂₆ covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. —1 Peter 4:8-10	Above all, Love is the first virtue to express to each other, covering over our vast failures Leading to hospitality and service of one another... ...out of our varied gifts, without grumbling

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Greater Love₂₆ has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (<i>philos</i>). – John 15:13	Love's Greatness is multiplied by the Sacrifice of ones own life
Love₂₆ does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore Love₂₆ is the fulfillment of the law. – Romans 13:10	Love Does no Harm to Neighbors
We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by Love₂₆, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1 Thessalonians 1:3	Love Prompts Labor
But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and Love₂₆ as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. – 1 Thessalonians 5:8	Love Protects
Your Love₂₆ has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. – Philemon 1:7	Love gives Joy and Encouragement
Husbands, Love₂₅ your wives and do not be harsh with them. – Colossians 3:19	Love is not harsh—even when firmly establishing boundaries in difficult relationships.

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
13 Serve one another humbly in Love₂₆.	Love Serves Humbly
14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love₂₅ your neighbor as yourself."	Loving each other keeps whole law given by our King Jesus: the Royal Command...
15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other. – Galatians 5:13–15	...but the consequences of us blaming and bickering with each other is self destruction
But the fruit of the Spirit is Love₂₆, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (<i>pistis</i>), gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. – Galatians 5:22	Our culture often considers Love as one virtue among many in the Fruits of the Spirit, but the others act as descriptors of Love's traits: Joy: Love rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6) Peace: Love is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5) Patience & Kindness: Love is patient, Love is kind (1 Corinthians 13:4, Colossians 3:12) Goodness: "Let Love₂₆ be genuine... cling to what is good." (Romans 12:9) Faithfulness: Love always trusts (<i>pisteuei, the verb form of pistis</i>) (1 Corinthians 13:7) Gentleness: Bound in Love (Colossians 3:12-14) Self-Control: Love does not boast, is not self-seeking (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

A Final Note on Agape Love and Its Placement First in the Fruit of the Spirit

The term fruit (*karpōs*) is singular, not plural (*karpōi*). Additionally, the original Greek was not written with punctuation; the commas we have added in translation carry the connotation of nine separate virtues listed.

Remember that the author describing the Fruit of the Spirit, Paul himself, taught that Love is not just one virtue among many—it is the virtue that binds all others together (**Colossians 3:14**). And in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul explicitly describes Agape Love as including most of the traits of the Fruit of the Spirit: patient, kind, faithful, and so on.

Therefore, either:

Love is the first fruit, and the following are highly valued virtues bound in Love (Colossians 3:14),

OR

Love is the primary fruit, and the adjacent virtues are facets of God's Love itself.

In either case, I hope we can see Agape Love in Galatians 5 as having explicit relationship to its surrounding virtues throughout Scripture—fortifying our harmonization of Love's traits, instead of seeing Love as one unrelated virtue in a bucket of others.

The Traits of Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

Walking in the Way of Love

When we examine Agape Love from a distance, we can analyze and label the key structures denoting its identifiable traits. This is foundational for our knowledge and understanding of what is, and is not, Love.

However, Love is a Way—and it is meant to be walked intimately.

The Scripture surrounding this is clear and well established. Jesus even referred to Himself as the Way, and asked us to follow Him. This is language that requires action. Actions that put us on a path to walk with our King in His Way.

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
And walk in the way of Love ₂₆ , just as Christ Loved ₂₅ us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. – Ephesians 5:2	Love is a Way to Walk
And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we Love ₂₅ one another. And this is Love ₂₆ : that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in Love ₂₆ . – 2 John 1:5–6	Love is the Command from the beginning And for Ladies as much as Gentlemen to walk Love's path
But God demonstrates his own Love ₂₆ for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – Romans 5:8	Christ has led the highest example of this self-sacrificial walk of Love Himself with His cross as unconditional Love for us. While we faltered, He took our burdens.
Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to Love ₂₅ one another, for whoever Loves ₂₅ others has fulfilled the law. – Romans 13:8	We are in Only one state of Perpetual Debt: To Love A debt that does not enslave, but liberates
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward Love ₂₆ and good deeds. – Hebrews 10:24	We should Plan (MIND) how to spur one another toward Love and its consequent fruit

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
9 Love₂₆ must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in Love. (<i>philadelphia/philostorgos</i>) Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: <i>"It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"</i> says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: <i>"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."</i> 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:9–21	Often called "Love In Action" Love₂₆ Should be Sincere, Clinging to good, Honoring others first Serving the Lord Joyful, patient, and faithful Generous and hospitable Connected in heart with others' celebrations and mourning Harmonious and at peace with neighbors Feeding and giving drink to your enemy Overcoming evil with good

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great Love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little Loves₂₅ little. – Luke 7:47	Being Forgiven of much greatly strengthens the walk of your Love. If you are shielding sin from repentance, it weakens your walk of Love.
1 Having Loved₂₅ his own who were in the world, he Loved₂₅ them to the end. 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. – John 13:1, 13–15	True Love perseveres to the end Jesus Gives us a teaching and Demonstration of Love as foot washing The Greater should serve the Lesser We are instructed to do likewise
9 As the Father has Loved₂₅ me, so have I Loved₂₅ you. Now remain in my Love₂₆. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my Love₂₆, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his Love₂₆. – John 15:9–10	Remain in Love by following Christ's Commands

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
16 This is how we know what Love₂₆ is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the Love₂₆ of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not Love₂₅ with words or speech but with actions and in truth. – 1 John 3:16–18	We can discern if we are walking in Love by examining our actions. Do we lay down ourselves to help our brothers and sisters? True Love is proven not just with words, but with actions and in truth.
There is no fear in Love₂₆. But perfect Love₂₆ drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in Love₂₆. – 1 John 4:18	Complete Love drives out all fear from our steps
If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in Love₂₆. – Romans 14:15	Love will sacrifice not to put a close friend or family member in distress
I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your Love₂₆ for him. – 2 Corinthians 2:8	Love Forgives, Restores and Affirms

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in the Love₂₆ we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. – 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9	Walking in Love is associated with Generous Giving; even Christ walking this earth in poverty to make us rich
Instead, speaking the truth in Love₂₆, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. – Ephesians 4:15	DISCIPLINE & TOUGH LOVE Part of becoming mature as a church: truth should be spoken in Love (implying that one could speak truth without Love)
5 My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines the one he Loves₂₅, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. – Hebrews 12:5–6, 11–13	Love rebukes and disciplines, but is never rude For the purpose of our good. Later it produces fruits of righteousness. (This is also why you should get a health assessment and join a gym: to ensure you can “Love strong” from your earthly tent for as long as the Lord gives you)

Walking in the Way of Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

Whom Shall We Love

The Greatest Command has two explicit directions for our Love: first to God, and then to neighbor.

So how do we Love an all-powerful God who needs nothing from us? And who is our “neighbor”? If we are to Love them as ourselves, are we supposed to Love ourselves, or is that selfish?

The Scriptures themselves address each of these questions head on.

A Note on Loving God

When searching the Scriptures for explicit teachings on how to Love God, I have not found Scripture primarily answering this question by giving one isolated devotional formula such as, “If you love Me”: “sing to Me,” “pray to Me at set times,” or “build this for Me.”

Yes, Scripture certainly commends worship—song, prayer, sacrifice, and devotion are everywhere, and God is genuinely pleased by them. Yet when Scripture moves to explicitly define love for God, it points again and again to one primary evidence: **obedient faithfulness**—keeping His commandments and keeping His Word (John 14:15, 21, 23).

Humanity has a long pattern of trying to please God with what we imagine He might enjoy, while quietly setting aside what He has actually commanded. Loving God begins not with our preferred offering, but with His revealed will.

LOVE GOD	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
If you Love _{2,5} Me, you will keep My commandments. – John 14:15	Jesus emphasizes keeping His commands repeatedly—as though, despite our genuine desire to do something for God from our hearts, we as a people, time after time, forget certain foundational commands God has explicitly given us to do and not to do.
Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who Loves _{2,5} Me. – John 14:21	
If anyone Loves _{2,5} Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will Love _{2,5} him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. – John 14:23–24	Therefore, let us be humbly aware—individually and as a Church—that we have a historical predisposition to turn our eyes from the responsibilities of core commands, while still seeking to worship God on our own terms.
Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” (<i>phileō</i>) He said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love you.” (<i>phileō</i>) Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” – John 21	Three times Jesus draws a direct line between Love and “Feed My sheep,” most often interpreted as taking great care of His Church—His people, great and small.

LOVE GOD	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
If anyone says, “I Love₂₅ God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not Love₂₅ his brother whom he has seen cannot Love₂₅ God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever Loves₂₅ God must also Love₂₅ his brother. –1 John 4:20–21	To Love God is to Love your neighbor sincerely, from the heart. We cannot hate our brother while thinking we are simultaneously Loving our Father. We are Sons of God. Our Brother is a Son of God as well, whom our Father has commanded us to Love.
35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me. Whatever you did for the least of these... you did for Me. – Matthew 25 : 31-46 <i>Sheep & Goats (implicit narrative teaching, see note)</i>	<i>(Implicit Agape)</i> We Love the Lord directly through tangible, practical care for society’s most vulnerable.

LOVE NEIGHBOR	
LOVE OF NEIGHBOR	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
29 “And who is my neighbor?”.... 30 A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” 37 ...Go and do likewise. – Luke 10:29-37	Taught immediately after the Great Commandment’s instruction to Love₂₅ our neighbor as ourselves, the question was asked... “And who is my neighbor?” A man was attacked and abandoned. A priest by practice passed by him. A Levite (priest by blood) passed by him. A traveler of differing beliefs and cultural practices—whose people were viewed negatively—stops, takes pity, and pays the practical cost to care for him. This was Love of a Neighbor. Compassion that crosses ethnic/ social lines and pays practical costs. Love can come from those of the “wrong denomination.” What is your response?

LOVE NEIGHBOR	
LOVING THE ABANDONED	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. – James 1:27	Love orphans and widows—both literally, and those abandoned by their family. The Scriptures have always shown the Lord’s compassion toward the fatherless, and we are called to be Christ’s hands and feet.
LOVE OF ENEMIES	
But to you who are listening I say: Love₂₅ your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you...” – Luke 6:27–28	Love those who are your political opponent. Those who tax and fine you. The customer service representative of the company you hate. The neighbor whose flag offends you.
If you Love₂₅ those who Love₂₅ you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners Love₂₅ those who Love₂₅ them. – Luke 6:32	And be careful not to deceive yourself—Loving only those who already Love you can easily flow from selfish motive. Even sinners do that. Christ commands more.

LOVE NEIGHBOR	
LOVE TOGETHER	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same Love₂₆, being one in spirit and of one mind. – Philippians 2:2	Love is meant to be experienced and carried out in forms of unity.
My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in Love₂₆, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. – Colossians 2:2	United in Love, we are given access to the fuller riches of deeper knowledge of God Himself—knowledge the isolated heart cannot reach alone.
MARITAL LOVE	
25-26 Husbands, Love₂₅ your wives, just as Christ Loved₂₅ the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word ... 28-29 ... He who Loves₂₅ his wife Loves₂₅ himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the Church. – Ephesians 5:25–26, 28-29	Demonstrate God’s Love inside our marriages as powerfully as Christ modeled it toward His Church Describes Love by washing, feeding, caring, and more SELF LOVE through proper perspective of your spouse

LOVE SELF (TO LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOR)	
SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Love ₂₅ neighbor as yourself (<i>assumes healthy self-regard</i>). – Matthew 22:39 / Leviticus 19:18	Loving our Neighbor as ourself in the Greatest Command assumes a right ordered self Love that nourishes and cherishes itself to God's Glory.
So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Corinthians 10:31	True Love of self grows in Wisdom as it will serve to protect and provide in your life.
Whoever gets sense Loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good. – Proverbs 19:8 (<i>Old Testament—Hebrew ahav; Greek agapā, G25</i>)	Just as a good Father wants his children to enjoy good gifts, so does our Heavenly Father wish us to enjoy the breath of life and it's many gifts.
If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! – Matthew 7:11-12 (<i>implicit teaching—see note</i>)	We are Called to Love ourself not in gluttony, sloth, and excess, but self care and stewardship that we might both enjoy the good gifts of our Father as well as grow to Love God & Neighbor stronger.

Whom Shall We Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

Disordered Love

A false love is often more insidious than a self-aware lack of it. With a false love, nothing seems missing; therefore, there is nothing to repent of. With a disordered Love, our passion and pride can deeply hurt our neighbor.

We all recognize that historically, scripturally, and presently, men have claimed God’s Love while simultaneously sowing hate and division. But it is tempting to believe that such deception only exists in the hearts of other people.

Remember: we are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. We are made in the image of God, yet tainted by original sin. To actively search your own heart for deceit is both humble and wise.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

– **Psalms 51:17**

To believe that you would never do such a thing—because you assume you “see clearly”—is an act of pride. It turns our eyes away from the sin that lurks in the hearts of all men.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways.”

– **Jeremiah 17:9-10**

Disordered love is not only love aimed at evil. More often it is love aimed at something genuinely good—but loved in the wrong order, or in the wrong measure. As Augustine saw, sin is frequently a good thing loved too much, or loved before God. The heart rarely chooses darkness while calling it darkness; it chooses a lesser good and calls it ultimate.

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people Loved ₂₅ darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. – John 3:19	We, as Sons and Daughters of the Lord Can and have given our Love and service to darkness evident by our deeds
Because of the increase of wickedness, the Love ₂₆ of most will grow cold—but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. – Matthew 24:12-13	Love Can grow cold
No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and Love ₂₅ the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. – Luke 16:13	Love cannot serve opposing Ways
Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he Loved ₂₅ this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. – 2 Timothy 4:9-10	Misguided “love” for the world can abandon others.
Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the Love ₂₆ of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. – Luke 11:42	One can observe assortments of God’s command but still Forget Greater matters of Love

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of Love₂₆... – Philippians 1:15-16	One can preach of Christ ... without Love
...Or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is Love₂₆, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. – 1 Timothy 1:4-5	Doctrines revolving around myths speculation, or long genealogies can be contrary to God's work which is LOVE through FAITH
Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, Love₂₆, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth. – 2 Timothy 2:22–25	Pursue Love alongside others who sincerely call on the Lord, resisting our immature selfish desires Avoid at all costs, foolish un-kind arguments (including social media) Don't quarrel and become resentful Instead gently instruct your opponents, hoping God will lead them to truth and repentance

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the Love₂₆ 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. – Revelation 2:4-5	A church community can do isolated deeds and goodness while putting aside their first pursuit of true agape Love. We should consider if this intersects our community's walk, and if so, turn back towards the restoration of Christ's Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

Love's Aim

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for sin is *hatā* ', which literally means, "to miss your aim."

"Among all these were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss (hātā ')."

– Judges 20:16

Old Testament: *hātā* ' —to miss the mark

In the New Testament, the Greek word for sin is *hamartia*—and it carries the very same meaning: to miss the intended mark.

"For all have sinned (hēmarton – missed) and fall short of the glory of God."

– Romans 3:23

New Testament: *hamartia*— to miss the mark

The term 'sin' has long been used in archery, ancient and modern, as the word for missing the target completely, receiving no points.

Love does have a goal. It has an aim. In Greek, this is a *telos*, meaning the maturing to a final perfect form.

As a Level-1 NTS Archery coach, one of the strongest ways to avoid sin in archery is not to focus on how "not to miss" the mark. The best way to hit the target is to aim directly at it.

Let's peer directly into the Scriptures as if they are the sight. What is Love's aim? What is the end that Love would have for us to pursue?

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. – Ephesians 2:8-10	We by Grace have been Saved, by Faith, not of any works of our own, but as a gift of God. For we are created and fashioned to fit in the Body of Christ for the explicit purpose of good works God has already planned for us to walk in We were not Saved BY works, but saved FOR works
16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is My command: Love_{2s} each other. – John 15:16-17	It is Christ that has appointed us to Grow and Bear these eternal Fruits of Love
Speaking the truth in Love₂₆, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in Love₂₆, as each part does its work. – Ephesians 4:15-16	The Body of Christ whom Christ is the head, is composed of us, each doing our part in this mission. This unified Body is meant to grow more mature. This Body is built up in Love
We know that 'we all possess knowledge.' But knowledge puffs up, while Love₂₆ builds up. – 1 Corinthians 8:1	Knowledge for Knowledge's sake is bloat Love has a purpose to BUILD

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
And this is my prayer: that your Love₂₆ may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ— to the glory and praise of God. – Philippians 1:9-11	Love can grow. Love can abound more and more in knowledge (Mind) and depth of insight. Love grows toward discernment — so that we may know what is best. Love’s aim is not vague goodness, but purity, blamelessness, and the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ, The chief end of this Love is the glory and praise of God.

SCRIPTURE	NOTES
For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, Love₂₆. – 2 Peter 1:5-8	We should make every effort to follow this Process Love is the crown of this functional virtue chain.
Blessed is the onewho perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who Love₂₅ Him. – James 1:12	Love persevering through trials receives the crown of life from the Lord.

Love's Aim

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

When reading through and thinking upon the Concordance verses, what stood out to you? Write down any thoughts that come in your mind and heart around these verses.

Hierarchy of Love

Agape Journal

Stream of Consciousness Journaling

Go back and read "Hierarchy of Love" in Chapter 3 (page 42), which established our reasoning begin this journey of knowing Agape as deeply as we have gone. What stands out to you now?



SELAH

Selah – a Hebrew word found in the Psalms, often marking a pause.
It invites us to stop, reflect, and let the words sink deep.

CHAPTER 5

Restoring Love in Language

Reclaiming Agape in a world of lesser “loves”



Working Definitions

Drifting Definitions

3 Steps Toward Restoration

The Best of Modern Love

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words, which you have heard from me, in faith and Love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

– 2 Timothy 1:13-14

How this chapter is different

This chapter will be a shift from the strict scripture study that has been primarily exegetical, drawing out from Scripture. In every chapter so far, we have engaged rigorously with the Scriptures that explicitly describe Jesus’s Great Commandment, alongside their surrounding context, while minimizing personal opinions and perspectives.

This chapter is my own logical inferences and observations of what is happening to the keyword “love” in Christ’s original command as it has passed through time and out of its original context into our contemporary language.

I invite you to join me as we move into a discourse on why the modern word “love,” as commonly used, feels so different from the Agape Love Jesus commanded and demonstrated.

Working Definitions

In the previous chapter, I asked you how you would define Agape Love after reading the full concordance. I hope you found that challenging. The breadth of Holy Scripture gives so much shape and context to true Love that boiling it all down to a single phrase can feel like doing the word a disservice.

I have the same struggle. After composing the concordance, defining Agape “properly” still feels difficult. But as long as we approach the task with humility about the breadth of material we are condensing, I believe it is a valuable endeavor—it gives us a practical anchor, a first measure to hold our actions against in daily life.

I have made several “holistic” attempts. Here is one:

“Agapē is God’s self-giving power in us—which, valuing His creation, wills and acts toward the true good at cost to self, for God’s glory and our neighbor’s good.”

But every attempt like this leaves me feeling I have left one or two aspects out, and the definition keeps growing until it runs away from being practical.

So my own best attempt at a simple, root-principled definition of Agape as a verb is this:

To value, and work towards the good of.

Two components. One simple frame. Let’s break them down.

To Value...

God values you as a Son or Daughter.

When we truly carry an attitude of family and of value for one another it exists separate from the ups and downs of what is said or done today, and persists in the hope that we might prosper tomorrow. Yes, it hurts when someone we value betrays us. But if we truly value them, we should not condemn them; we may condemn their actions, but to Agape love them is to hope for a new heart in those we love.

This is where many get tangled.

We conflate Agape Love with simple enjoyment—of a donut, of sleep, of an attractive actor. We “value” these things for ourselves. But although value may include enjoyment, our highest value should transcend simple self-oriented enjoyment.

This distinction is at the heart of one of the classic struggles of faith:

“How can God ‘love’ me after all I have done to His other children (theft, murder, adultery, betrayal of every kind)?”

When we conflate love with enjoyment, we know deep in our hearts that God does NOT enjoy our actions while we disrespect our brothers and sisters.

However, He VALUES you still as His child. He sees how you were made in His image for more, and wants to lead you toward His Way. You can value someone or something that may produce discomfort. Understanding this nuance gives clarity to how God can still value us deeply, even when we wrong Him and our brothers and sisters.

... and Work Towards the Good Of

“14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? **15** Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? **17** In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

— James 2:14–17

Just like in James, you can “wish for someone to be fed and clothed” but / do nothing.

Even in poverty or prison, each one of us has an assortment of giftings and roles unique to us. We are to actively harness these strengths toward the good of others. Sometimes praying for their good is all someone will allow for the relationship, or it is the true extent of your reach, but that should be a boundary you encounter in your mission, not a default setting where true Love is simply “wishing” the best for someone.

I am genuinely curious about the working definitions you have composed out of the wealth of Agape Scripture—definitions that can anchor your “love” in the rock of Christ’s demonstration of it, especially amidst the winds, rains, and shifting tides of language around us.

Drifting Definitions

If we have done the work of defining Agape Love as Christ taught it, a question follows almost on its own:

What has happened to the English word “love” in contemporary times?

Should we still use “love” for pizza and matrimony? Does the Agape Love Christ uses as the mark of true discipleship need distinction from when we would “love” another cookie? Does the scriptural declaration, “God is Love,” deserve any reverence apart from how much we “love” sleeping in on a rainy day?

Do we need reform? Should we return to using Agape?

These questions are not part of a purely exegetical scripture study, but I believe the more we study Agape, the more a dissonance arises between the word “Love” spoken by Christ and the “love” used in our culture.

The Command to Love with our “Mind” leads us to search out what is going on with this precious term. In this chapter I will lead my best attempt to decipher what has happened to the word “love” and how we might restore meaning to Agape Love as Christ uses it.

There are two major movements I observe when examining what has been shifting to take modern “love” so far away from Agape.

Semantic Bleaching

We as a culture have diluted the meaning of Love.

One of the most subtle yet powerful shifts in modern culture is when our words themselves change in meaning over time, because when a word loses its shape, so does the truth it was meant to carry.

This phenomenon in language is called semantic drift, which may cause a word to broaden, narrow, or shift over time entirely. (For example, the word “gay,” once commonly meaning joyful or carefree, has shifted greatly in definition over time.)

One specific type of semantic shift is semantic bleaching⁴, when a word loses its original force, precision, or emotional intensity. The word still exists, but its meaning becomes diluted or generalized. A good example is the word “awesome,” which once meant “awe-inspiring” or connected to divine reverence, but now often just means “cool.” The word still functions, but it has lost much of its former weight.

Through generations our intentions may be well to extend the beautiful and divine term of “Love” to further and further values, eventually when we over extend from the sacred to the mundane and when “love” can mean absolutely anything, inevitably it starts to mean nothing.

This brings us to another type of semantic drift I call Semantic Inversion.

⁴“Semantic drift” and “semantic bleaching” are standard terms in the linguistic study of language change. See works by David Crystal, April McMahon, and others.

Semantic Inversion

Biblical Love was defined by what we give. Modern “love” is defined by what we enjoy.

It’s as though the direction of Love has been reversed. I genuinely challenge you to look back at the many verses using and describing Agape. The overwhelming majority describe an outward-oriented action, focused on the good of others—greatest when it is self-sacrificial.

There are only a minority of verses where agapē is used in reference to strong affection or admiration, such as “God so loved the world” (**John 3:16**), or those who “loved the world” (**1 John 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:10**), but even these show a direct correlation of the value to committed action. In the first, God gave His Son; in the second, men became devoted to the world instead of to God. Even when feeling is present, biblical love still moves outward through giving, allegiance, or sacrifice.

Today’s “love” often runs in the opposite direction. Try this test. The majority of the time, the word “love” in our daily speech can be substituted with “I enjoy”—and nothing about the sentence breaks:

<i>I love (enjoy) it when you do this</i>	<i>You gotta just do what you love (enjoy)</i>
<i>I love (enjoy) that feature</i>	<i>What did you love (enjoy) most about it?</i>
<i>I love (enjoy) days like this</i>	<i>I loved (enjoyed) that movie</i>

Notice over this next week how often “love” is being used to describe what we receive—and how rarely it is being used to describe what we give.

Today’s “love” rarely takes a sacrificial, action-oriented position unless we add other words to push it back:

I Love _____ by _____.

I love my wife by ... making her feel safe and encouraging her. I love my community by ... volunteering at a local shelter. I love Christ with my mind by ... understanding how the key verb agapē in His Great Command has slowly been shifting culturally toward one’s own enjoyment.

3 Steps Toward Restoration

What should we do? How can we course correct?

Should we correct our neighbor? Give them a “gentle rebuke” when they conflate Agape Love with modern enjoyment love?

In my personal opinion, no—at least not as a harsh reflex. We are in a world and culture soaked in “love” meaning anything and everything. You will hear it with daily abundance in all forms. This would be an unending uphill battle, with the world and our neighbor feeling criticized without understanding.

Love is patient and kind. Lead by example, and let others learn Agape Love’s deeper meaning when their ears are ready to hear. Should we stop using “love” for anything but Agape?

I think of this as a personal conviction. The word began as Agape, in Greek (previously *Ahava* in Hebrew) with distinction from other loves like *philo*, *storge*, and *eros*. We don’t have these distinctly different words woven into our modern language. We have stepped into just one word—“love”—to translate Agape as well as everything else, and the result has saturated our culture. We are meant to just feel out the difference through context.

We are deep into an age where the word for our Lord’s greatest sacrifice on the cross is simultaneously used to enjoy a cold beer waiting for an appetizer.

The Greek use of distinct words for distinct loves is a beautiful feature the Holy Scriptures were written within. But just as slowly as our language drifted into a single word “love” meaning many things, we can—hopefully, slowly—shift back to restoring the uniqueness of the Agape Love Christ taught.

I see three strong ways to begin. I hope the church will find many more.

Lift Up Agapē Love

Start calling Agapē Love what it is: Agapē Love.

Both for ourselves, those familiar with the difference, and those who might inquire, “What’s Agape Love?” This can ignite a fruitful conversation where we can share the good news of the difference. Let’s start to lift up the word Christ said we will be known by.

Capitalize the L when writing of the truest Agape Love. If corrected by others, answer kindly:

“In the Christian tradition, Agapē Love is the name of our highest virtue—and explicitly the very nature of God Himself (1 John 4:8). It warrants the capital.”

I don’t know if you have noticed, but for this study I have taken that liberty.

Let’s start to bring the word Agape back into contemporary conversation. Let’s make the contrast felt—between the little “l” love of apple pie and the Agape Love that suffers on a cross for those it Loves. This is a conversation worth having, and a verb worth restoring to its fullness and specificity as the Love that Christ teaches.

Increase Our Vocabulary

When Scripture spoke of Agapē, it meant giving, not getting. Today, we use the same four-letter word for both.

We say we “love” pizza, “love” a show, or “love” a compliment—but the biblical writers would have reached for far more precise words: grateful, pleased, delighted, enraptured, enchanted. The early Greek Christian culture had a rich vocabulary for affection, pleasure, and thankfulness. Overwhelmingly, they devoted Agapē to something sacred—the self-giving love that wills another’s good above one’s own.

Let us consciously expand the palette of our vocabulary. Instead of defaulting to “love” for everything you enjoy, be specific. Say delight. Say thankful or treasure when you mean grateful. Say admire, cherish, or esteem when you mean you hold something in high regard.

And reserve Love—true Agapē Love—for the kind of love that truly gives.

When we stretch “love” over everything we like, we don’t elevate the cookie or the movie; we cheapen the word Jesus placed first and greatest. Precise language does the opposite: it honors what we enjoy and protects Agapē for its proper weight.

Here is the difference in practice:

I loved that cookie:

That cookie was exquisite, So crispy on the outside and soft in the center!

I love that actor:

I enjoy how that actor is able to seamlessly transition from such disparate characters with ease.

I love the way you smile:

Whenever you smile, your dimples crease in a way that makes my knees weak.

I love this song:

This song wraps around my soul and pulls my buried pain to the surface so it can finally heal.

Notice what happens in the adjusted statements. The speaker is still expressing genuine delight, but they are doing it with honor and craftsmanship instead of monotonously borrowing the sacred word, Love. The cookie gets its due praise. The actor gets real admiration. The smile, the song, all receive language fitting to them.

And because we have been more precise with our tongue, the word Love is now free to carry the weight Jesus gave it: self-giving, costly, outward

Agapē that seeks the good of another even when it hurts. This is not meant to be elitism or word-policing. It is thoughtful stewardship.

When our vocabulary grows, our ability to honor God and neighbor with our words, grows with it. The goal is not to sound smarter. The goal is to guard the good deposit (**2 Timothy 1:13–14**) so that when we say, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...” or “Love your neighbor as yourself,” the word still carries the shape Jesus gave it.

Have Grace for the Journey

We’ve inherited a culture where Love has been bleached, inverted, conflated, and confused. You won’t feel like you give Agape it’s perfect distinction every time you say “love” and that’s okay.

Language restoration is not a war campaign. It is a pilgrimage toward clearer hearts and truer words. Don’t turn correction into condemnation.

Have grace for yourself, and for your neighbor who hasn’t yet learned Agape from eros or simple self-enjoyment. Have grace for yourself when you say you “love” something trivial. Just keep walking toward clarity, humility, and truth.

The goal is never to win an argument about vocabulary.

The goal is to live in such a way that Agapē Love itself becomes visible again—the kind of Love that fulfills the first and greatest command and shows the world whose disciples we really are.

The Best of Modern Love

But what about the greatest examples of “true love” modeled in our personal lives, culture, and narrative examples?

The vows a couple says at the altar. The hope that they may have found “true love.”

A couple fighting against all odds, at great personal cost, to pursue, provide for, and protect each other.

A father bearing all he can to protect his little girl and give her a good life.

These are not in any way to be confused with the love of a donut or snoozing on a rainy day. These stories cross theological and political lines. They shape the hopes and values of young and mature, secular and religious alike.

And I would argue: the best of these narratives—the ideals that pull at the strings of our hearts—all have the shape of Agape somewhere in them. That is why they have such an impression on us.

Look back at the breadth of Greek language:

Philia

Chosen friendship: companionship, trust, laughter, and shared life.

Storgē

Family belonging: loyalty, household, commitment, and lifelong care.

Eros

Passion, desire, intimacy, attraction, and embodied love.

Agapē

Self-giving Love, seeking the true good of the beloved at personal cost.

I believe the “True Love” that the best of modern culture raises as the ideal to pursue is actually a composite love of all of these, rooted in Agapē.

All the toxic variations that were not “True Love” were missing this critical piece.

True romantic love, properly shaped, involves a deep desire both to receive and to give. This passion to give—where it is a pleasure to sacrifice for the other—makes our desire grow even more.

But desire is imperfect. Passion does not always rise to meet the moment. The appetite to receive will, at times, outrun the will to give. This is why Agape is what holds it all together.

When desire fails, Agape gives anyway. Without Agape at the root, the other loves slowly wither. With it, they grow, endure, and bear lasting fruit.

Take a look at the graphic on the next page, illustrating Romantic “true love” as a composite love. Now imagine one love missing.

Eros without friendship, loyalty, and self-giving love can collapse into lust.

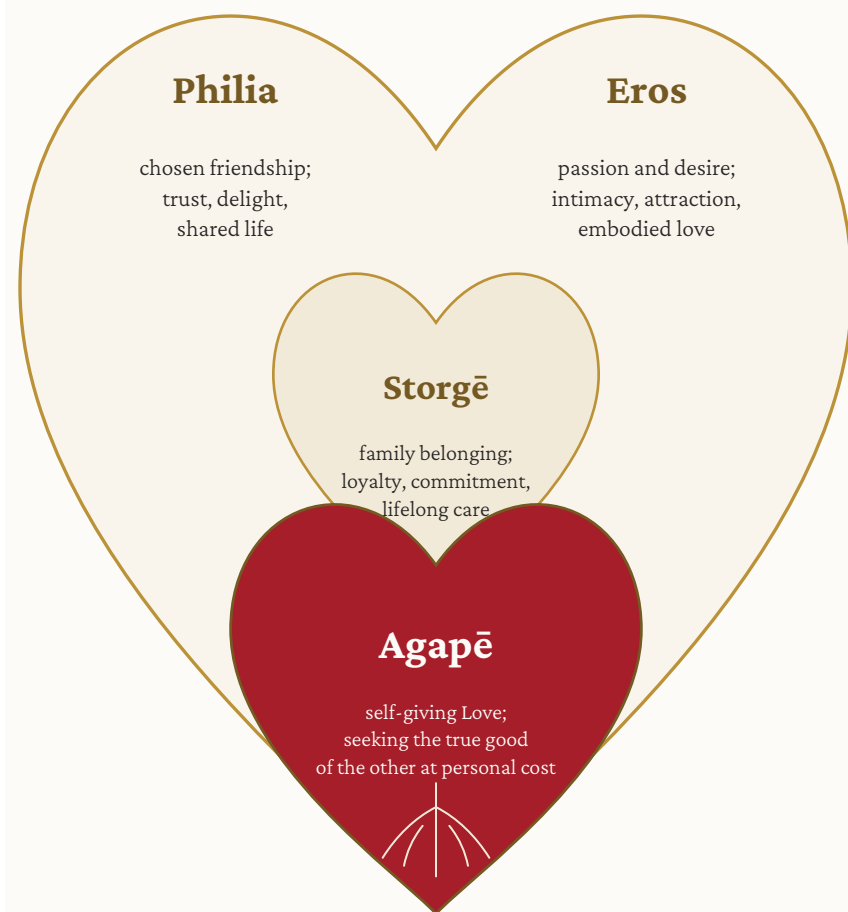
Philia without passion, commitment, and sacrifice may remain only friendship.

Storgē without passion and friendship can become hollow duty.

Agapē does not replace the others; it roots them. When passion fades, agapē seeks to rekindle it. When friendship weakens, agapē seeks to rebuild it. When loyalty is strained, agapē seeks to heal it.

The other loves are beautiful fruits, but agapē is the root. Without it, love slowly withers. With it, love can grow, endure, and bear fruit together.

A COMPOSITE LOVE ROOTED IN AGAPE



Agape does not replace the other loves; it roots them.

With it, passion, friendship, and family love can grow, endure,
and bear fruit together.

The true meaning of Agape Love is perfect—life-giving—from the lips of a King who welcomes us into the good news of new life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

What the world truly needs, by definition, is Agape Love.

However the more we contrast Agape love to the word “love” today it reminds me of the first temptation back in the Garden of Eden. The serpent’s first move was distorting the meaning of God’s words.

In Genesis 3:1, he says: *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”*

The serpent wasn’t just questioning God’s authority; he was re-framing God’s words. The attack began not with rebellion, but with meaning distortion. He questioned what God meant and whether that meaning was trustworthy.

It was the first recorded act of theological distortion of God’s Word. It began by pivoting the intent of God’s command into something self-interpreted.

Contemporary “love” may come dressed in many flavors. But remember:

Agape rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.
Agape Love never fails.

— 1 Corinthians 13:6–8

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but wisdom that leads to love in action.

1. The definition you wrote in the previous chapter (or whatever your latest iteration) for Love—how does it compare or contrast with the various ways you hear “love” used through the week in media, in public, in casual conversation?

2. What do you think is the reason for this difference? What has happened to the word “love” in our common language?

3. What do you see as the best steps to restoring our ability to effectively communicate the difference between Agape Love and enjoyment love?

In our culture:

Individually:



PART TWO

THE FOUR FACULTIES OF LOVE

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

—Jesus, Mark 12:30

Now that we have clarified the word Love itself, we turn to the four dimensions through which Jesus commands that Love to be offered.

In this next section, we will dive deeper into each of the Four Faculties we are commanded to Love with as the cardinal dimensions of our lives. We will take a tour of each in detail, examining how we can Love the Lord our God with ALL of our Mind, Heart, Strength, and Soul.

We will use these as our working definitions as we move deeper into the framework:

Mind (*Dianoia* | νοῦς)

The faculty of knowledge, understanding, strategy and our thought life

Heart (*Kardia* | καρδιά)

The seat of emotion, desire, and intent

Strength (*Ischus* | ἰσχύς)

The faculty of ability, willpower, and action

Soul (*Psychē* | ψυχή)

The essence of one’s being, eternal identity, and the devotion of one’s life

In each of these areas, we will explore how to Agape Love God and Love neighbor.

A note on Loving Self

Because we are commanded to Love our neighbor as ourself, this study implies that—to some degree—we are also to Love ourselves. Not in a selfish way, but in the heart of responsible stewardship of self.

So, alongside our journey to understand Loving God and neighbor, we will also seek how to rightly Love ourselves, that we may in turn Love stronger through the stewardship of our own lives.

Picture the moment. The Pharisees have gathered. A legal expert steps forward with a question designed to corner Him. Every ear leans in. The room is waiting.

And Jesus answers without hesitation.

He does not say, *“Just love. That covers it.”*

When asked directly, *“What is the greatest command of all?”*
He does not stop at the verb. He gives it four dimensions.

Heart. Soul. Mind. Strength.

This matters. If two of those words were sufficient, He would have said two. If one was enough, He would have said one.

We should take Him at His word. He gave the foundational structure from which all the Law and the Prophets hang.

Each faculty is not decoration. It is load-bearing. He answered what is first before all other instruction, and He did not waste words.

The harmonized Gospel witness instructs us to Love with all four faculties. Love, even if well-intended, is incomplete if one of these is missing.

Let’s use a thought experiment to demonstrate the necessity of all four, if we are to walk in the love Jesus is instructing. Imagine the critical failure if only one of these faculties is missing.

Mind

A husband desires to impress and love his wife, Anna, for her 30th birthday, but he puts hardly any thought into what she would actually like. Instead, he gets her exactly what he would enjoy: a swamp fishing trip, and he even uses part of their shared savings to buy it. (Anna is not outdoorsy).

The day of Anna’s birthday comes. She is not happy with her swamp gift.

Heart

A very intelligent husband with great resources and skills notices that his wife’s 30th birthday is near. But he has no real desire to think about a plan for her. He is consumed with planning his own swamp fishing trip and is passionate about that. He cannot keep it off his mind.

The day comes, and Anna has to remind him that it is her birthday.

Strength

A husband who genuinely cares about his wife, Anna, plans an elaborate surprise birthday party for her at her favorite Irish pub. But he never calls anyone. He never reserves the rooftop. He never follows through and puts the plan into action.

The day comes, and all he can say is, “Happy birthday,” ashamed of himself.

Soul

An intelligent, capable man of great resources has a heart and desire to love a wife one day. But he never takes the role of husband. He never makes the step of whole life-commitment that becomes a part of his new identity.

Anna’s 30th birthday comes and goes without him, because he never became her husband.

Each of these stories shows the same truth from a different angle:

when even one faculty is missing, love remains incomplete. This is why it is so important to understand each one of the Four Faculties through which Jesus commands us to Love.

CHAPTER 6

Mind *[dianoia]*

*Becoming a lifelong student of God and neighbor,
and loving with knowledge, strategy, and a guarded thought life*



Loving With Our Mind
Everlasting Enrollment
Our Thought Life
Strategy of Love

“The beginning of wisdom is this:
Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have,
get understanding.”

– King Solomon, Proverbs 4:7

Loving with Our Mind

To Love with our mind is to engage our knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in devotion to God and service to others. We begin with this faculty because this study itself requires the mind—calling us to discern what true Love is and what it is not.

Through our thoughts, we strategize Love in action, aligning ourselves with God’s way rather than the patterns of a fallen world. Loving God with our mind means seeking renewal, wisdom, and intentional thoughtfulness in our Love. It also requires vigilance, ensuring our thoughts and discernment reflect Love rather than fear, selfishness, or pride.

Yet, just as Love with the mind requires active engagement, failing to engage the mind invites unseen harm. Negligence, whether through ignorance, apathy, or distraction, creates a vacuum where Love should be. The absence of awareness is not neutral; it is often the silent root of pain, injustice, and missed opportunities to Love.

The world suffers not only from intentional wrongdoing but from the passive failure to think, to see, and to discern. To Love with the mind is both to actively pursue Love with wisdom and strategy, and to recognize that inattention itself carries weight. Every moment of neglect shapes the world just as much as intentional Love does.

True Love requires not only what we do, but also what we refuse to ignore.

Everlasting Enrollment

Becoming a Lifelong Student of Christ and Neighbor

We start the study of these four faculties with the study of MIND, as it allows us to examine each of the others more deeply, to see details we didn’t notice before, and to clarify our identity as disciples.

We are meant to use our minds to study Christ’s ways and to understand them more fully, so that we can develop better strategies for walking in His way of Love.

Since this is the perfect time to put on our full thinking caps, let’s look at a nuance of the word “disciple,” especially in light of the linguistic drift we’ve examined with the word “love” and how its meaning has shifted.

The actual Greek word for disciple—which we aspire to be and are commanded to “make” in the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19–20**)—is worth slowing down to examine

The Greek word for Disciple is *mathētēs*, and if you see the word “math” in there, you are on to something.

The Latin vulgate translated *mathētēs* into Latin as *discipulus* (related to *disciplina*), which is where we get “discipline” in the sense of a field of study.

However, through the centuries, because English ears hear “discipline” inside “disciple,” we’ve subconsciously imported connotations of punishment, self-denial, or pushing through hardship into what it means to be one.

And yes, a disciple of Christ should persevere—but the original Greek word *mathētēs* literally means “learner.”

In the New Testament context, it meant a learner of the Way, just as Jesus was called Teacher. This was not learning from a distance. It was a deep apprenticeship. The word describes a relationship in which one learns the ways of the master in order to follow them.

To be a disciple is not simply to persevere. It is first to learn Christ's ways, to follow them, and to persevere as a student of them for life.

With this deeper understanding of disciple as learner, I challenge you to consciously enroll yourself as a lifelong student of Christ and of neighbor. We are commanded to love God with all our mind, so let us study the Scriptures deeply. Let us study God's ways deeply.

And since we are commanded to Love our neighbor as Christ has Loved us, let us use our reasoning to learn our neighbor.

Let us become students of our Spouse, students of our co-workers, students of our literal neighbor, students of our fellow citizens, and of the laws of our land.

We can even become students of the traffic around us—learning to make space for someone trying to merge—or students of the line at the store. We can even be students of our conversations, noticing who has already had time to share, and who we should make space to hear.

Everywhere we go, let us be students of how to Love in the greatest way, just as Christ Loves.

Know Your Neighbor

Who is my Neighbor? What are they "all about"?

What are they up to lately?

What one thing I could do that would be meaningful for them?

Our Thought Life

Think about your thought life.

"What's on your mind?" is a common way to check in with your neighbor.

If we're going to try to Love God with all of our mind, it's important to also think about what you're thinking about. The fancy word for this, since we're in the mind section, is **meta-cognition**: the practice of observing your own thoughts.

We all have a thought life—thoughts and reasons running through our mind, thoughts that reoccur, thoughts we prize or regret, thoughts scattered or piled, or thoughts that we might not want to acknowledge. They may originate from our past glories or traumas, or be run-throughs of scenarios from our future fears or the desires of our heart.

One way or another, each of us has a thought life, but for those of us who call ourselves Christians, we are to *"take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

If we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all of our mind, we should be dedicating that thought life to God and to our neighbor. That's why verses such as Philippians 4:8 found on the next page are so powerful—they lead us explicitly into where to place our thought life.

Let's engage in a little Scriptural meta-cognition right now! Take a deep cleansing breath....

What is on your mind?

In your life right now, what is true, what is noble, what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, what is admirable? Is anything excellent or praiseworthy around you?

Thinking Deeper: Scriptures On Our Thought Life

“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.”

– Romans 12:2

“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.”

– Philippians 4:8

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

– Colossians 3:2

“Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming.”

– 1 Peter 1:13

“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.”

– 2 Corinthians 10:5

Strategy of Love

Moving beyond the first step of becoming students of God, our neighbors, the Scriptures, and the world around us, we seek to understand what our spouse, children, family, and neighbors truly value—their love languages, hopes, dreams, and fears. As we continue to gather insights about them and ourselves, it’s time for a strategy.

The grandest strategy of all: the strategy of Love.

This is the master plan that should be occupying our minds. It might even seem a little comedic to think of constantly scouring our environment and studying those around us to create a master plan for how to Love in the greatest way, in all ways... but this is exactly what Christ commands us to do.

“And this is my prayer: that your Love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best...”

(Philippians 1:9–10)

This is what God did. And this is often where friction arises, when we encounter someone who is not paying attention or who has no intent to form a plan for love.

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward Love and good deeds.”

(Hebrews 10:24)

As Christians, we are called to Love with all our mind. So I challenge you: what is your current master plan for Love? For some, this may be an empty space waiting to be filled. For others, there may already be a list in place. And still others may realize that, though they haven’t consciously planned, they have been informally doing this all along. For you, the next step may simply be to become more intentional and strategic.

What is your master plan for your path to Love God and Love your neighbor? And along the way, how will you steward yourself? How do you wish to Love yourself in a healthy, Christlike way?

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but wisdom that leads to love in action.

1. Loving God (Upward Focus)

Study: What are you currently learning about God's character, His Kingdom, or His instructions for us?

Strategy: Knowing that Agape often means actively keeping His commands, what is your specific strategy to translate what you are learning into an active expression of Love this week?

2. Loving Neighbor (Outward Focus)

Study: Who has the Lord placed on your mind to understand more deeply right now? What are you actively learning about their needs, burdens, or Love languages?

Strategy: Keeping the true definition of Agape fresh in your mind—to value and work toward the good of another—what is your actionable plan to Love them exactly where they are?

3. Loving Self (Inward Stewardship)

Study: Turn that curiosity inward. What are you currently learning about yourself, Love languages, hopes, passions, limits, or health?

Strategy: True self-Love is founded on proper stewardship of the life God gave you so that you can Love Him and others better. What is your strategy to protect and renew your mind this week?

CHAPTER 7

Heart *[kardia]*

*Diagnosing the heart's sickness and
receiving the new heart God promised*



Heart Disease

Heart Surgery

One New Heart

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

– King Solomon, Proverbs 4:23

What does it mean to Love God and neighbor with our heart (*Kardia*)?

In Hebrew thought, the heart (*levav*) held everything inward—emotion, will, desire, and even what we now call the mind. As we saw in Chapter 1, when the Shema is rendered through the Greek Gospel accounts, heart and mind are distinguished as *kardia* and *dianoia*. We addressed thoughts and reasoning in the previous chapter. Here, our focus narrows to what makes the heart distinctly the heart—three deep currents moving beneath everything we say and do.

Our intent

What we have resolved, what we have set our will toward
(Daniel 1:8; 2 Corinthians 9:7)

Our emotion

What we hope for and what we fear
(Psalm 112:7; Proverbs 13:12; John 14:1)

Our desire

What we hunger for, what we are drawn toward, both for good and for vice
(Matthew 15:19, Psalm 37:4)

Jesus emphasizes this when He says,
“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)

Whatever the heart is filled with—whatever we intend, whatever we hope or fear, and whatever we hunger for—eventually comes out of us. Our words and actions become visible signs of an invisible state.

The Bible calls us to a circumcised heart that is softened, surrendered, and devoted to God (Romans 2:29).

David was called a man after God’s own heart because of his deep longing for the Lord. In Psalm 51, he prayed, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

This is what God desires. Not outward obedience alone, but a heart whose intents are His, whose emotions are anchored in Him, and whose desires hunger and thirst for righteousness—a heart aligned with God’s heart from the inside out.

Heart Disease

So why does the heart get such a bad rap in Scripture? Deceitful, above all things? And how do we reconcile this with the wisest king of Israel writing, just a few books earlier, *“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it”* (Proverbs 4:23)?

At first glance these two statements seem to pull in opposite directions. One warns that the heart cannot be trusted. The other urges us to guard it above all else.

The truth is, both are right. The heart is the wellspring of life—and it is sick. Left unchecked, it can be our greatest saboteur. Guarding the heart means protecting its life-giving purpose from the sickness and self-deceit that can twist it from the inside out.

Richard Feynman once said, *“The first principle is that you must not fool yourself—and you are the easiest person to fool.”* This is a modern echo of Jeremiah’s warning. The heart is the seat of our intents, our emotions, and our desires. It can deceive us far more easily than anyone else can, and when others do deceive us, it is often because some part of our own heart left the door open.

When the heart has a poor or crooked intent, as we all do at times because of our sinful nature, it can enlist the mind to justify its desires:

“This will make me happy,”
“This is not really that wrong,”
“I deserve this,”
... or any other rationale that suits its goal.

The mind may build the argument, but the heart has already chosen the path of its desire.

We rarely have to talk ourselves into doing what is truly good. More often, we have to overcome our resistance to it. The sick heart desires its own way,

and then looks for reasons to defend that desire. That is why Proverbs urges us to guard it—not only from outside influence, but from its own capacity to mislead. Everything we do flows from the heart, for better or for worse. If the heart is corrupted, it will use the mind to rationalize whatever it wants.

We have all seen this in others and in ourselves, looking back later and asking, “*What was I thinking?*”

We saw at the opening of this chapter that Jesus said, “*out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*” In a heart aligned with God, that abundance flows outward in righteousness and Love. In a heart that is sick, what spills out is whatever the sickness has been quietly filling. Jesus had words for this too, spoken directly to those who only polished their outward appearance:

“You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. First clean the inside of the cup, and then the outside also will be clean.”
— **Matthew 23:25–26**

Everything we pursue with our mind and our strength is tinted by the condition of the heart underneath.

So is the heart all bad? No. We were made in the image of God. But every one of us, without exception, has a sick heart. Your sickness would be pride if you thought you were the exception.

Guarding the heart begins with recognizing where it is vulnerable to deceit, and then inviting God to renew it.

The same heart that can deceive us can, through Christ, become the source of abundant life, flowing with godliness, righteousness, and Love.

Take a moment before moving on. Don’t try to fix anything. Don’t try to explain anything away. Just look honestly at your own heart—your intentions, your hopes and fears, your desires. Humbly ask the Spirit of God to show you the area of your heart that needs restoration.

Heart Surgery

“Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.”

— **Deuteronomy 10:16**

“This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: ‘*Break up your unplowed ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts.*’”

— **Jeremiah 4:3-4**

Circumcision is a strong and visceral analogy for removing the pieces of our heart that hold us back—those areas of vice within each of us. In ancient Jewish culture, circumcision was a radical and deeply symbolic act, by cutting away flesh close to what was most protected and dedicating this part of the body to the Lord.

This analogy to the heart—removing the “foreskin” of our hearts—is equally arresting. Throughout Scripture, the Lord calls His people to circumcise their hearts and to separate themselves from the evil they continue to fall into. In the New Testament, this image continues:

“A person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code” (Romans 2:28–29).

In the previous section, we identified the “heart disease” that afflicts us all through sin. Whether greed, lust, envy, or another vice, these forces fight for control over the seat of our intentions, hopes, and fears. To live with a heart that God desires—a heart that truly loves His people—we must, by the Spirit, cut away the hardened, sinful parts that lead to spiritual death.

Like the sharp, deliberate cut of circumcision, God’s call is to reflect, repent, and remove the areas of vice that, through deceit, distraction, and disobedience, pull us away from the life He intends.

But here is the hardest part of this surgery, and yet the most freeing:
We cannot perform it on ourselves. It is the Lord we present ourself to for surgery.

“When you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and with all your soul... the LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

– Deuteronomy 30:2, 6

Circumcision of the heart begins when we stop defending the diseased places within us and invite the Lord, through His Spirit, to remove what is hardened and make our hearts pure again.

Is there a part of your heart that you need to surrender to God?

Now we leave space for reflection.

On the next page is a prayer of David, a man called after God’s own heart, who had nevertheless committed adultery and arranged a murder to cover it up. When the prophet Nathan confronted him, David did not minimize, justify, or hide. He surrendered. The psalm that followed is one of the most honest prayers ever recorded—a man asking God to do what he could not do for himself.

As you read the Scripture, bring your own heart and join David in this prayer.

**For the director of music. A psalm of David.
When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.**

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing Love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

– Psalm 51:1–10

One New Heart

“I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone... that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

— Ezekiel 11:19–20

This is the heart God promised. And for everyone who is in Christ, it is already at work. As Romans 5:5 declares, *“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

Such a heart is not left blank. Paul tells the Corinthians they are a letter from Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

On this renewed heart, Christ may dwell through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in Love... (Ephesians 3:17). And the Lord Himself directs your hearts to the Love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

This is the heart of the new creation:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

And from this new heart, fruit follows.

Peter writes, *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere Love for each other, Love one another deeply, from the heart”* (1 Peter 1:22).

The Spirit makes that Love visible: *“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”* (Galatians 5:22–23).

It is with this heart in view that Paul kneels and prays for the Church, and for you:

“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in Love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the Love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

— Ephesians 3:14–19

And so, along with Paul and all who belong to Christ, I join in this blessing over you:

That you would fully receive this new heart, given by God and filled with His Spirit.

That your life would overflow with His Love and bear its good fruit.

Selah.

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but a heart fully surrendered to God.

1. Loving God (Upward Focus)

Sometimes, being commanded to “Love God with all your heart” makes us immediately feel inadequate because we know our desires are split. But even the desire to desire Him more is both a humble and beautiful place to start.

Have you brought your whole, unfiltered heart to God recently, even the parts that feel broken or disconnected?

If not, what’s that next step?

2. Loving Neighbor (Outward Focus)

It is incredibly easy to let our relationships become utilitarian—interacting with people based on what we need from them, how they inconvenience us, or what role they play in our day. But Loving neighbors from the heart means valuing them simply because they are children of God. Look at the people you interact with daily. Is there anyone you have been treating transactionally rather than genuinely?

If so, Who can you pray for right now, asking the Lord to give you His heart and compassion for them?

3. Loving Self (Inward Stewardship)

Loving yourself in a biblical sense means properly stewarding the life and the faculties God gave you. In the context of the heart, true self-love means refusing to settle for “heart disease” when the Great Physician has offered you a new heart. What is your experience with inviting the Lord to put a “new heart” within you? What intentions, hopes, or desires might He be forming in you?

How do you personally guard the wellspring of life that is your heart (Proverbs 4:23)?

CHAPTER 8

Strength *[ischys]*

Time, talents treasures, and the vessel that carries them



Time to Love
Talented Love
True Treasures

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

— 1 Timothy 6:18-19

What does it mean to Love God and neighbor with all our strength?

In the Hebrew Shema, the phrase “with all your might” (*me’od*) carries a sense of “muchness”—totality and intensity, with nothing held back. The Greek of the Gospels uses *ischys*, which points more explicitly to physical strength and capacity. Held together, they call us to bring everything we are and resources we have into the act of Love.

One way the Church has historically held this together is through the stewardship model of **Time, Talent, and Treasure**—widely used across Anglican, Roman Catholic, and many evangelical traditions. It gives us a simple way to consider how our strength can be fully devoted to God:

Our Time

The hours and days we're given

Our Talents

The abilities and skills we develop

Our Treasures

The resources and material blessings we hold

Underneath all three sits the body itself—the literal *ischys*, the vessel through which time is spent, talents are deployed, and treasures are carried. We'll return to its stewardship before this chapter closes.

I want to affirm that Loving out of our strength is not the source of our salvation, but Scripturally the natural actions of a citizen of God's Kingdom. As we are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), the very next verse tells us we are explicitly created for good works God prepared in advance for us to walk in (**Ephesians 2:10**). Our time, our talents, and our treasures are all meant to be directed toward Love.

What follows is an invitation to a personal inventory—not a checklist. We'll walk through how your time is currently spent, what gifts God has woven into you, where your treasure quietly sits, and how the body that carries it all is being stewarded. Some of what you find will already be flowing in love, and that is worth celebrating. Some may be waiting to be offered for the first time—and that is the joy of this chapter.

Loving God with all your strength means bringing all you have for His purposes, and letting love take its visible form in what you actually do.

Time to Love

What is it to Love God and neighbor with your time?

The Lord gave us our breath and numbered our days. It is by Him that we have life, and our greatest joy will only be realized in His name. The beauty is that He also wishes us to enjoy our days—and to enjoy them with our neighbor through loving them well. As James 4:13–15 reminds us, we only know that we have today. Tomorrow is not promised.

I want to look at two ways we can devote the precious time God has given us.

Intentional Commitment

Yes, we must work and fulfill responsibilities. That is part of the nature of life. But are our priorities in order?

Time is not found; it is made. Have we made room for the primaries—to gather with our church family, to live and worship together as we're called? If we are disciples—devoted learners—are we making time to learn more about God and our neighbor? Are we setting aside Loving time for family, and carving out time for outreach?

Scripture calls us to care for orphans and widows (**James 1:27**) and the least of these (**Matthew 25:31–46**). There may be seasons when we are the ones receiving care, but as long as it is within our means, we should look for ways to Love those around us.

The question is not whether Love belongs on your schedule; it is where Love shows up. Where are you volunteering, building relationships, and stewarding your walk with God?

Space for the Spirit

Margin is Love kept available.

Some of the most profound assignments happen off the calendar.

On the road, the Samaritan saw a man in need, stopped, bandaged him, carried him to safety, and even arranged to return (**Luke 10:33–35**). Others passed by. Perhaps they had religious, practical, or personal reasons. The text does not tell us. But the Samaritan had enough compassion, and enough availability, to stop.

It's so easy to surrender so much of our margin that we no longer have time to spare when the Lord calls. That's why it's important to keep our ears open for divine appointments, and to pray for the eyes to see them. When it is within our power to do good, we should not delay (**Proverbs 3:27–28**).

We all will endure difficult seasons, but we should intentionally seek to steward our strength and our schedule so that we have a budget of time the Spirit can spend as He leads.

Loving God with your time means both commitment and openness—putting Him on your calendar, and keeping enough margin for His beautiful interruptions.

In both, our hours become an offering of Love.

The Calendar Call - Time to Love Map

Talented Love

What has God placed in your hands?

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, each according to his ability.”

— Matthew 25:14-15

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve...”

— Romans 12:6-8

We are God’s handiwork. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The word workmanship is ποιηματα (poiēma)—the root of our English word, poem. God is writing something through your life. What kind of poem is God writing through you?

Each of us carries a beautifully unique set of talents: serving, teaching, encouragement, physical strength in a moment of need, artistry, careful craftsmanship, deep empathy, wise administration, and more.

Scripture names many gifts, but it never gives a closed catalog. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 offer different examples to show how the Spirit supplies diverse capacities for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). So we will not squeeze God’s work into a checklist. Whatever He entrusts to you, offer it to build others up and bear fruit that remains (John 15:16; 1 Peter 4:10–11; Ephesians 4:12–13).

In both the parable of the minas and talents (talents, Matthew 25; minas, Luke 19)—talents originally referred to a denomination of money, not a skill—a master gives his servants different amounts of capital and asks them to invest it. Two of them invest, but one of them sadly buries his portion. Though the story uses money, the principle reaches much wider. The Master expects us to invest what He entrusts—our abilities, opportunities, relationships, and capital—so it grows for His purposes. Burying what we have is not faithfulness. Developing and deploying it in Love is.

Now imagine the beauty of what the world would look like if we each took that to heart and did it. To take that first step, we must pause and honestly consider what God has placed in our hands and how we might grow it.

On the next pages you’ll find a harmonized list of the gifts and capacities Scripture names. It is not exhaustive, but is enough to begin an honest conversation with yourself. As you read, notice which ones quicken something in you. Which have others affirmed in you? Which have you already invested and grown? Which are sitting quietly in the ground, waiting to be put to work?

Biblical Talents & Gifts

HARMONIZED / NON-EXHAUSTIVE

This list harmonizes gifts, roles, and service capacities named in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and related Scriptures. It is illustrative, not exhaustive. God equips His people in diverse ways for the common good.

GIFTS & TALENTS	NOTES
☐ Exhortation / Encouragement <i>Rom 12:8</i>	
☐ Teaching <i>Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11</i>	
☐ Word of Wisdom <i>1 Cor 12:8</i>	
☐ Word of Knowledge <i>1 Cor 12:8</i>	
☐ Various Tongues / Interpretation <i>1 Cor 12:10; 12:28</i>	
☐ Mercy (cheerfully) <i>Rom 12:8</i>	
☐ Prophecy <i>Rom 12:6; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:10</i>	
☐ Discernment of Spirits <i>1 Cor 12:10</i>	
☐ Working of Miracles <i>1 Cor 12:10; 12:28</i>	
☐ Administration / Governance <i>1 Cor 12:28</i>	

TALENTED LOVE

What has God placed in your hands?

As you read, mark the areas where you feel most strongly gifted. Then circle and write about your top 3-5.

GIFTS & TALENTS	NOTES
☐ Hospitality <i>Rom 12:13; 1 Pet 4:9</i>	
☐ Pastor / Shepherd <i>Eph 4:11</i>	
☐ Leadership (with zeal) <i>Rom 12:8</i>	
☐ Evangelist <i>Eph 4:11</i>	
☐ Faith <i>1 Cor 12:9</i>	
☐ Gifts of Healing <i>1 Cor 12:9; 12:28</i>	
☐ Music & Worship Arts <i>1 Chr 25:1-7; 2 Chr 29:25</i>	
☐ Craftsmanship / Artistic Design <i>Ex 31:1-6; 35:30-35</i>	
☐ Generosity / Contribution <i>Rom 12:8</i>	
☐ Service / Helps <i>Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28</i>	

"Serve" is a large and open category.

In which of God's various gifts are you able to serve your Lord and neighbor?

True Treasures

“Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

– Luke 12:33-34

What is a true treasure, and are possessions truly ours if we’ve put our identity in Christ?

In the Old Testament, the Lord asked Israel to honor Him with the firstfruits and a tenth of all they had. *“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops”* (Proverbs 3:9; see also Leviticus 27:30). The tithe was a floor; a minimum portion set apart to acknowledge that everything came from Him.

In the New Testament, the floor disappears; not because the standard lowers, but because it is raised to a whole new posture of the heart. The early Church, with renewed hearts, held nothing back: *“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had... and there were no needy persons among them”* (Acts 4:32–34).

What had once been measured as a tithe became a total disposition. Worldly assets—once measured in barns and vats—were now seen as tools for the Kingdom; vulnerable to rust and loss in this world, but eternally useful when invested in the next.

Jesus himself names the hinge: *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (Luke 12:34).

This is why the New Testament is not about a smaller percentage, although a ten percent tithe is an honorable, wise, and foundational pledge. The expansion is about a different heart. It is the Spirit who rules now—not a fixed ten percent—and the Spirit asks us to hold our assets with an open hand, cheerfully prepared to offer them for the Kingdom, and to view them as tools to expand His work.

Some have answered this call with a complete vow of poverty—a historic and beautiful path for those genuinely called, but never the universal command. The broader call is to steward what we have and grow it, so that our assets become a blessing to all nations.

And remember, treasures are not only money. The Lord makes use of spare rooms, tools, vehicles, networks, expertise, and every other Kingdom-shaped asset we have been given. Wherever your treasure quietly sits, that is where your heart is sitting too.

The earth is the Lord’s (Psalm 24:1). We steward what already belongs to Him.

Open-Handed Treasure Audit

Talking about what we own is sensitive. Let’s address the elephant in the room—looking at your assets in a church or group setting can instantly make you want to put your walls up.

This is not a financial audit. You don’t have to write down a single number, and you can keep this entirely as a private conversation between you and God. We are not looking for a balance sheet; we are looking for the condition of your heart.

This is a breathing exercise though... you might need a few cleansing breaths before you begin.

Open-Handed Treasure

Money / Income

Savings & Investments

Home / Property

Vehicles

Platform / Influence

Tools & Equipment

Other:

Spare Room / Hospitality

Skills & Expertise

Time

Network & Connections

Knowledge & Wisdom

Reputation / Standing

Other:



As you read through the treasures listed to the left, pay attention to your physical and emotional reactions as you approach each area of treasure.

Ask yourself:

Am I Open?

I view this as the Lord's. I am willing and ready to use it for love.

Am I Clenching?

I am holding this tight. The thought of losing it or sharing it brings up fear or pride.

Hidden Gem?

I completely forgot I had this to offer.

The Monkey and the Jar

There is an old story about how to catch a monkey: place a piece of fruit inside a narrow jar. The fruit fits in the jar. The monkey's open hand fits in the jar. But the monkey's fist, closed around the fruit, does not.

To pull his hand free, the monkey only has to open it—to let the fruit go. But he will not. So he stays trapped by his own grip, on a thing he was never meant to keep.

If you find yourself unable to open your hand from around something, it is rarely because God will take it from you. He will not take away what you need to live.

The clench itself is the cage. Open the hand, and see what He does.

Love Stronger

Physical Stewardship of the Vessel

The Greek word for strength, *ischys*, carries a very physical sense: strength, might, force, and capacity. This matters because our Love is not lived in theory. We Love through bodies.

Your physical body is the vessel through which you spend your time, deploy your talents, and steward your treasures. When the body suffers, our capacity can be affected. And when the body is neglected unnecessarily, our ability to serve may be diminished.

As a culture, we easily accept basic hygiene. Everyone agrees that you should brush your teeth every day to prevent decay. It would seem nonsensical to refuse to brush your teeth, while constantly asking the church to pray for your cavities. Yet, when it comes to the rest of our physical health—what we eat, how we move, and how we build our stamina—we often treat it as an optional vanity project rather than a spiritual responsibility.

Scripture reminds us:

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?”

— **1 Corinthians 6:19**

In context, Paul is speaking about sexual holiness, but the deeper principle still stands: the body is not meaningless. It belongs to God.

I want to address this gently, because the Church often does not. This reflection is not about fitness culture, body image, vanity, comparison, or becoming a “fitness person.” It is not a call to a particular shape or size. Every body has a different story: disability, chronic illness, injury, age, trauma, pain, genetics, and seasons of weakness can all limit what a person is able to do. Stewardship looks different in a healthy body than it does in a body that struggles.

The widow gave two coins; the Lord saw her faithfulness, not the amount. The question is not what someone else would do with your body. The question is what faithfulness looks like with the body God has entrusted to you.

Every single one of us is on an aging trajectory, and many face unavoidable limitations completely outside of their control. The Church is built to bear those burdens together in Love. But there is a profound difference between the inevitable decline of an earthly tent and the premature collapse of a vessel that was simply neglected.

The point is much simpler, and much more elementary, than the Church often admits: the body God gave you is meant to be cared for, basically and faithfully, the same way you brush your teeth.

Biblical physical stewardship is not about becoming a fitness model. It is about maintaining the capability to Love. It is about having the stamina to play with your children, the energy to serve your community on a Saturday morning, and the literal strength to help carry a neighbor’s load.

Take a moment to look at your physical health. Are your hands open to giving your body to God through daily stewardship?

Whether it means starting a daily walk, joining a fitness group with friends, getting better sleep, or simply changing what you put on your plate, how can you steward your vessel today so that you can Love stronger tomorrow?

Reflection & Discussion

Take some time to process these ideas. Whether individually or in discussion with others, the goal is not just knowledge, but translating your strength into love in action.

1. Loving God (Upward Focus: Trust and Open Hands)

To love God with our strength requires trusting Him enough to open our hands. God is a good Father who desires to bring us into His family and His mission, which means we can trust Him with our time, our talents, and our treasures. Think back to the “Open-Handed Treasure” exercise. Which specific area of your life—your schedule, a specific ability, or a financial asset—do you find the hardest to hold with open hands?

What underlying fear is causing that grip, and how does trusting God’s character change that?

What helps you relax your grip?

2. Loving Neighbor (Outward Focus: Deploying Your Strength)

Loving God inevitably overflows into loving our neighbor. The Time, Talents, and Treasures you mapped out in this chapter were given to you not just for your own comfort, but to be deployed for the good of others. Look at the unique gifts and the schedule you mapped out earlier. Where do you currently see a practical need in your community, your church, or your own household that your specific combination of time and talent could meet this week?

3. Loving Self (Inward Stewardship: Building a Stronger Engine)

True self-love is responsible stewardship. You cannot pour out what you do not have. Just like a machine requires maintenance to run effectively, your body and mind require disciplined stewardship so you don’t burn out or become a premature burden to those around you. What is one practical step you can take this week to build a “stronger engine”? Whether it is adjusting your physical health routine, carving out better rest, or setting a healthy boundary on your time, how can you better steward your vessel so you have the capacity to love stronger?

CHAPTER 9

Soul [psychē]

The whole life given, the great exchange, the call answered



Soul Semantics

The Great Exchange

Salvation of Our Souls

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul (*psychē*)?”

– Jesus Christ, Mark 8:36

To Love God with all your soul is to dedicate the whole of your life and identity to Him.

The Hebrew word for soul (*nephesh*) refers to our whole being—our life, breath, and essence. The Greek word *psychē* carries a similar cluster of meaning, as our inner self, our true nature, and the very life we live before God. In Scripture, “soul” and “life” are most often the same word—*psychē*—and we will see Jesus use that single word for both throughout this chapter.

Loving God with our soul is not simply about securing our eternal state, but about dedicating this one life we have to Him in a way that leaves an eternal impact. This is the opportunity we have on Earth, in this moment, to align our life with God’s purpose and participate in the story of redemption that spans generations.

Loving God with our soul means choosing total devotion—not just an emotional response or intellectual understanding, but a life lived in full surrender to Christ.

Jesus makes it clear:

“Whoever wants to save their life [psyche] will lose it, but whoever loses their life [psyche] for me will find it.”

— Matthew 16:25

Our *psychē*, our very life, is given meaning through surrender. This is more than intellectual belief. It is a commitment of identity, purpose, and action.

To Love God with our soul is to give Him everything, not withholding any part of who we are. It is to recognize that this life is our one chance to glorify Him, that we are part of His eternal story, and that our soul finds its fulfillment in Him alone.

Soul Semantics

What does it mean to Love the Lord God with all your soul? What is a soul?

Similar to the word “love,” soul is a fuzzy word in contemporary Western culture. We carry many narratives and biases from the outset. We picture the soul as a disembodied spirit—an ethereal something that lives inside us and floats away when we die. We’ve seen stories where characters sell their soul and try to get it back. And, similar to Love, it can feel rude for anyone to challenge someone else’s definition of soul.

Just as we did with Love in Chapter 3, we have three options:

- 1. Let soul mean whatever each person wants it to mean.**
- 2. Reverse-engineer the definition from our tradition or prior beliefs.**
- 3. Look at the actual word in context and let Scripture define it, then work from there.**

We are going to take the same scriptural path. Many people hold ideas about the soul very close to the heart, but here we will take the scriptural path: looking at the word in context and letting Scripture teach us what is meant by “soul.”

What the Scriptures Actually Say

The word recorded in the Great Commandment passages is *psychē*, which corresponds closely to the Hebrew *nephesh*. In Scripture these terms most often mean the living person—the whole self. Consider how broadly *psychē* is used:

“Do not be anxious about your life [psychē]” (Matthew 6:25)—the same word, now translated as the life you eat and clothe.

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), means every person.

“The good shepherd lays down his life [psychē] for the sheep” (John 10:11), the life that can be risked or laid down.

“Men who risked their lives [psychas]” (Acts 15:26), the everyday life that can be spent.

The *“Seventy souls [nephesh]” (Exodus 1:5)* who came to Egypt means seventy persons.

“This night your life [psychē] is required of you” (Luke 12:20), the same word, naming our accountability before God.

Taken together, the word soul (*psyche*) that Jesus uses in His command encompasses the whole self and life you steward before God, which will have eternal consequences—not simply a detachable ghost.

What About After This Life?

A fair question follows: if soul means your whole lived life, what happens to it after death? Doesn't Scripture also speak of the soul continuing beyond the grave?

Yes, and there is no contradiction. Scripture is consistent that our identity, our *psychē*, does continue beyond this earthly life. But notice where Scripture places its emphasis. The decisions that shape what happens to your soul beyond death are made now, in the life you are living today.

“You fool,” the rich man hears in Luke 12, *“this night your life (psychē) is required of you.”* His mistake wasn't theological—it was practical. He spent his lived life storing up for himself rather than becoming rich toward God. When his soul was called for, the account had already been written by the days he had spent.

So when Jesus commands us to Love God with all our soul, He is not pointing us toward some ethereal afterlife transaction. He is pointing us toward the whole life we are living right now, in every breath, every choice, and every allegiance. The eternal path of the soul is revealed in how this life is entrusted, spent, and surrendered before God.

Which brings the question to its sharpest point:

Where is my life oriented today?

Toward the Kingdom, or toward mammon? (**Matthew 6:24**)

That is the question the rest of this chapter is going to walk us into.

A Working Definition

Soul (*nephesh* / *psychē*) — your whole lived life before God; your core identity. It holds your heart's choices, and your mind and strength serve it. This is the life that can be devoted to God or to the world, and it stands before God with eternal consequence.

Go Deeper: *Psychē* and *Nephesh* in Scripture

Psyche/Nephesh

If this working definition of the soul feels different from how you've heard the word used before, you're not alone—and you don't have to take my word for it. Below are passages where you can see *psychē* and *nephesh* doing their actual work in Scripture. Read each in its full chapter context, and let the word reveal itself.

HEBREW: *nephesh*

Genesis 2:4-25 — God breathes into Adam and he becomes a living *nephesh* (v. 7). The very first appearance of “soul” in Scripture is not a ghost arriving in a body; it is a whole living person coming alive before God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 — The Shema: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your *nephesh*, and with all your might.” The same word Jesus quotes when He gives the Great Command.

GREEK: *psychē* (ψυχή)

Matthew 16:21-28 — Jesus on losing your *psychē* to find it, set in the full context of His coming cross.

Luke 12:13-34 — The rich fool whose *psychē* is required of him, anxiety about *psychē*, and where treasure goes.

1 Peter 1:3-9 — The salvation of your *psychai* (souls), framed as the goal of faith.

Read the chapter, not just the line. Each verse opens up when you see what surrounds it.

The Great Exchange Losing Your Life to Save It

Now we come to the heart of what Loving God with our soul actually requires. Scripture is clear—our *psychē* can be given. The only question is to whom.

From a scriptural perspective, the soul is not something we passively hold, but it is something we actively spend. We are spending it every day, in every choice, on something. And paradoxically, the only way to truly find your life is to lose it on purpose—deliberately handed over to the One who gave it to you in the first place.

“Whoever wants to save their life [psychē] will lose it, but whoever loses their life [psychē] for me will find it.”

— Matthew 16:25

That is the exchange Christ invites us into. We die to ourselves—our earthly life, our self-rule—and give that life to Christ so that He might live in us. We lose to find.

But before we walk all the way into that exchange, we have to address a question that lives in the cultural subconscious. A question almost every reader has heard, joked about, or quietly wondered about themselves.

Can You Sell Your Soul?

The trope is everywhere. Movies, song lyrics, comedy skits, late-night dares, cultural hot takes on which celebrities sold their soul for fame. The idea that you could sign away your soul to the devil in some binding contract, and then spend the rest of your life trying to get it back, is woven so deeply into our cultural imagination that most people, believers and non-believers alike, don't know how to answer the question scripturally.

So Scripturally, can you actually sell your soul?

Yes, you can rent your soul out.

Scripture is unflinching about this. You can spend your *psychē*—your whole lived life—serving Mammon, serving the world, serving whatever spirit you let direct your steps.

Jesus puts it plainly: *“No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24).*

Paul writes about Demas, who *“loved this world,”* and walked away **(2 Timothy 4:10)**. The rich fool in Luke 12 spends his *psychē* hoarding for himself, only to meet the end of his account in a single night. Scripture takes seriously the possibility that we will squander the life God gave even using it against Him.

No, you cannot be bound by a contract you can’t escape.

This is where the cultural trope diverges from Biblical reality. Scripture speaks of forfeiting and exchanging the soul **(Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:37)**, but never of demons holding signed contracts. The idea that you have already gone too far, that you have already signed something irrevocable, that there is no path back... that is not Scripture. That is the lie of the devil himself.

Look at the parable of the prodigal son **(Luke 15:11–24)**. The son takes his inheritance, walks into the far country, and squanders it all on wild living. By any worldly measure, he has sold himself out. And yet when he returns home broke and ashamed, the father—who was filled with compassion—runs to meet him.

That is the gospel’s word against the devil’s trope. Every breath you have is another chance to come home. Every step you take is another opportunity to turn. There is no contract signed that grace cannot cover.

If anyone reading this has been quietly believing they’ve gone too far—that a choice, season, addiction, or betrayal has put them beyond God’s reach—let me say it plainly: that belief is the lie. The Father is on the road. The robe and the ring are waiting.

Salvation of our Souls

“From that time on, Jesus began to preach:
‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has
come near.’”

– Matthew 4:17

Jesus Christ explicitly invites us into His Kingdom to become citizens of His reign, to become one with Him and the Father as they are one. This is not a passive ticket to a future place; it is an active citizenship in a present reign. He calls us not only to receive His salvation but to step into His Kingdom and follow His Way.

There is no greater way than the Way of Love our King commands us to walk in.

“For God so Loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ wants you to share in the Love that God is, and to bring that Love on earth as it is in heaven. He has opened this invitation at the cost of His own life sacrificed upon a cross.

And now He waits for our response.

The Call to Repent

The King's call is for a complete turning—Mind, Heart, Strength, and Soul—away from the false thrones of this world and toward His Kingdom.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

– Mark 1:15

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

– Luke 13:3

“Truly I tell you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

– Matthew 18:3

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

– Matthew 16:24

Repentance is not merely saying “sorry.” It is turning. It is reorienting the whole self—mind, heart, strength, and soul—away from the path we were walking and toward the King. It is denying ourselves and taking up our cross, as He explicitly says, because the path He invites us into is the same path He walked: laying down our life to find it.

This is not a casual recommendation tucked among many. It is the King's first sermon and His clearest demand.

There is no Kingdom without turning toward the King.

The Call to Be Baptized

The same King who calls us to repent also explicitly calls us to be baptized. These are not the words of pastors or denominations—they are His own:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

– Matthew 28:19–20, the final words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel

Notice the loop in that final command. He sends us to baptize disciples and teach them to obey all His commands, which sends every reader of this book straight back to His first and greatest command.

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment are bound to each other.

Jesus did not only command baptism. He Himself was baptized. When John the Baptist hesitated, saying, “*I need to be baptized by you*,” Jesus answered, “*Let it be so now; it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matthew 3:14–15). If Christ Himself walked into the waters to fulfill all righteousness, He has set the pattern for everyone who would follow Him.

And to Nicodemus, He said it directly: “*Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.*”

– John 3:5

His own example. His own teaching. His own final command. Baptism is not optional ceremony. It is what the King has explicitly asked of His citizens.

**A Common Question:
“What If I don't get Baptized?”**

A fair question follows: Will I still be saved if I die before I can be baptized? We look to the thief on the cross. With nothing left to give and no waters to enter, he simply turned toward Christ in his last moments and said, “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*” And Jesus answered him: “*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise*” (Luke 23:43).

God will make a way for those who follow Him. Do not fear your circumstances; fear the Lord and have faith in Him. If you die at an inopportune time, and that was within the Lord's will, trust Him. He will make a way. Love never fails.

Yet I remember, after I had given my life to Christ in word and deed, I still held back from being baptized with water. I wondered: *Do I actually need to? Why would my loving God set harsh consequences if I do not take part in a simple ceremony of water? Did not the thief on the cross go to eternity with God? Why is this necessary?*

This sat with me until the Spirit convicted me with power one night. I saw clearly: God can make a way, but I was not loving God. He made a way, and He asked me to be baptized. I had every ability to be baptized. I hesitated because I was questioning why God's way was The Way, and whether there might be problems in it, instead of having faith that Jesus Christ would carry me through any problems we had.

There is nothing too great for us if we are following Him. So I chose to follow His path and be baptized as He clearly instructed. The next night I found myself in a prayer room, and then on a trip to a lake, where I was baptized, dedicating my soul to the Lord in ceremony.

Baptism is like a funeral, a birthday, and a wedding all at once.

We die to ourselves (**Romans 6:3-4**). We step into new life (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). And we are united with the other half of our truest Agape Love (**Revelation 19:7-9**).

This occasion is a ceremony of great rejoicing in the Kingdom of Heaven. When we finally let go of our lives, we find the one we were always meant to live.

The Apostle Paul summarized the devoted soul perfectly when he wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who Loved me and gave himself for me"* (**Galatians 2:20**).

Where is your soul today?

We have walked through the faculties of the Mind, the Heart, the Strength, and the Soul. But knowledge is not a covenant. Loving God with all your soul means stepping over the line. It means giving Him your identity.

Take a moment to locate where you are in this journey today:

Confession

Have you confessed Jesus Christ to be your Lord and believed in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead (**Romans 10:9**)? There is space here and now to follow the calling the Lord has for you—to repent and give your whole life to Him.

Baptism

Have you confessed Christ with your mind and heart, but held back from the ceremony He requested? I pray you see the path and the beauty of this ceremony He has placed to symbolize entering into a new life in His Kingdom—and that you might connect with your local church to follow in His example.

Rededication

Perhaps you have taken that vow in the past, but lately, you feel divided in your allegiance, and you are trying to serve two masters. There is no shame in the conviction of the Holy Spirit. If your soul feels fractured, today is the day to rededicate your life to your King.

Celebration and Service

If your soul is anchored in Christ and you are walking faithfully in that covenant, rejoice! Your task now is to endure, to grow in the other faculties, and to look for the "neighbor" in your life who needs a guide. Who around you needs encouragement to take their next step of faith?

(Reminder: When your heart is broken, contrite, or simply overflowing with gratitude, the Eucharist is the beautiful way Christ has instructed us to remember Him, as well as receive Him and His new covenant.)

If you are studying by yourself:

If you are reading this alone and feel the Spirit moving you to take one of these next steps, I truly pray that you will reach out to a local congregation. Ask your questions, and allow them to help you take your next steps.

You were never meant to walk this Way alone.

If you are studying with a group:

This is a moment for deep humility and transparency. We are not called to be forceful or pushy, but we are called to patient, kind, and messengers of the Good news. If you are in a position of leadership or service within your group, this is the time to humbly open the floor and ask, *“Is anyone feeling the Spirit prompting them to take a next step today?”*

Create a safe space to pray, answer questions, or help organize a time for baptism.

SELAH

***Selah** – a Hebrew word found in the Psalms, often marking a pause. It invites us to stop, reflect, and let the words sink deep.*



PART THREE

MOVING FORWARD

Moving Forward

To make disciples (*mathētēs*) of Christ
and to teach them all he commanded,

we begin back at what
He commanded First.

We return to the beginning,
but we are not the same.
As learners—disciples—
we now have a clearer lens.

We understand the strategy of the Mind,
the surrender of the Heart,
the open hands of our Strength,
and the total devotion of the Soul.

The Great Commission
and the Great Commandment
are bound to each other.

So moving forward...

We Start Back at the First Step

“Therefore go and make disciples of all
nations, baptizing them in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything
I have commanded you.”

– Jesus Christ

Final Instruction of the risen Christ
according to the Gospel Matthew

MY PLAN TO LOVE GOD

with all my mind, heart, soul, and strength

MY MASTER STRATEGY IS:

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your mind
and with all your strength.*

— Mark 12:30 —

MIND

dianoia
thought
•
understanding
•
study
•
strategy

HEART

kardia
desire
•
intent
•
will
•
affection

SOUL

psychē
life
•
identity
•
devotion
•
whole self

STRENGTH

ischys
capacity
•
action
•
resources
•
endurance

as myself, and as Christ loved us

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

— Mark 12:31

dianoia

thought

understanding

study

strategy

kardia

desire

intent

will

affection

psychē

life

identity

devotion

whole self

ischys

capacity

action

resources

endurance

endurance

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First Edition

THE GREATEST COMMAND

A SCRIPTURE STUDY

on

What Jesus Said Matters Most

and

Why Everything Else Depends on It

