Worldview Devotional for Commissioned Centurions

By T. M. Moore
Worldview Devotional

Introduction

Welcome to a Worldview Devotional focusing on the Great Commandments:

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

- Matthew 22:37-40

A worldview is only as good as its greatest claim, and the greatest claim of the Biblical worldview is that it fosters love for God and others as nothing else can. A worldview is not just a way of thinking – not just an intellectual position to assert and defend. A worldview is a way of life, and the great strength of the Biblical worldview is that it guides us powerfully and joyfully into the life of love.

We are called to grow in our understanding of that way (2 Pt. 3:18), as it is presented in “all the Law and the Prophets” – all of Scripture. The studies in this series are designed to help us reflect on and apply the teaching of Scripture to the life of loving God and others according to the requirements of the Biblical worldview. We will be searching the Scriptures and listening to the counsel of our forebears in the faith as they guide us into a deeper and fuller experience of living the Biblical worldview according to the teaching of the Great Commandments.

We will also be singing praises to the Lord using selections of the psalms from The Ailbe Psalter (if you don’t know the tunes, go to The Cyber Hymnal website and have a listen). These will help us to grow in expressing our love for God, as well as in tuning our hearts to love others.

Once again we encourage you to establish a prayer partner who will hold you up in prayer before the Lord as you work through the assignments that follow, and with whom you will be able to share the exciting experience of growing in love. We trust that you will be challenged to new heights of love for God and others as you study and reflect on the exercises that follow. Pray that the Lord will show you areas in which you need to grow. Ask Him to make you alert to opportunities to improve your love for Him and others. Think about ways you might incorporate what you are learning into your ministry of teaching and discipling others.

I am most grateful to my wife and editor, Susie, for her contribution in helping to prepare these devotionals, and to our National Director, Martha Anderson, for coordinating their distribution. Our prayer is that the Lord Jesus Christ will cause His Spirit to well up within you and flow out through you in rivers of love and mercy as never before (Ezek. 36:26, 27; Rom. 5:5; Jn. 7:37-39).

T. M. Moore
PART 1: LOVING GOD

“You shall love the Lord your God …”
Week 1: Knowing God
Loving God begins in knowing Him. Few in Christian history have expressed love for God more fervently or with such clear exposition as St. Augustine (354-430).

Augustine was the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and one of the most prolific writers and exact theologians of the early Church. His great classic on loving God is The Confessions. For the next five weeks he will be guiding us into our study of God’s Word as we begin to look more carefully at what love for God requires.

“Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is thy power, and thy wisdom is infinite. And man, who being a part of what thou hast created, is desirous to praise thee; this man, bearing about his own mortality with him, carrying about him a testimony of his own sin, (even this testimony, that God resisteth the proud;) yet this man, this part of what thou hast created, is desirous to praise thee; thou so provokest him, that he even delighteth to praise thee. For thou hast created us for thyself, and our heart cannot be quieted until it may find repose in thee. Grant me, Lord, to know and understand what I ought first to do, whether call upon thee, or praise thee? and which ought to be first, to know thee, or to call upon thee? But who can rightly call upon thee, that is yet ignorant of thee? for such an one may instead of thee call upon another. Or art thou rather first called upon, that thou mayest so come to be known? But how then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe without a preacher? And again, they shall praise the Lord that seek after him: for, they that seek shall find; and finding they shall praise him. Thee will I seek, O Lord, calling upon thee; and I will call upon thee, believing in thee: for thou hast been declared unto us. My faith, O Lord, calls upon thee, which thou has given me, which thou hast inspired into me; even by the humanity of thy Son, and by the ministry of thy preacher.”

- The Confessions, I.i
Psalm 111

Tune: Manoah – “When All Your Mercies, O My God”

vv. 1, 2
Praise the Lord! O let my heart give thanks here amid His chosen race!
Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know Your grace.

v. 3
For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;
Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

v. 4
You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

vv. 5, 6
For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.
Your pow’r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

vv. 7, 8
The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.
Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

v. 9
You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov’nant fame,
And we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

v. 10
All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,
And in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.
Week 1, Day 1
We cannot love God unless we know Him. But God must be known on His terms and in His way. Our texts for this week will guide us more clearly into the ways of knowing God.

Read Exodus 3:1-22
Moses’ encounter with God is instructive for us because here we meet a God Who is eager to be known and clear about Who He is and what He desires for us.

1. What is unusual about the way God revealed Himself to Moses (vv. 1-3)? What does this suggest about God and His relationship to the things – and people – He has made?

2. What do we learn about God in vv. 4-6? What means did He use to make Himself known? What was motivating God to make Himself known to Moses at this time (vv. 7-12)? What do we learn from this about the kind of God He is?

3. God’s name – Yahweh – derives from the Hebrew verb, “to be”, as we see in vv. 13-15. What is suggested about the nature of God by this name?

4. God revealed Himself to Moses so that Moses would declare Him and His purposes to His people. How did God intend to motivate His people to believe Moses (vv. 16, 17)? What does it suggest about God that He leads His people in this way?

5. Summarize what we learn about the God we serve from this passage. What is He like? How does He reveal Himself to us? For what purposes? What does He require of us?

Sing Psalm 111
Week 1, Day 2
Augustine saw himself as part of God’s great creation; as such, he believed his purpose in life was to know God and to praise Him. He seemed to know that the works of God are made for His praise. They can teach us to know Him, too.

Read Psalm 111
The works of God in creation do, indeed, help us to grow in the knowledge of God, which is the first step in learning to love Him more.

1. What do the works of God reveal about Him, according to the psalmist (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8)?

2. Below, and following the example, see if you can cite some ways the works of God reveal the various aspects of God you identified above:
   Example
   - greatness (v. 2): the immensity of the universe; the great depth of the oceans; the power of hurricanes and tornadoes

3. What else about God do the works of God bring to the psalmist’s mind (vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9)? Why would contemplating the works of God cause the psalmist to think of such things? Can we know God in His works apart from these other things? Why or why not?

4. As the psalmist reflects on how the works of God reveal Him, and how they set him to thinking about His precepts, covenant, redemption, and so forth, to what does this lead his meditation (v. 10)? Why would this seem to be a logical conclusion to such contemplations?

5. What do they do who learn to delight in such contemplations (vv. 1, 2)? How can contemplating the works of God help us to grow in loving Him?

Sing Psalm 111
Week 1, Day 3
Augustine “knew” God all his life. His Christian mother taught him, and he was even baptized and raised in the church. But he wandered from the Lord, because, while he “knew” Him, he did not really “know” Him at all.

Read Hosea 4:1-6; Jeremiah 31:31-34
The people to whom Hosea preached were in many ways like the young Augustine, while the promise Jeremiah held forth was the one Augustine would come to know in Jesus.

1. Is it really possible that the people to whom Hosea preached did not know the Lord? Weren’t they worshipping Him? Didn’t they have priests, and offer sacrifices and the like? In what sense were they being “destroyed for lack of knowledge”?

2. According to Hosea 4:1-3, what results in a land where there is no knowledge of God? If one saw such symptoms in a land, and on the rise, what might one conclude? What is the primary thing such people need?

3. What is the difference between what Jeremiah was prophesying and the kind of “knowledge” the people had to whom Hosea preached? What are the characteristics of the knowledge of God that God promised through Jeremiah?

4. When, according to the last part of Jeremiah 31:34, does the true knowledge of God begin in a person’s life? How does this occur? What comes with it?

5. We’ve seen what happens where the knowledge of God is lacking. What might we expect where the knowledge of God is present and increasing?

Sing Psalm 111
Week 1, Day 4
Augustine came to know the Lord through the faithful prayers of his mother and the powerful preaching and teaching of his pastor, Ambrose of Milan. But ultimately, as he tells us, it was through “the humanity of thy Son” that the knowledge – and love – of God began to take root in him.

_read John 14:1-14_
_How many people in churches today are just like Philip? They’ve been in Jesus’ company all these years, and still they don’t know who He is._

1. In v. 1 Jesus equated knowing Him with knowing God. How can you see that? Why is this significant?

2. Jesus claimed to be the exclusive way to the knowledge of God (v. 6). How could this be so (vv. 7-9)? What does this mean? What does it suggest for us about growing in the knowledge of God, and love for Him?

3. How many different ways in this passage does Jesus identify Himself with the Father? What does He call those who see Him thus to do (vv. 1, 12)? What privileges does He hold out to them?

4. To know Jesus is to know God; to love Jesus is to love God. At present, what disciplines are you involved in that are designed to help you know and love Jesus more? Are these sufficient to allow you to know all the promised fruit of this relationship?

5. In what ways is your present ministry designed to help others come to know Jesus and to grow in love for Him? By what means do you assess your effectiveness?

Sing Psalm 111
Week 1, Day 5
Read the quote from Augustine again. Loving God begins in knowing Him, as He reveals Himself to us in His Word, His works, and His Son. Jesus is the final point of reference for all the knowledge of God. As we grow to know and love Him, we will grow to know and love God as well.

Read Revelation 1:9-20
Like Moses, John was granted a vision of God in His glory – the exalted, enthroned Son in His glorious humanity – and John has declared Jesus to us!

1. In what ways is the revelation of Jesus to John similar to the revelation God made of Himself to Moses? In what ways is John’s response like that of Moses?

2. Below, indicate the various aspects of this vision of Jesus, and, following the example, what they suggest to you about our Lord:
   
   **Example**
   
   vv. 13, 14: robe, sash, white hair: a pure and holy judge, the Ancient of Days

3. What is the significance of Jesus’ revealing Himself to John “in the midst of the lampstands” (v. 13, cf. v. 20)? Do you think that the vision of Jesus we see here is the way most people in churches think of Him? Why or why not?

4. Summarize the vision of Jesus in these verses:

   Should this vision find its way more consistently into your meditations? Your ministry? If so, how will that happen?

5. John elsewhere indicates that to see Jesus as He is is to be like Him (1 Jn. 3:2). While his focus there is eschatological, is there any sense in which seeing Jesus as John – and the rest of Scripture – presents Him can help us to love Him, and to be like Him? Explain.

Sing Psalm 111
**Week 1 Final Exercise**
Review all your work for this week. In the light of this, write a brief paragraph describing your expectations for this series of studies. What will tell you, when we have finished, that you have grown in love for God and others? Where do you feel a need to grow in these ways? How will you endeavor to apply these studies to growing in love for God and others?

When you have completed your paragraph, find a friend with whom to share what you have written. Read and discuss your paragraph, and then enlist that person as a prayer partner with you as you continue these studies.

**Week 1 Worldview Observation**
Our sad world desperately needs to know the Lord. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Certainly we can see the effects of not knowing God in our own society. What evidence would you cite to show this? Does the Church bear any responsibility for this situation? Do the Christians you know believe that knowing and loving God is our society’s greatest need? Ask a few of them, and record their responses below:
**Week 2: Desiring God**

*As we begin to know God, if we know Him truly, it will be inescapable that we shall desire more of Him – more knowledge of Him, more of His presence, more of His saving mercies. They who truly know and love the Lord desire Him earnestly.*

“What is therefore my God? What, I ask, but the Lord God? For who is Lord but the Lord? Or who is God besides our God? O thou supreme, most excellent, most mighty, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just; most secret and most present; most beautiful and most strong; constant and incomprehensible; immutable, yet changing all things; never new, and never old; renewing all things, and insensibly bringing proud men into decay; ever active, and ever quiet; gathering together, yet never wanting; upholding, filling, and protecting; creating, nourishing and perfecting all things; still seeking, although thou standest in need of nothing. Thou lovest, yet art not transported; art jealous, but without fear; thou does repent, but not grieve; art angry, but cool still. Thy works thou changest, but not thy counsel; takest what thou findest, never losest aught. Though art never needy, yet glad of gain; never covetous, yet exactest advantage. Men pay thee in superabundance of all things, that thou mayest be the debtor: and who hath anything that is not thine? Thou payest debts, yet owest nothing; forgivest debts, yet losest nothing. And shall we say, my God, my Life, my holy Delight: or what can any man say when he speaks of thee? And woe to them that speak nothing in thy praise, seeing those that speak most, are dumb.”

*The Confessions, I.iv*
Psalm 84
_Tune: Holy Manna – “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship”_

_vv. 1-4_
Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling;  
How my soul longs for Your courts!  
Let my soul with joy keep telling  
Of Your grace forever more.  
Like a bird upon the altar  
Let my life to You belong.  
Blessed are they who never falter  
As they praise Your grace with song!

_vv. 5-7_
Blessed are they whose strength is founded  
In Your strength, O Lord above.  
All whose hearts in You are grounded  
Journey in Your strength and love.  
Though they weep with tears of sadness,  
Grace shall all their way sustain.  
In Your presence, filled with gladness,  
They shall conquer all their pain.

_vv. 8-12_
Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving,  
Hear me, help me by Your grace!  
In Your courts I stand believing;  
Turn to me Your glorious face!  
Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory,  
No good thing will You deny  
To those who proclaim Your story,  
And who on Your grace rely.
Week 2, Day 1
It is clear that Augustine knew and delighted in the Lord, and greatly desired more of His fellowship and saving mercy.

Read 2 Chronicles 15:1-15
Reminded of God’s great compassion and mercy, Asa set his heart to desire the Lord, and led the people of Judah to do the same.

1. What was Azariah’s role in prompting Asa and all Judah to desire the Lord? In what ways is Azariah’s calling similar to your own?

2. According to v. 8, what preliminary steps are required of those who desire a closer walk with the Lord? To what kinds of things do these translate in our own lives? Can we say that we truly desire the Lord if we do not deal with these things?

3. In v. 12 Asa and Judah “entered into a covenant” to seek the Lord, binding themselves to one another in a mutual agreement expressing their desire for God. We see this frequently in Biblical history. Why is this a good idea? Do you participate in any such covenants? Should you?

4. How did those who covenanted together in desiring the Lord confirm their agreement, and how did this affect them (vv. 12-15)? What comparable acts of confirmation might those covenanted together today perform?

5. Verse 15 reminds us that desiring God cannot be a “half-hearted” adventure. How can you see this? What does this mean?

Sing Psalm 84
Week 2, Day 2
Augustine’s desire for God – expressed so passionately in *The Confessions* – took the form of an extended prayer, in which he reflected on his own life and what God had revealed to him of Himself.

*Read Job 23:1-17*
*At a desperate point in his own life, Job desired to know the Lord and His will and purpose for him.*

1. How would you describe the tone of these verses? How was Job feeling at this time?

2. Sometimes personal crisis can be a summons from the Lord to desire and seek Him. By what means does Job intend to carry out this quest (vv. 1-4, 7)? Is it fair to say that they who truly desire God will make much of this means? Explain.

3. Job’s desire for God is carried on in the light of God’s Word. How does he express this in vv. 11 and 12? What counsel is there here for those who desire more of the Lord?

4. They who desire the Lord will be content to rest in God’s purposes and will for them. How does Job show that he understands this in vv. 13-15? How does he feel about desiring the Lord on these terms (vv. 15, 16)? Is this good? Perhaps even normal? Why or why not?

5. Desiring God and seeking Him can be fraught with “darkness” (v. 17). What does Job seem to mean by this? Should the prospect of this keep us from desiring the Lord? Why not?

*Sing Psalm 84*
Week 2, Day 3

The Confessions is one of the great “journey stories” of Christian history, recounting Augustine’s long, wayward trek to salvation and the first years of his newfound joy in Christ. But always in the background, as in today’s text, is his sense of a greater glory to come.

Read Psalm 84

This psalm envisions the life of faith as a journey to the heavenly court of the Lord. We pursue this life as “living sacrifices,” and rejoice as the Lord turns tears to joy time and time again.

1. How would you describe the psalmists’ longing for the presence of God? How does one nurture such a desire for the Lord?

2. Desire for the Lord enabled the psalmists’ to live as “sacrifices” to Him (v. 3). What is required of a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1, 2)?

3. As the psalmists focused on the beauty of the Lord and their heavenly destination, they found that even their tears (“Valley of Baca”) could be turned to refreshment and joy. How is this so? Have you experienced this before?

4. What is required of those who desire the presence and blessing of the Lord? That is, if we truly desire the Lord, how will this come to expression in our lives (cf. vv. 2, 4, 5, 11, 12)?

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest rating, how would score these psalmists’ desire for the Lord? Why did you choose that number?

How would you score your own desire for Him? Why?

Sing Psalm 84

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Week 2, Day 4
Our Lord Jesus is a study in desiring God. Indeed, it would be fair to say, I think, that He was fairly obsessed with being in the presence of God.

Read Luke 2:41-52
*Jesus seems always to have had His mind set on the things of the Lord – a measure of His great desire for His heavenly Father.*

1. How did Jesus indicate His desire for His Father in vv. 41-46? What did He forego to follow this desire? What do you set aside in order to pursue your desire for the Lord?

2. Jesus’ response to His mother’s query seems almost incredulous: He can hardly believe that she needed to ask Him about His actions. Why?

3. How did Jesus’ love for God come to expression as love for people (vv. 50-52)? How does His example instruct us? To whom are you accountable for your growth in the Lord? How do you carry out that accountability?

4. Jesus’ love and desire for God and His will helped Him to grow in a balanced way – physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially. Should we expect the same growth through our desire for the Lord? Explain.

5. How have you seen your desire for the Lord – to be with Him, to learn from Him, talk about Him, and worship Him – affect you recently in each of the areas below?
   *Spiritually*  *Physically*  *Intellectually*  *Socially*

*Sing Psalm 84*
Week 2, Day 5
We may nurture love and desire for God by focusing on Jesus, who welcomes our desire for Him and promises that, through Him, we shall surely know God. Thus we shall be able to say with Augustine, “My God, my Life, my holy Delight”.

Read John 5:19-24
Jesus claimed that He honored God and that those who honored Him would honor God as well.

1. How do you suppose Jesus “saw” (v. 19) what the Father was doing? How did God “show” (v. 20) His works to Him? How does He do this with us?

2. All who desire God will honor Him, just as Jesus did. In what ways did Jesus honor God – and thus demonstrate His desire for Him – during the course of His earthly ministry?

3. Those who desire Jesus will “hear” Him and “believe” in Him. What do these two terms mean for an unbeliever? What do they mean for a believer?

4. How would someone be able to tell that your life was devoted to honoring God by honoring Jesus? What would be the indications of desire for and devotion to Him?

5. Jesus encouraged all who desire God to honor God by honoring Him. How can you encourage others to honor Him? Do you think that doing so will increase their desire for God? Why or why not? Should this be a central part of your ministry to others?

Sing Psalm 84
**Week 2 Final Exercise**
Augustine showed us that, as we come to know the Lord, our desire for Him increases, so that He becomes all our life and delight. What does it mean to desire God? How would you describe your own desire for Him? Have this week’s studies helped you to understand this aspect of loving God any better? Do you see hope for growing in your desire for God? In what ways? Reflect on these questions in writing below. Then meet with your prayer partner to share your conclusions.

**Week 2 Worldview Observation**
Jot down some things that you see people around you strongly desiring. How does that desire express itself? In what way can you see that some of these people are desiring “god”? Can such desires ultimately satisfy? But of what do they remind us?
Week 3: Seeking God

The better we know God, the more our desire for Him grows; as our desire grows, we will become more determined in seeking Him – yet another aspect of the love we are called to have for our God.

“And what is this? I asked the earth, and that answered me: I am not it; and whatsoever are in it made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the creeping things, and they answered me: We are not thy God, seek above us. I asked the fleeting winds, and the whole air with his inhabitants answered me, That Anaximenes was deceived; I am not God. I asked the heavens, the sun and moon and stars: Nor, say they, are we the God whom thou seekest. And I replied unto all these, which stand so round about these doors of my flesh: Answer me concerning my God, since that you are not he, answer me something of him. And they cried out with a loud voice: He made us. My questioning with them was my thought; and their answer was their beauty. And I turned myself unto myself, and said to myself: Who art thou? And I answered: A man; for behold here is a soul and a body in me; one without, the other within. By which of these two ought I to have sought my God, whom by my body I had enquired after from earth to heaven, even so far as I was able to send those beams of mine eyes in ambassage? But the better part is the inner part; unto which all these my bodily messengers gave up their intelligence, as being the president and judge of all the several answers of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein, who said, We are not God, and He made us. These things did my inner man know by the ministry of the outer man. And I the inner man knew all this: I, I the soul, by means of the senses of the body. I asked the whole frame of the world concerning my God, and that answered me: I am not he, but he made me.”

The Confessions, X.vi
Psalm 42
*Tune: Nettleton – “Come Thou Fount”*

vv. 1-3
As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,
While my foes add to my sorrow, saying, “Where now is your God?”

vv. 4, 5
Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

vv. 6-8
Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;
When distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

vv. 9-11
Lord, forget me not in mourning ‘neath my foes’ oppressing hand.
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.
**Week 3, Day 1**

They who desire the Lord will earnestly seek Him. Augustine sought Him many years before he finally found him in a quiet garden. We who would love the Lord must seek Him as well.

*Read Psalm 63*

*David gives us reasons and means for seeking the Lord, as well as an example of how to do so diligently.*

1. How many reasons for seeking the Lord can you find in this psalm? Can you see how *knowing* the Lord leads to *desiring* Him, and *seeking* Him? Explain.

2. How would you describe the *intensity* of David’s seeking the Lord (vv. 1, 2, 6, 8)? How does that compare with your own intensity? Where can you go to increase that intensity?

3. By what means did David seek the Lord? What place do these activities hold in your own life?

4. Augustine talked about searching for God with the *inner being*, while his *outer being* served as a means of satisfying the longing of the inner. How was this same thing true of David? What does this require of us with respect to our *outer* being?

5. If we are going to seek God with our *souls* (v. 5), so that they become satisfied and grow strong, what must we do with our bodies – and the time in which they exist? How well satisfied are you with the extent to which your body (and its time) are serving your seeking soul’s desire for God?

*Sing Psalm 42*
Week 3, Day 2
The *Song of Songs* is one of the most beautiful and mysterious books of the canon. The ancients saw in it an allegory of the soul or of the Church as it grows in love for the Lord.

*Read Song 3:1-5
*Here we find the soul or Church describing her search for the object of her desire.*

1. How would you describe the intensity of the bride’s seeking for her beloved? To what lengths did she go to find him?

2. What is suggested by the images of time (night), place (streets and squares), and encounters with people about the soul’s practice of seeking the Lord? If you could put vv. 1-3 into words more expressive of the realities of your own life, what would you say? How might these images shape your own seeking after the Lord?

3. What was the result of the bride’s intense search for her beloved (v. 4)? To what does this compare in the life of faith? Do you experience this?

4. How can you see in this little vignette that love consists of *knowing* the beloved, *desiring* the beloved, and *seeking* the beloved?

5. Do you think the Church today seeks the Lord like this? Why or why not? Do you have any role in helping to promote that kind of seeking? Explain.

*Sing Psalm 42*
**Week 3, Day 3**

Augustine sought the Lord out of a deep disquiet in his soul. Very often such times can be reminders of just how important this aspect of our love for God can be.

*Read Psalm 42*

*The psalmists would have recognized Augustine’s struggle, as they sought the Lord out of deep anguish of soul.*

1. How do the psalmists lead us to see that they are in deep anguish in their souls? What seems to have caused this? Do you ever experience this kind of anguish of soul? What causes it?

2. To what did the anguish of their souls lead them (vv. 1, 2)? How did they endeavor to do this (vv. 4-6, 11)?

3. Verses 7 and 8 contrast the psalmists’ experience with what they knew about the Lord (Jonah prayed v. 7 in the depths of his distress, Jonah 2:3). Why is doing this an important part of learning to seek the Lord? What’s the alternative to doing this?

4. The psalmists faced up to the woeful condition of their souls and rebuked them (vv. 5, 11). Apply their example to helping a believer who is “down” begin seeking the Lord again. What would you do?

5. Summarize what you learn from this psalm about seeking the Lord:

*Sing Psalm 42*
Week 3, Day 4
As we have seen – and as Augustine reminds us throughout The Confessions – prayer is a vital instrument in seeking the Lord. But we need to pray with the Lord’s promises in mind, and according to His terms and conditions.

Read Jeremiah 33:1-16
Here is a classic passage on prayer that truly seeks the Lord.

1. According to vv. 10-12, what was the condition of Jerusalem in Jeremiah’s day?

2. So not only a soul, but an entire city, a church, even a nation, can come to distress and anguish. What should they do at such a time (v. 3)? What might that look like, say, for a local church, as it began to seek the Lord together for renewal?

3. God promises that if, in times of distress, we will seek Him, He will show us “great and hidden things that you have not known” (v. 3). The Hebrew text says, literally, “great things and mysteries”. To what might these refer?
   - great things:
   - mysteries:

4. We receive some clarification concerning these “great things and mysteries” in vv. 6-13. Put into today’s terms, what kinds of “great things and mysteries” might we dare to hope for – in our own lives, our churches, and our nation – if we could begin to seek the Lord this way?

5. Clearly, as we have seen over and over, prayer is one of the most important ways of seeking the Lord. How much of your own prayer time is devoted to seeking the Lord in the ways we have seen thus far?

Sing Psalm 42
Week 3, Day 5
There is more to seeking the Lord than prayer. Reading, meditating in, and walking in His Law is also an important part of seeking the Lord.

Read 2 Chronicles 12:1-14
Here is a classic example of one who refused to seek the Lord.

1. Compare v. 1 to v. 14. On the basis of these two verses, what would seem to be the role of the Law of the Lord in seeking Him?

2. According to vv. 1 and 13, what led Rehoboam to leave off seeking the Lord? Do we face this temptation in our day? In what forms?

3. What do you think is involved in “setting one’s heart” to seek the Lord? Is this merely making up one’s mind to do so? Making a plan? Is it more? Have you “set your heart” to seek the Lord? How?

4. Even though we, from time to time, may leave off seeking the Lord, He never ceases to seek us, as we see in vv. 2-12. How did the Lord seek Rehoboam? How does He seek us when we are beginning to wander from Him?

5. In a sense, those who know the Lord, and who truly desire Him and are seeking Him, play a role in the church and in society not unlike that of Shemaiah to Rehoboam – calling the wayward to return to the Lord and to seek His face. In what ways do you fulfill this calling in your own ministry?

Sing Psalm 42
**Week 3 Final Exercise**
So far we have seen that loving God increases as we come to know Him better, as our desire for Him increases, and as we devote ourselves to seeking Him more earnestly. What are the greatest obstacles in your life keeping you from growing in love for God in these ways? How do you work to overcome those obstacles so that love for God can increase in you? Summarize your answers to these questions below:

Meet with your prayer partner and share your summary. Talk with him or her about this matter, then spend some time in prayer together that the Lord will help you to overcome these obstacles and love Him more.

**Week 3 Worldview Observation**
This week we have seen people seeking the Lord out of deep love for God, anguish of soul, devastation of country, and in response to prophetic urging. Can you see these kinds of things at work in your own church and community? In what ways? List some below. Are these opportunities for us to call people to seek the Lord? How might you make seeking the Lord, and calling others to seek Him, more a part of your own ministry?
Week 4: Fearing God

Of course, the terrifying thing about seeking the Lord is that we might actually find Him! But fearing God is also part of loving Him, as we shall see.

“I call upon thee, O my God, my mercy; upon thee that createdst me, and who hast not forgotten, that had forgotten thee. I invite thee into my soul, which thou now preparst to entertain thee by the longing that thystelf inspireth into her. Forsake me not now when I call upon thee, thou who preventedst me before I called, having been earnest with me with much variety of repeating calls; that I would hear thee from afar, and suffer myself to be converted, and call at length upon thee, that didst call after me. For thou Lord hast blotted out all my evil deservings, lest thou shouldst take vengeance upon the work of my hands, for that in which I have fallen off from thee: and thou hast prevented all my well deservings took, that thou mightest recompense the work of thy hands with which thou madest me; because that before I was, thou wert, nor was I anything upon which thou mightest bestow the favour to cause me to be: and yet behold, I now am, merely out of thine own goodness, preventing both all this which thou hast made me, and all that too, whereof thou hast made me. For thou neither hadst any need of me, nor yet am I of such good use, as any ways to be helpful unto thee my Lord and God: nor am I made to be so assistant to thee with my service, as to keep thee from tiring in thy working; or for fear thy power might be less if any service should be wanting: nor so to ply thee with my service, as a man does his land, that unless I tilled thee thou must lie fallow: but made I am both to serve and worship thee, that I might receive a well-being from thee; from whom it proceeds that I have such a being as is capable of well-being.”

- The Confessions, XIII.i
Psalm 112

_Tune: Beecher – “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”_

_vv. 1-4_
Praise the Lord, all you who fear Him;  
Blest are all who love His Word.  
Mighty are the upright children  
Of the bless-ed of the Lord.  
Wealth and riches shall not fail them,  
Long their righteousness endures.  
Light in darkness shall avail them  
In God’s grace and mercy sure.

_vv. 5-8_
He who is a gracious giver  
And who in God’s justice lives,  
From His righteous ways shall never  
Be removed, but ever thrive.  
Bad news shall not leave them fearing:  
Firm their hearts who trust in God.  
Strong and steady, e’er appearing,  
They upon their foes have trod.

_vv. 9, 10_
Let us then our gen’rous offerings  
To the poor and needy give.  
Thus our horn shall be exalted  
And our goodness ever live.  
Let the wicked see and tremble,  
Let them gnash their teeth in rage;  
Their desire shall surely crumble  
In God’s coming glorious age.
Week 4, Day 1
Augustine gives us one good reason why we ought to fear God: He doesn’t need us! Yet, in spite of that, He made us, and He loves us – which makes us, while we fear Him, love Him all the more.

Read Psalm 112
This psalm helps us to see the mysterious and intimate connection between loving God and fearing Him.

1. Recall what we have said about the Law of God (and seeking Him) and delighting in God (or in His Law): who is the person who truly seeks and delights in the Lord (v. 1)? How can this be?

2. Remember that God leads His people by promises (recall our meditations on Exodus 3). What promises does God hold out to those who fear Him in this psalm?

3. According to this psalm, what are some of the characteristics of those who fear God? In other words, how does this aspect of their love for God come to expression in love for others?

4. How does the unbelieving world respond to those who thus fear the Lord? What do you suppose that might look like in our day?

5. According to this psalm, if we fear the Lord, what need we not fear?

Sing Psalm 112
**Week 4, Day 2**
Augustine knew that loving God meant worshipping and serving Him all His life.

*Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22*
*Moses tells us what God requires of those who would love Him truly.*

1. Below, list all the verbs in this passage that tell us what God requires of His people. Explain each one in terms of how you try to fulfill that requirement:

2. Look at vv. 14 and 15. Do these verses remind you of Augustine’s prayer in the quote beginning this week? In what way? Do you ever meditate like this? Should you?

3. We cannot love, fear, and serve God without first making sure that our hearts are right before Him (v. 16). What does this mean? How is this accomplished? Maintained?

4. How does Moses link the love and fear of God to love of others in vv. 16-19? To what does this equate in our day?

5. How should we expect the fear of God to come to expression as love for Him in our lives (vv. 20, 21)? Explain each of the terms found here:

*Sing Psalm 112*
Week 4, Day 3
In a sense, we have all been created for the fear of God. Moses surely taught this, and Augustine seemed to know it. Do we?

Read Ecclesiastes 12
Solomon is blunt in advising us about “the whole duty of man.”

1. Ecclesiastes 12 provides a dramatic description of getting old. In what ways can you see this?

2. As we get older, it becomes harder to make our bodies do what we want them to do in serving and worshipping God – especially if we have not developed good disciplines in this area when we were younger. Hence the exhortation in v. 1. What does it mean to “remember” God, as Solomon seems to be using it here? What practices and disciplines are you presently following that are designed to help you “remember” him all the days of your life?

3. Though he had been a fool for many years, Solomon, in his final days, returned to true wisdom, and he offers us words which he says are like “goads” and “nails.” How are the words of a wise man like Solomon like “goads” and “nails”?

4. Meditate on v. 13. Remember Rehoboam and the Law of God. Knowing God, desiring God, seeking God, fearing God: How does this last term effectively include all the previous three, thus making it truly “the whole duty of man”?

5. Can you say that you truly fear the Lord? Is your heart set to fear Him? Are you growing in the fear of the Lord, as your “whole duty”? How is the fear of the Lord expressed in your life?

Sing Psalm 112
Week 4, Day 4
Augustine’s love for God made him cling to the Lord who made and saved him. He had to leave a lot behind to do that, but he did so gladly.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1
The fear of God, which is the whole duty of man, leads us to separate ourselves entirely unto Him.

1. Give some examples of believers being “unequally yoked” with unbelievers – or unbelief – in our day:

2. Why does being “unequally yoked” not make sense for the person who truly loves the Lord?

3. The God we love dwells in us. The God we fear is among us. How should this affect those who truly love the Lord?

4. What does it mean to “go out” from the midst of unbelieving worldviews, to “be separate” from them, and to “touch no unclean thing”? What does God promise to those who show such love for Him (v. 18)?

5. Look at 7:1: again, the mention of promises (those outlined in the preceding verses). God lovingly leads His people to fear and love Him by great and precious promises. What would be indicators that someone was “bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God”?

Sing Psalm 112
**Week 4, Day 5**

This fearing the Lord can be a lot of work. But it’s good work, as we shall see.

*Read Philippians 2:12-18*

*In our day people are much enamored of “working out.”* It’s good advice for us as well – with some qualifications.

1. How should “fear and trembling” motivate us to greater fervor in working out the blessings of our salvation?

2. How does our salvation get “worked out” in us? What is our role? What is God’s role?

3. This working out of our salvation is a very public thing, or it should be. If we can do this properly, diligently, and joyfully (v. 14), what should we expect the effect of this to be on us in relation to the unbelievers around us (v. 15)? What do you suppose that would look like?

4. What does it mean to “hold fast” to the Word of life? How do you try to encourage others to do this, so that your ministry will not be in vain?

5. There could be some cost involved in this kind of “working out” (vv. 17, 18). What might be some of these costs? How will you make sure that you are able to rejoice should such things come to pass?

*Sing Psalm 112*
**Week 4 Final Exercise**
How would you relate the following terms to one another: knowing God, desiring God, seeking God, fearing God? See if you can create a diagram or schematic that you can use with your prayer partner to explain the relationship between these aspects of the love of God:

Meet with your prayer partner and share your diagram, then pray together that the Lord might greatly increase your love for Him.

**Week 4 Worldview Observation**
Do today’s Christians fear the Lord? Let’s find out. Take a little survey with some folks in your church. Ask them the following questions:

1. What does it mean to fear the Lord?
2. Are we supposed to fear Him?
3. What would fearing the Lord look like in our lives?
4. Can we both fear the Lord and love Him?
5. Would you say that you truly fear the Lord?

Comment below on the responses you receive to these questions. How should your findings affect your own ministry?
**Week 5: Obeying God**

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15). It doesn’t get much clearer than that. Sincere love for God comes to expression in obedience to the law of love (1 Jn. 5:1-3).

“Give ear unto my prayer, O Lord my God, and let thy mercy hearken unto my petition: because it striveth not to entreat for myself alone, but to be useful also to brotherly love. Thou seest in my heart, that so it is. I would sacrifice unto thee the service of my thoughts and tongue: now give me, what I am to offer unto thee. For I am poor and needy, but thou art rich to all those that call upon thee; who not distracted with cares thyself, takest care of us all. From all rashness and lying do thou circumcise both my inward and my outward parts, my lips. Let my chaste delights be thy Scriptures: let me neither be deceived in them, nor deceive out of them. Hearken Lord, and have mercy upon me, O Lord my God, O thou Light of the blind, and the Strength of the weak; yea, the Light of those that see, and the Strength of the strong; hearken thou unto my soul, and hear me crying unto thee out of the deep. For if thine ears be not with us also in the deep, whither then shall we go? To whom shall we cry? The day is thine, and night is thine: at thy beck the moments fly past. Afford out of it some spare time for my meditation upon the hidden things of the Law; which I beseech thee shut not up against them that knock. For in vain it was not, that thou wouldst have so many leaves full of darksome secrets committed unto writing: nor are those forests without their harts which retire themselves into them, making their range and walks in them; feeding, lodging, and chewing cud in them. Perfect me, O Lord, and reveal them unto me.”

- *The Confessions*, XI.ii
Psalm 116
Tune: Mit Freuden Zart – “All Praise to God Who Reigns Above”

vv. 1-3
I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.
The snares of death encompassed me; hell’s grip could not unloosened be;
Distress and anguish pressed me.

vv. 4-6
I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

vv. 7-9
Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
And dwell with them forever.

vv. 10-14
Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation’s cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
And pay my vows most truly.

vv. 15-19
How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!
From sin You loosed my wand’ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your presence I would stay
Your praise to offer ever.
Week 5, Day 1

Augustine was ready to sacrifice to God because of his love for Him. Happily, his sacrifices were not like Saul’s.

Read 1 Samuel 15

Poor Saul: he never quite “got it.” God isn’t interested in our stature or flourishes. He wants us to obey Him.

1. Look at vv. 1-8. God’s Word was clear, and Saul seems to have done his duty pretty well. But is “pretty well” what God requires of those who would prove their love for Him? Explain.

2. Read vv. 9-15. Saul’s motives seemed to have become sadly mixed, right in the middle of his carrying out the will of God. What motives intervened here to derail obedience? Do such motives ever emerge within you? Explain.

3. Samuel told Saul that he had failed in the “mission” God appointed to him. Should believers consider themselves as people on a “mission” (Jn. 20:21)? How would you describe your “mission” from the Lord? What kinds of things have the potential to distract you from faithfully carrying out the mission appointed to you?

4. Disobedience is the fruit of not listening, presumption, rebellion, and rejection of God’s Word (vv. 22, 23). Of what kinds of things is obedience the fruit? How can we cultivate obedience and weed out disobedience in our walk with the Lord?

5. In v. 25 Saul is still protesting that he wants to worship the Lord. Is he serious? Do believers today tend to think that if they just keep coming to worship they don’t have to worry about such messy things (vv. 32, 33) as “obedience” and a “mission” from God? How does Samuel’s relationship to Saul instruct us as those called to teach others?

Sing Psalm 116
Week 5, Day 2
When we begin insisting on the importance of obedience to God, some believers might want to say to us, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, friend! I’m free in the Lord; I don’t need to worry about obedience, as if I were some kind of slave.”

Read Matthew 23:23-28
They should listen to the words of our Lord.

1. Outwardly, it looked as though the religious leaders of Jesus’ day were, in fact, obeying the Lord. In what ways did this appear? Are today’s “religious leaders” susceptible to such parading of their attainments? In what ways?

2. Jesus, however, was not impressed. Why? What can we learn from Jesus about the nature of true obedience?

3. Jesus said that, instead of being filled with love for God in their hearts, the religious leaders were filled with something else. Define each of the following terms:
   - hypocrisy:
   - lawlessness:

   How might a person be able to tell when these things were beginning to take root in his heart?

4. In spite of His ringing condemnation, Jesus did commend the religious leaders. For what (v. 23)? So obedience is a matter of both the inner and the outer person? Explain:

5. What does Jesus’ attitude toward the religious leaders of His day reveal about God’s view of those who claim to love Him, but do not obey His Law?

Sing Psalm 116
Week 5, Day 3
Augustine looked at God as his Light and Strength; and, in view of that, he was willing to sacrifice his own “light” and “strength” to the service of the Lord.

Read Psalm 116
Amazed and filled with worship for the great gifts of God, the psalmist resolves to walk in obedience to Him.

1. How many different “benefits” (v. 12) does the psalmist identify? List them below:

2. Which of these “benefits” have you experienced? In what ways?

3. What did the psalmist know about the Lord (cf. vv. 5, 6, 15)? How is it evident that he delighted in God (vv. 7, 17, 19)? By what means did the psalmist seek the Lord (vv. 1, 2, 4, 13, 14, 18)?

4. Summarize the commitments the psalmist made in order to bring love of God to completion through obedience:

5. Comment on the image in v. 13 of “lifting up the cup of salvation.” What does this imply about our salvation, given that this image suggests:
   - toasting with others:
   - drinking with joy:
   - filling again and again:

Sing Psalm 116
Week 5, Day 4
Augustine looked to God as the Strength of the weak and the Strength of the strong. Without God’s strength, he saw, no one could do anything pleasing to Him.

Read Ezekiel 36:22-32
*God’s words of comfort and promise must have instilled enormous hope in the breasts of faithful Israelites.*

1. God is telling His people that He will shortly do a great work. Why (vv. 22, 23)? How does this relate to our loving God?

2. Verses 24-32 conflate the restoration of Israel to the land of promise with the promised coming of God’s Holy Spirit. The emphasis is definitely on the second of these elements. Summarize the benefits that accrue to the people of God when the Spirit comes upon them:

3. In his book, *The Spirit and the Letter*, Augustine writes that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the key to being able to love God. He argues from this passage, coupled with Romans 5:5, showing that the Spirit brings together the Law of God and the love to which God calls us. Why is it important to make this connection just the way Augustine does?

4. What, therefore, is the evidence that we have received the Spirit of God and have been truly cleansed and renewed within?

5. What does this have to do with Biblical worldview?

*Sing Psalm 116*
Week 5, Day 5
In the closing sentences of the quote beginning this week, Augustine muses on the grace and goodness of God in giving us so much of Himself in His Word.

Read James 1:19-27
Luther may have regarded this as “a right strawy epistle,” but you’ve got to give it to the apostle for clarity and directness.

1. From vv. 19-21, summarize what we might call James’ “prerequisites” for approaching the Word of God:

2. According to vv. 22-25, what should be the goal of Biblical study? How does this relate to Biblical teaching?

3. James likens the Word of God to a mirror. What does he say we see when we look into it? What kinds of things would we expect this “mirror” to reveal about that image? Should those who teach hold up the Word of God as a mirror to their students? How?

4. According to vv. 26, 27, what is the essence of true religion? In view of this, is it enough for us merely to acquire understanding about the Biblical worldview? Of what does true learning consist?

5. Below, use the words know, delight, seek, and obey to explain the nature of the love we are called to nurture toward our gracious and glorious God:

Sing Psalm 116
**Week 5 Final Exercise**
We’re beginning to understand something about the love we are to have for God – the great commandment. Meditate on Exodus 20:1-11. Based on what we have been studying these past five weeks, ask yourself: How do these commandments guide me in loving God? Make some notes below:

Meet with your prayer partner and share your observations on loving God according to the first four commandments and the teachings of Part 1 of this series (the last five weeks).

**Week 5 Worldview Observation**
It’s interesting to consider that two of the four words we have been using to describe aspects of how we are to love God are increasingly *anathema* to the postmodern mind. How can you see that for each of the following words:

- know:
- obey:

Meanwhile, the other two words – delight and seek – seem to be at the very *heart* of a postmodern worldview. How can you see that?

Can we truly love God without all four of these aspects being in place and growing? Why not?
PART 2: LOVING GOD

“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD . . .”
Week 6: The Inner Being
Columbanus (c. 543-615)
The greatest of all the Irish peregrinati, Columbanus began his ministry as a scholar at the coastal monastery in Bangor. At age 60 he gathered a team of disciples and set out on a mission of evangelism, monastery-building, and disciple-making that led in a very significant way to the re-evangelization of much of southern Europe. Besides the sermons which have survived, there are also letters, poems, and rules of discipline from this missionary-monk’s hand which give us insight into his understanding of the Biblical worldview.

“For of what use is the religion of the outward man, if there is not also shown an improvement of the inner? That person can be false and thief, that person is false and a hypocrite, who displays one quality in his bearing and another in his character. Then let us not be like whitened sepulchers, let us study to show ourselves splendid and adorned within and not without; for true religion resides in lowliness not of habit but of heart. For where else does the Lord dwell, save in the heart of the truly humble, according to that saying of Isaiah, But on whom shall I look, or with whom shall I abide, save with the humble and peaceable and with him who fears My words? Therefore whoever wishes to be made God’s dwelling-place, should strive to make himself humble and peaceable, that he may be known to be God’s servant, not by his greed for talk and pliability of mien, but by the reality of his lowliness; for goodness of heart requires no false unction of talk. Idle then is a religion decorated with prostrations of the body, equally idle is the mortification of the flesh, and the hollow devotion of the outward man, unless it be accompanied by a fruitful moderation of the mind. What use is it for the passions to be assailed by a servant, when they are found to be in league with the master? Then, lest perhaps we should labour without fruit, let us take pains to be freed from our vices by God’s help, that thereafter we can be adorned with virtues. Thus let us cleanse ourselves as far as we are able from every taint of vices, from pride first, from ill-will, from anger, from blasphemy, from injustice, from spite, from melancholy, from vain glory, from covetousness, from malice, from all bitterness; that we may be possessed by lowliness, gentleness, kindness, courtesy, sobriety, mercy, justice, joy, and love.”

- Sermon II
Psalm 13

*Tune: Melita – “Eternal Father, Strong to Save”*

vv. 1, 2
How long, O Lord, O Lord, how long
Will You forget me and my song?
How long will You conceal Your face
And keep from me Your precious grace?
How long must I my soul consult?
When shall my weary heart exult?

vv. 2-4
Exalt not, Lord, my enemy;
Lord, hear my prayer and answer me!
Give light unto my weary eyes;
Let not death claim me for its prize.
Let not my foe rejoice to say
That I have fallen in the way.

vv. 5, 6
Yet I have trusted, Lord, in You;
Your lovingkindness sees me through.
My heart breaks forth in happy voice;
In Your salvation I rejoice!
Thus I will sing triumphantly:
“My God has dealt full well with me!”
**Week 6, Day 1**

Loving God – knowing, desiring, seeking, and obeying Him – is a whole-life affair, beginning in the inner person, as Columbanus insists. People consist of both body and soul, and are called to love God entirely with each.

*Read Genesis 2:1-18*

As we are created body and soul, so also we must live, not neglecting one for the other, but giving full attention to each in learning to love God.

1. People are material beings in a material world, each the product of the wisdom, power, goodness, and love of God. What does this passage – a detailed retelling of Genesis 1:26-31 – suggest about the relationship between human beings and the material world?

2. People are called to exercise rule and dominion over the earth, but in a manner which will continue to develop and extend the “goodness” that God seeks in His creation (cf. Gn. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). How would you explain the idea of this “goodness”?

3. In our reading for today, how many passages seem to relate to or suggest humanity’s physical interaction with the creation? In what ways?

4. Our text suggests a special kind of intimacy between human beings and God. We can see this in vv. 7, 8, 15, 16, and 18. How would you describe this intimacy which God intends for human beings with Himself? What is it about us that qualifies us to have that intimacy? Is it something primarily material? What?

5. The key to humanity’s purpose and calling is the nature of the inner essence and the way by this that they relate to God. Verses 16 and 17 suggest something very important about how that inner essence must function. What is it?

*Sing Psalm 13*
Week 6, Day 2
Columbanus looked to Scripture to give him the wisdom he needed to be the kind of person – inner and outer – that God created Him to be. God’s exhortation to us is ever the same.

*Read Proverbs 2:1-15*

_Solomon appeals to his son to gain wisdom from the words God had given him, and to keep careful watch over his life, inward and outward._

1. Below, list all the verbs in this passage that relate to what Solomon wants his son to do with the words he is giving him. Explain each one:

2. According to Solomon’s advice, how would you describe the relationship between receiving the Word like this and prayer? Why do these two disciplines seem to be so important to a healthy inner life?

3. If we will receive God’s Word and pray earnestly to live by it, what promises are held out to us (vv. 5-12)?

4. Which words in this passage seem to relate to the inner being? What does our text suggest about the relationship between, for example, the understanding (mind), the affections (heart), and the conscience (v. 11, “discretion”)? What enables these to function properly together?

5. Solomon’s words to his son follow the same pattern of God’s words to Adam in Genesis 2:16, 17 – and Columbanus’ words to his monks. What does this suggest about how we ought to approach the work of growing in and communicating Biblical worldview?

_Sing Psalm 13_
Week 6, Day 3
Columbanus reminds us that God is always looking on our inner being, to see just what kind of people we truly are.

Read John 2:13-25
It’s scary to think that Jesus knows just how much of Himself to show us, based on what’s going on within us.

1. See if you can describe what seems to have been going on within Jesus in vv. 13-15 in each of the following aspects of the inner being:
   - mind (information):
   - heart (affections):
   - conscience (values, choices):

2. On what basis did Jesus become so inwardly agitated as to perform such outwardly provocative actions (vv. 15, 16)? How is this consistent with what we have seen thus far?

3. Notice the focus of the religious leaders who accosted Jesus (v. 18). They asked Him a question about His practice – what He was doing. Is it tempting for us in our day to fixate primarily on what we should be doing, or on what others are or are not doing, rather than on seeking to serve God as whole persons? Explain.

4. I think v. 24 is one of the most subtle warnings in all of Scripture: You who want to love the Lord – to know, desire, seek, and obey Him – be careful about what you harbor within you. Why does this seem to be the admonition of this text?

5. How confident are you that your inner person is such that Jesus would gladly and ever more fully reveal Himself to you – let you know Him so as to grow in love for Him?

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Not all that confident       Very confident indeed

   Why did you circle the number you did?

Sing Psalm 13
Week 6, Day 4
Columbanus condemned idle religion that was all outward show with little inward reality. Apparently he was in good company.

*Read Acts 5:1-16*

The early Church had many struggles to overcome, and one of the greatest ones was helping the believers to keep focused on the true life of faith, the life of inward purity.

1. The sin of these two people did not consist in keeping a portion of the proceeds of the sale of their property. What was their sin? What did this reveal about their motives in this action? Whose glory were they seeking?

2. Peter says that in so doing this man and his wife were “testing the Spirit of the Lord” (v. 9)? In what sense does this action constitute a test of the Spirit? What should *we* learn from this test?

3. How can you see that the *failure* of Ananias’ and Sapphira’s inner person affect the inner persons of the other members of the Church (v. 11)? How did God’s action against their hypocrisy affect the Church as a whole (vv. 12-16)?

4. How *might* this man and woman have served to help one another keep their inner beings pure before the Lord? What does this suggest about the kinds of relationships we should be seeking with other believers?

5. This passage deals with the subjects of *purity of heart* and *prosperity of life*, both with respect to a man and his wife and the local body of believers in Jerusalem. What can you conclude from this brief study for individuals and for churches about these two subjects?

*Sing Psalm 13*
Week 6, Day 5
Columbanus argued that we must first cleanse our inner person from everything that keeps it from God, then be “adorned with virtues” as the Spirit of God works in us.

Read Colossians 3:5-10
Paul offers a brief catalog of the kinds of things that, as long as they lurk within us, can keep us from knowing the prosperity of life God intends for us.

1. What forms do each of the following take as they make their presence known in our inner being:
   - sexual immorality:
   - impurity:
   - passion:
   - evil desire:
   - covetousness:

2. Paul says that, as long as we harbor such things within us, we are susceptible to the wrath of God (v. 6). What form(s) might that wrath take in our lives?

3. We must not “walk” in such things, must not “live in” them. Then Paul gives us a renewed catalog of related inner vices, and the outward evils to which they lead (vv. 7, 8). How do you deal with these vices of the inner person whenever they make themselves known in you?

4. Paul indicates that we may use our outward lives to train our inward beings for godliness. Knowing what inward evil leads to, we can resolve to “put off” such “old self” ways and “put on the new self” instead. How might such outward discipline in time affect our inner beings?

5. This practice of using “contrary behavior” (positive actions) to correct “contrary behaviors” (vices within and without) is the basis for what Columbanus would have recognized as the practice of penance: “contraries by contraries improved.” Are there any “contrary” aspects of your inner being at present that are keeping you from loving God as you should? What might you do on the outer being to begin improving these?

Sing Psalm 13
**Week 6 Final Exercise**  
Love for God begins in the inner person. To the extent that we are consciously working to eradicate the vices and nurture the virtues of the inner life, we can expect that the Lord will entrust Himself more completely to us. As we grow in knowledge of the Lord, our desire for Him will lead to more earnest seeking, greater fear, and more consistent obedience. But it all begins within us: “For what use is the religion of the outward man, if there is not also shown an improvement of the inner?”

Describe (not simply name) the disciplines that you currently practice which are *consciously focused* on developing your inner life so that you might know and love the Lord more completely:

Are these adequate for where you are in your love for God at present? Meet with your prayer partner to discuss this and pray together.

**Week 6 Worldview Observation**  
Pay attention to the popular media for a few days – TV, advertising, news, and so forth. To which aspects of the inner person do these most frequently appeal? Is this likely to develop vices or virtues in the inner being of our contemporaries? Explain.
Week 7: With All Your Heart

If we are to love God it must begin in our inner beings. As we are transformed within and begin to put on the new self in Christ, the Lord makes Himself known to us more fully, and the process of growing in love for Him accelerates. We need to analyze our inner being a little more carefully, so that we can understand how each component of our soul contributes to a life of loving God and neighbor. In Sermon VIII, Columbanus pointed to the affections – the heart – as the key to loving God in the inner being.

“Our first duty is to love nothing here; but let us place our affections above, our desires above, our wisdom above, and above let us seek our home: for the fatherland is where the Father is. Thus we have no home on earth, since our Father is in heaven. And indeed, if He is everywhere in virtue of His power and by the greatness of His Godhead, He is deeper than the ocean, firmer than the earth, broader than the world, clearer than air, higher than heaven, brighter than the sun; yet He dwells openly in the heavens, where He is the bread of angels, who as His retinue inhabit the blessed palace of the highest heaven, and enjoy the sight of God. But since our weaker nature could not bear the pure nature of the invisible God, for that reason God in His goodness, in Whom are all things and beyond Whom is nothing, allotted to the supreme virtues the first region of the knowledge of Himself, which He bounded by the first heaven, and mollified that heaven by the waters that are above; for unless the nature of the first heaven were mollified by the aforesaid waters, it would be set on fire by the virtue of the Most High God, and could by no means be endured by lower natures; and so, while everywhere present to all, God remains invisible. For He is greater than what could be seen entire, and greater than all things, for He created all of nothing; and thus when seen He is imperceptible, since Who He is and how great He is, to Himself alone is known. Yet let us beseech Him, since God the Trinity, though imperceptible and imponderable, is known and present to each one, in proportion to the deserts of our purity. Let us beseech Him, I say, at least here, that there we may more closely approach, or more clearly understand, and singing on our journey let us say, Let us run after Thee towards the odour of Thy perfumes, and, My soul has clung behind Thee, and, Draw me after Thee; that with these songs we may speedily pass through the world, and controlled from above may scorn the things of the present, and ever thinking of heavenly things may shun the things of earth; for unless we long unweariedly with heavenly desires, we needs must be entangled with earthly ones.”

- Sermon VIII
Psalm 51:1-13

Tune: Passion Chorale – “O Sacred Head Now Wounded”

vv. 1-3
Be gracious to me, Savior, according to Your love!
According to Your mercy, my sins, my sins remove!
O wash me, precious Savior, and cleanse me from all sin;
Look on me with Your favor, and cause my grief to end.

vv. 4-6
Against You only, Savior have I become unclean;
Thus just the condemnation which You pronounce on me.
Lord, I was born to sinning, while You seek truth within;
To wisdom my heart winning, release me from my sin!

vv. 7-9
In Jesus’ blood and mercy, Lord, cleanse my evil heart!
Let me washed, cleansed, renewed be and pure in whole and part.
Bring joy again and gladness; look not upon my sin.
Deliver me from sadness; renew me yet again!

vv. 10-13
Create in me a clean heart, renew me from within!
Take not Your Spirit from me because of all my sin.
Salvation’s joy restore, Lord, and keep me in Your hand;
Thus shall I tell Your strong Word to sinners in the land.
Week 7, Day 1
The heart is the seat of the affections, the place where desires and longings are nurtured. Columbanus believed that we must train the heart to seek heavenly things.

Read Deuteronomy 30:1-10
Throughout the period of the Old Covenant, Israel’s main problem was that they had no heart for God (cf. Dt. 5:29, where the ESV translates “mind” instead of “heart”). God understood this, and resolved to meet this great need.

1. This passage prophesies of the exile to Babylon and Israel’s return to the land, but goes beyond that period to speak of a time when God promised to meet Israel’s greatest need (v. 6). What is that, and what does it mean? How does God do this?

2. According to vv. 6-10, what are the effects of this gracious action on God’s part?

3. As Paul understands it (Gal. 4:6, Rom. 5:5), by what power is God able to circumcise a person’s heart and bring forth such effects in him?

4. Below, briefly summarize your experience of what this passage describes. What was your situation in life when God “circumcised your heart”? How have you seen the promised effects of the Spirit at work in you?

5. Can we expect people to embrace the Biblical worldview who have no heart for God? Why or why not?

Sing Psalm 51:1-13
Week 7, Day 2
Only a God as great and powerful as Columbanus described could possibly accomplish what Moses foretold, and what Jeremiah promised as well.

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34
Jeremiah picks up Moses’ thread and sheds greater light on what God is promising to do.

1. What was wrong with the Old Covenant? Was the problem with the Old Covenant or with Israel? Explain.

2. The New Covenant, promised here, will be “not like” that Old one. In what ways?

3. The New Covenant differs from the Old not so much in content (v. 33) but in thrust. What is the thrust of the New Covenant? Why is the Holy Spirit essential to achieving this thrust?

4. But notice the promised effects of the New Covenant. We can identify three in vv. 32-34. How would you explain the importance of each of these?
   - “I will be their God, and they shall be my people”:

   - “they shall all know me”:

   - “I will forgive their iniquity”:

5. The New Covenant, and the Biblical worldview that issues from it, flows from a renewed heart, where true knowledge of God and vital, vibrant relationship with Him are nurtured. God initiates this work, but we must participate in it as well. According to Columbanus, what must begin increasingly to be the primary orientation of our hearts – our affections and desires? Explain how one might begin to achieve this:

Sing Psalm 51:1-13
Week 7, Day 3
As Columbanus reminds us in his last sentence, a heart not oriented to heavenly things is a heart “dragging its tongue” (Ps. 73:9) across earthly things – with the expected results.

Read Matthew 15:10-20
Jesus warned His disciples to pay special attention to what goes on in our hearts.

1. Why do you suppose the Pharisees “were offended” by what Jesus said in v. 10 (you might want to review vv. 1-9)? What was Jesus warning against?

2. The real issue, Jesus said, at least not in the first instance, is not how careful we are about what we patch on to ourselves, as what we allow to settle into our hearts. How did Jesus emphasize the importance of guarding the heart in these verses?

3. What kinds of things can flow from an unguarded heart (v. 19)? But can such a heart bring forth wickedness that actually looks like good (the Pharisees)? What seems to have been the orientation of the Pharisees’ hearts?

4. How might a person tell when the orientation of his heart was beginning to drift from that which Columbanus prescribed? If not always in our outward actions, then how? What role can we play in helping to keep one another’s hearts properly focused?

5. How can praying and singing a psalm like Psalm 51:1-13 – “singing on our journey”, as Columbanus has it – help us to keep our hearts properly oriented to heavenly things?

Sing Psalm 51:1-13
Columbanus suggests that there is a relationship between how well we know the Lord and our ability to keep our hearts focused on heavenly things. But there are many distractions.

*Read Ephesians 6:5-9*

*Surely one of the great temptations distracting our hearts from God is the desire to please men.*

1. What does Paul contrast with a “sincere heart” and “doing the will of God from the heart” in these verses?

2. Why do you suppose the temptation to be a “people-pleaser” is so great? How do you experience this temptation?

3. Paul indicates that our motivation in all we do should be to receive good back from the Lord (v. 8). Reflect on this in the light of Columbanus’ statement that “God the Trinity…is known and present to each one, in proportion to the deserts of our purity.” What is the “good” we should expect from the Lord, and that comes from keeping our hearts properly focused?

4. According to v. 9, how can keeping our hearts focused on heavenly things keep us from sinning against those we are called to serve?

5. Certainly people-pleasing is a “contrary” we need to address. How would you counsel someone who was beginning to grow in his faith to recognize and deal with this temptation, and to keep his heart pure?

*Sing Psalm 51:1-13*
**Week 7, Day 5**

A God as vast and great as Columbanus described certainly would be able to know what was going on in our hearts.

*Read Revelation 2:18-29*

Apparently the “heart” of a church can lose its focus as well.

1. The Lord begins His letter to this church with a commendation. If He were to write to your church, for what would He be able to commend it? Is it important to keep such things in mind, and to practice such commendations? Why or why not?

2. But this church had let its heart go. How can you see that people-pleasing was about to destroy this congregation?

3. The Lord Jesus “searches mind and heart” (v. 23). Recall Paul’s warning about wrath coming on wicked hearts (Week 1, Day 5, number 2). What forms can that wrath take on a church with a heart improperly focused? Have you ever seen anything like this?

4. What is involved in “holding fast” to the things Christ has given us? How does this relate to our hearts? The “heart” of our church?

5. How can you see Christ trying to re-orient the heart of this church to the same kinds of things Columbanus wrote about? What does this suggest for those called to teach Biblical worldview in their churches?

*Sing Psalm 51:1-13*
Week 7 Final Exercise
Below are some of the affections that issue from our hearts. See if you can define each one:
- fear:
- hate:
- desire:
- compassion:
- revulsion:
- longing:
- hope:
- indifference:
- kindheartedness:
- anger:

Each of these is a valid affection, and can serve properly to help us grow in love for God and others. What matters in these “matters of the heart” is how those affections are focused and the intensity of that focus. For example, hate is a valid affection for Christians, Psalm 97:10. It can also destroy us. How? And love is a good affection – when properly focused (1 Jn. 2:15), but it can also waver in intensity at times (Rev. 2:2-4). How do we keep up the proper intensity, as well as the proper focus, of our hearts?

With each of these affections of the heart, explain how they can be both helpful and destructive. What suggestions would you make for intensifying the proper focus of these affections? Meet with your prayer partner to discuss your observations and pray.

Week 7 Worldview Observation
Which affections, and what kinds of foci, seem to be guiding the lives of our contemporaries? Can you see any areas in which the affections of people today are improperly focused? What about the Christians you know? In teaching Biblical worldview is it necessary to challenge the affections of our students? How might we do that?
Week 8: With All Your Mind

The inner being – the soul – consists of heart, mind, and conscience. The mind must be renewed in the Word of God if it is to rule the affections properly. Columbanus understood this well, and he insisted that his monks be thoroughly trained in the commandments of the Lord.

“Moses wrote in the law, God made man in His image and likeness. Mark, I beg you, the distinction of this saying; God the omnipotent, unseen, unfathomable, ineffable, unsearchable, when making man of clay, ennobled him with the distinction of His image. What comparison has man with God? What is there between earth and spirit? For God is Spirit. It is a great dignity that God bestowed on man the image of His eternity and the likeness of His character. A grand distinction for man is the likeness of God. For if he prostitutes for the opposite employment what he has received from the breath of God, and corrupts the blessing of his nature, then he perverts the likeness of God and destroys it as far as in him lies; yet if he employs the virtues planted in his soul to a proper end, then he will be like God. So whatever virtues God sowed in us in our original state, He taught us in the commandments to restore the same to Him. This is the first, To love our Lord with the whole heart, since He first loved us from the beginning and before we were. For the love of God is the restoration of His image. But he loves God who observes His commands; for He said, If you love Me, keep My commands. This is His command, a mutual love, according to that saying, This is My command, that you love one another, as I also have loved you. But true love is not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Therefore let us restore to our God, our Father, His own image undefiled in holiness, since He is holy, according to that saying, Be ye holy, since I am holy; in love, since He is love, according to that saying of John, God is love; in righteousness and truth, since He is righteous and true.”

- Sermon XI
Psalm 27
Tune: Joanna – “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

vv. 1-3
Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear!
You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear?
Though evil surround us, our enemies fall;
No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

vv. 4-6
One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord.
Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word.
In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace;
No foe may o’erride us: We sing of Your praise!

vv. 7-10
Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!
Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day!
Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,
Preserve our good station when on You we call.

vv. 11-13
Lord, teach us; Lord, lead us because of our foes!
Hear, Lord, when we plead for release from their woes.
Had we not believed all Your goodness to see,
Our heart sorely grieved and in turmoil would be.

v. 14
Wait, wait on the Lord; persevere in His grace.
Hold fast to His Word; seek His radiant face.
Be strong, set your heart to abide in His Word;
His grace He imparts; therefore, wait on the Lord.
Week 8, Day 1
We cannot love God with our minds as long as our minds are filled with the world’s view of things, rather than God’s Law.

Read Romans 12:1-21
Genuine love for God and others flows from a renewed mind, which leads to right thinking and sound living.

1. How might you be able to tell when someone’s thinking was more conformed to this world than to the Word of God?

2. Paul says (following the English Standard Version) that the transformation of our minds comes through “testing” and “discernment” so that we might discover what is “good and acceptable and perfect” (v. 2). Explain each of these terms:

3. A renewed mind helps us to focus our thinking properly concerning ourselves and others. How does Paul indicate this in vv. 3-8? How would we show by our relationships with others that our thoughts were conformed to the Law of love rather than the ways of the world?

4. The remainder of this passage is filled with terms that only make sense if we have the right definition of them – if our minds are rightly in tune with what God requires. Give some examples from vv. 9-21:

5. Is it possible to exercise such love toward others without first loving God and His Law with our minds? Explain.

Sing Psalm 27
Week 8, Day 2
In Christian growth we are seeking to restore the image of God to uprightness within us. Thus we must continually resist the temptation to “prostitute” our minds, and always be yielding them to God for renewal.

*Read Ephesians 4:17-24*
Paul gives us another perspective on the renewal of our minds.

1. What are the characteristics of a mind “prostituted” to the things of this world (vv. 17-19)? Define each of the terms Paul uses here.

2. What verb in v. 20 indicates the key to shaking free of this kind of thinking?

3. Notice how, again, Paul tells us that part of the renewing of the mind has to do with “putting off” the “contraries” of the old self and “putting on” the ways of the new self (“contraries are by contraries improved”). If vv. 17-19 describe the “contraries” of the old self and its worldly mind, and v. 20 gives us the key to the “new self” and its mind, what would be some of the specific behaviors a person would need to adopt in order to begin realizing more of the new self? That is, what kinds of activities are encompassed in the verb you identified in v. 20?

4. As Columbanus observed, the new self we are striving to realize is, as Paul has it, “created after the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness” (v. 24). Is it likely that we will want to have a mind devoted to righteousness and holiness if we do not first nurture a heart inclined to such things? Explain.

5. By now you should be starting to get some glimpse of how the heart and mind work together in the soul to help us grow in love for God and His ways. Summarize your thoughts on this:

*Sing Psalm 27*
Week 8, Day 3
It matters where we focus our minds, just as it matters where we focus our hearts. The more our minds are oriented to heavenly things, the more our lives will express the reality of God’s Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

Read Colossians 3:1-4
As we return to this chapter and pick up the first four verses, we see that what Paul urged concerning the heart in vv. 5-10 is dependent on having a proper focus for our minds.

1. What are some of the “things that are above, where Christ is” (v. 1)? Describe as many as you can, and cite any Scripture references that can support your descriptions.

2. How does one “seek” such things? Why is this good advice?

3. What does it mean to “set your minds on things that are above” (v. 2)? Suggest some ways that you might practice this more consistently throughout the day.

4. Christ is in glory now (v. 4), and we are on a journey the destination of which is glory as well. How do you envision Christ in glory? Should “seeking” that glory and “setting your mind” on it more consistently have any impact on your life? Your worldview? Explain.

5. Paul is exhorting us to think hard and often about “unseen things.” According to Hebrews 11:1, why is this utterly necessary to the life of faith?

Sing Psalm 27
**Week 8, Day 4**

Peter is in complete agreement with Paul and Columbanus.

*Read 1 Peter 1:3-25*

*Unseen things, minds prepared for action, lives conformed to the way of Christ – this is getting to be familiar stuff!*

1. In verses 3-9 Peter mentions a number of those “unseen things” which, he says, we presently believe in and, therefore, think longingly about. What are they?

2. Not even the angels can understand the mysteries of God’s revelation as well as we can (v. 12)! Why is that (v. 12)? This same cure for our sinful hearts seems to have power to improve our sinful minds as well. Why is this? How should this instruct us?

3. Peter tells us we must “prepare our minds for action” (v. 13). How would you define each of these terms to explain what that involves:
   - “being sober-minded”:
   - “set your hope on the grace that will be brought to you”:
   - “as he who called you is holy”:

4. In v. 17 and v. 19 Peter indicates that our motivation for being transformed in this life is what we understand about God and what we understand about Christ – and, consequently, why and how we love them. From these verses, what do we know about God and Christ that should motivate us to prepare our minds and hearts for Kingdom action? Why should this make us love them?

5. We know God and Christ through what they have revealed in the Word, which “remains forever” (v. 25). How important is the Word of God to the renewing of our minds, and to loving Him so fervently that we obey Him in loving others? What disciplines do you presently pursue in order to help you grow in that Word?

*Sing Psalm 27*
Week 8, Day 5
“But true love is not in word only, but in deed and in truth.” Columbanus concurs with Peter. Right thinking is not enough; right living must follow.

Read 1 Peter 3:8-12
And Peter wants to remind us just why it is important to let our transformed minds lead to right living.

1. Define each of the following:
   - unity of mind:

   - sympathy:

   - brotherly love:

   - a tender heart:

   - a humble mind:

2. How can you see that each of these involves a heart rightly focused and a mind properly transformed?

3. When the rightly-focused heart and the transformed mind are made to work together properly (the job of the conscience, as we shall see), what happens (vv. 9-11)?

4. Love issues from the confluence of a pure heart and a transformed mind. But we will only be motivated to seek these as we keep in mind what Peter tells us in v. 12. Why should this motivate us to love? How is this related to loving God?

5. We love God with our minds when, out of a heart inclined and devoted to God, we submit to the teachings of His forever-remaining Word. As we do this, how does our renewed mind then help in the continuing improvement of our heart? And how does this affect our mind? Our love for God?

Sing Psalm 27
**Week 8 Final Exercise**
Here is a diagram of the soul – the inner being – as far as we have investigated its workings. How would you explain each of the aspects of this diagram? Why, for example, is the soul represented by a dotted line? What is the heart? The mind? Why are there arrows interacting between them? What do they mean? What does the arrow toward God indicate? Toward other people?

Meet with your prayer partner and discuss what you are learning about loving God with all your heart and all your mind. Pray together.

**Week 8 Worldview Observation**
The worldviews of this age are decidedly “this worldly” in their focus. How do they regard any investment of intellectual activity in the “unseen things” of the Biblical worldview? How do they communicate this attitude through the vehicles of popular culture? How should we be working to equip God’s people to “prepare their minds for action” against these contrary attitudes of the unbelieving worldviews of our day?
Week 9: With All Your Soul

The third aspect of the soul mentioned in Scripture is the conscience, that part of the soul which processes thoughts and feelings into choices and decisions of the will. It is the center of judgment, discernment, and valuing. Columbanus rarely used the word, “conscience”, in his teaching, but he clearly understood the importance of valuing that which is eternal over that which fades away, as we see in Sermon VII.

“Thus he toils in vain who nourishes such passions, and sows into the wind who serves this empty will, where the payment of service does not profit. Then let those passions hunger, which are so unthankful, so burdensome, that they seem ever hungry. Those who nourish them deceive themselves. Disgraceful servitude that takes pleasure in the flesh! Harsh and irresistible, fierce though domestic usurpation, that is daily paid and daily demanded, each day goes and comes, having left sated, returns hungry! Alas for those who batten where famine reigns and is not overcome by riches, and while these dews are paid others are demanded. For render the first and you will be forced to pay out the second; nourish your appetite, and you will be dunned for lust. Thus we must cry with Susannah, Straits surround me on all sides, and with Paul we must exclaim and say, Wretched man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death? If you pay the essentials, you will be forced to render non-essentials. Then if, unhappy man, you fear to render the second, refuse the first if you are able; if not, render sparingly, pay out miserly, pay nothing except against your will, give nothing freely. But you cannot, I see; this is worse and graver, that you love your usurers, and your enemy is your own friend. I know not what to say, and have no inkling of what to urge. One thing I know I shall say: the man who here battens, here sates himself, here makes merry, here smiles, here is drunken, and here plays, shall hereafter hunger, thirst, mourn, wail, and lament, as the Lord has said, Woe to those who smile, for they shall mourn, and, Woe to you who are sated, for you shall hunger. For two ages and two lives succeed each other, and there are two worlds; one life is brief, the other long, and he who hunger in the one shall be batten in the other; indeed he who here in the one devours, is sated and comforted, and in the other shall hunger and thirst, according to that saying of Isaiah, For this reason saith the Lord, Lo, those who serve Me shall eat and drink, but you shall hunger and thirst, and a little later, Lo, those who serve Me shall leap for joy, but you shall cry for grief of heart and lament for remorse of spirit. Since then these things are so, we should spare our riches, and pay the least service to our short-lived will, lest our battening result in hunger, our satiety perhaps in famine, and our drinking in thirst; for we see that either here or hereafter one of the two must needs be undergone. Wherefore if we are sated, if we drink, wretched men that we are, let us eat here in part and not entirely, let us eat what is needful, not what panders; let us eat with the poor, drink with the poor, share with the poor, that even so we may deserve to share with the poor in that place where they shall be satisfied who here for Christ’s sake hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

- Sermon VII
Psalm 142

*Tune: Dix – “For the Beauty of the Earth”*

vv. 1, 2
With my voice, O Lord, I cry –
Hear my plea for mercy, Lord!
My complaint mounts up on high,
Bringing You my troubled word:

**Refrain** vv. 5, 6
Lord, You are my Refuge strong!
O receive my plaintive song!

v. 3
When my spirit faints away,
You my faltering pathway know;
Where I take my journey they
Traps have hidden to my woe.

**Refrain**

v. 4
Lord, look to my right and see:
None takes notice of my plight.
Is there refuge left for me?
Is my soul out of Your sight?

**Refrain**

v. 6
Hear my cry, Lord, I am low!
They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe;
He will keep and make me whole!

**Refrain**

v. 7
Out of prison lead me, Lord;
Thanks and praise to You shall be.
Righteous men armed with Your Word
Will Your grace bestow on me.

**Refrain**
Week 9, Day 1
The unredeemed conscience – like the uncircumcised heart and the untransformed mind – is in deep trouble. It will continue to feast on the fading food of this world, and heap up dead works unto itself.

Read Hebrews 9:11-14
Dead consciences produce dead works, because they induce the mind and heart to will what is fading.

1. Look at how the writer of Hebrews refers to the unredeemed conscience (v. 14). This is what Columbanus is preaching about in the quote that begins this week: Dead consciences feast on dead things, making choices that result in dead works. Reflect on your own experience prior to your redemption. Can you see how this was true of you? Explain.

2. The writer of Hebrews is arguing the power of Christ’s redeeming work to do in us what no sacrifices of the Old Covenant could: a full and transforming redemption. We’ve used the word “circumcised” to refer to the redeemed heart, and “transformed” concerning the redeemed mind. What might we use to refer to the conscience (v. 14, cf. 1 Tim. 1:5)?

3. A “cleansed” or “good” conscience is one that works according to the purposes of Christ’s redemption. How would you expect such a valuing center, a judging center, to affect the heart and mind in our inner being?

4. Since the conscience is the arbiter of heart and mind – the judging, discerning, or valuing center of the soul – what kind of input, information, or other valuating criteria do we need to supply our souls if they are to function as God intends?

5. What can we expect if we fail regularly to supply such criteria?

Sing Psalm 142
Week 9, Day 2
The supreme value which the redeemed conscience promotes is love. Mere knowledge is not love; nor is rigid legalism. Only one Reference, only one Example can guide our consciences in the way of love.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

1. What is it about “mere knowledge” that, as Paul puts it, “puffs up”? What does such knowledge lack to keep it from this pitfall?

2. To what kinds of outcomes can such “mere knowledge” lead? What did Paul fear for the Corinthians in this passage?

3. Instead of relying on mere knowledge, Paul counsels – as did Columbanus in the excerpt beginning this week’s study – that we set our sights squarely on God and Christ (v. 6). Paul uses five prepositions in v. 6 to explain how we rightly relate to God when matters of conscience are on the line. Here is the ESV of this text: “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (emphasis added). Briefly explain how a right understanding of these prepositions can help to teach our consciences right priorities:

4. According to Paul, are we responsible only for the right formation of our own consciences (v. 10)? How does he obligate us in this passage when it comes to helping others realize the proper functioning of their consciences?

5. What does it mean to “wound” someone’s conscience (v. 12)? How might you “wound” your own conscience? Someone else’s?

Sing Psalm 142
Week 9, Day 3
Columbanus seems to have been warning his hearers against the kinds of attachments to the flesh that can lead to what the writer of Hebrews might have called an “evil conscience.”

Read Hebrews 10:19-25
If we do not address the requirements of a redeemed conscience, we shall surely fall prey to the natural evil bent of this critical component of the soul.

1. If a redeemed conscious stirs us up to love and good works, how might we be able to tell when the old remnants of an evil conscience were still at work in us? In your case, what might that look like?

2. A “clean conscience” seems to come alive in the presence of the exalted Lord (vv. 19-22). In many passages (cf. Col. 3:1-3) the Apostle Paul exhorts us to focus our minds and hearts on the exalted Christ and the glories of heaven. I think the writer of Hebrews is getting at the same thing here: we nurture a conscience that functions as God intends as we dwell in the light – and presence – of the Lord of glory. How should you expect to practice this discipline throughout the day?

3. Here the writer shows us how heart, mind (vision of Christ, understanding of our redemption in Him), and conscience work together to produce God-honoring practices. Which two kinds of practices in particular (vv. 23, 24)? Do you think we can consistently achieve such practices if we neglect to develop any of the three aspects of the redeemed soul?

4. What does v. 25 suggest about how we might expect to continue developing our love for God from the soul?

5. How do the kinds of disciplines and practices mentioned in this passage demonstrate love for God from the soul?

Sing Psalm 142
Week 9, Day 4
Columbanus advised us to “pay the least service to our short-lived will” (emphasis added). He wanted us to develop that aspect of the will (conscience) that functions with the “long view” in focus.

Read Romans 2:12-29
There is a critical connection between the Law of God and the work of the conscience.

1. Paul says that, even in unbelievers, the works of the Law of God are evident, and their consciences are engaged with those works (vv. 13-15). What evidence have you seen that this is true?

2. It is not enough to simply acknowledge the Law and its importance. For what does Paul argue instead (vv. 17-25)? What is the role of the conscience in leading to this?

3. According to v. 29, what is ultimately necessary to ensure that the various aspects of our souls – mind, heart, and conscience – are functioning in love to God as they should?

4. So Paul sees a prominent place for the Law and for the Spirit in producing genuine faith and love for God. How would you explain the relationship between these? How would you counsel a new believer to make sure he or she was getting the benefit each affords?

5. What are you presently doing to ensure that the Law and the Spirit are working unto love for God in your soul?

Sing Psalm 142
**Week 9, Day 5**

Columbanus calls us to “starve” those passions which encrust the conscience and corrupt heart and mind. Paul seems to have been fairly confident that he was doing just that.

*Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-23*

*Paul measured the sincerity of his conscience, and of his love for God and men, by the evidence of his life.*

1. This is not the only place that Paul pled a “clear conscience” (cf. Acts 23:1). How did he make that judgment with respect to his relationship to the Corinthians?

2. Define each of the following terms as Paul seems to be using them here (v. 12, ESV):
   - simplicity:
   - godly sincerity:
   - earthly wisdom:
   - grace of God:

   How do these relate to having a “clear conscience”?

3. In vv. 17-22 Paul refers the actions of his clear conscience to the eternal perspective within which he lived. Explain what he is doing here as he justifies the decisions and actions he took concerning the Corinthians.

4. Paul’s conscience was clear, as he saw it, because he kept his soul always in the presence of the One Who loved him and died for Him. His love for Christ seems both to have *motivated* and *expressed* the actions of his redeemed (“clear”) conscience. How can you see this?

5. Thus, the exalted Christ is both the *reference point* for and *approver of* (v. 22, “seal”) the redeemed conscience. What are the implications of this for your own growth in loving God and others?

*Sing Psalm 142*
**Week 9 Final Exercise**
Let’s bring together all the components of the soul and their intended effects. Here is the diagram we began at the end of last week’s studies. In the proper place, show where the conscience fits into the soul (the dotted circle) and indicate with arrows how it relates to the heart and mind. Explain how the conscience is intended to function with respect to each of the other components in the diagram:

![Diagram](image)

Meet with your mentor and prayer partner to discuss your observations from this week’s study.

**Week 9 Worldview Observation**
Spend some time observing the people around you – at work, in church, on television, at public places. In what ways do they seem to reflect consciences shaped more by the “tastes” of this world (Columbanus) than the “tastes” of the eternal realm. How many different ways can you observe that their surroundings work more for the corruption than the redemption of their consciences?
Week 10: Renewing the Inner Person

We are called to love God with all our heart, mind, and conscience – our whole soul, all our inner person. If we do not work at this, we shall not be able to love Him with our strength (practices). During this week’s studies we’ll be looking from various perspectives at what we must do to maintain constant renewal of our souls. Columbanus, in Sermon III, points us in the right direction, by reminding us of the things that really matter.

“If any man, to whom God has granted it, understands what life he ought to live to become eternal in place of mortal, wise in place of stupid, heavenly in place of earthly, first let him keep his discernment pure that he may employ it for living well, and look not on what is but on what shall be. For that which is not shall be, and he should consider what he sees not, by means of what he sees, and attempt to be what he was created, and call God’s grace to help his striving; for it is impossible for anyone to acquire by his own efforts alone what he lost in Adam. But what help is it to gain discernment and not to use it well? He uses it well who lives in such a way that he may never repent ¹ or forget repentance; for a late repentance proves bad habits, while a good conscience commends man’s life. So what should a pure discernment learn to love? Assuredly that which makes it love all else besides, ever remains and never grows old. No other outward thing ought to be loved, according to the reckoning of truth, except eternity and the eternal will, which is inspired and quickened by the Eternal, Wonderful, Ineffable, Invisible, Incomprehensible, Who fills all things and passes beyond all things, Who is present and yet eludes our grasp. The wise man should love nothing here, since nothing lasts; for there eternal things are with the Eternal, here transitory things are with the mortal. Thus it is perilous to dwell amongst deceptions and deceits, and not to see the truths you ought to love, and in addition to see things that entice you by their flight, and as in a dream allure you to sin with them, and smilingly beguile you (hateful as it is) and thus steal away the things that are justly lovable, as though they did not exist.”

¹ That is, have need of repentance.
Psalm 34
*Tune: Alleluia (Lowe) – “Mighty God, While Angels Bless You”*

vv. 1, 2
I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!

*Refrain v. 3*
Magnify the Name of Jesus! Let us lift His Name in praise!

vv. 4, 5
When I sought the Lord, He answered and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.

*Refrain*

vv. 6, 7
When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
‘Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.

*Refrain*

vv. 8, 9
Taste and see how good is Jesus; blest are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e’er confide.

*Refrain*

vv. 10, 11
Though the beasts succumb to hunger, all who seek Him all things have.
Listen, children, I will teach you how to fear Him who can save.

*Refrain*

vv. 12-14
Turn to good from wicked wand’ring; peace pursue through all your days.

*Refrain*

vv. 15-17
For the eyes of Jesus ever look to meet His people’s need.
Though He stands against the wicked, He will hear us when we plead.

*Refrain*

vv. 18, 19
When for help we cry to Jesus, He will save for He is near.
He delivers us from trouble, for He holds us ever dear.

*Refrain*
vv. 19, 20
See the Righteous as He suffers: God will save Him through His pains.
All His bones He keeps through suff'ring; every one, intact, remains.

Refrain

vv. 21, 22
Let affliction slay the wicked; they who hate us are condemned!
Jesus saves His faithful servants, all who refuge seek in Him.

Refrain
Week 10, Day 1
Columbanus called his hearers to a life of careful introspection – “discernment” – lest they lose their proper focus and fall into worldly ways. Good advice.

Read Hebrews 3:1-19
The writer of Hebrews understood well where the problems arise that can keep us from growing in love for God.

1. Let’s examine this passage from the perspective of how it speaks to the soul – the mind (understanding), the heart (affections, desires), and the conscience (values, priorities). First, the mind: the writer counsels us to maintain a particular kind of orientation for our minds in vv. 1-6. Summarize the key elements of that orientation:

2. In vv. 7-11 the writer seems to turn his focus from what we are to understand to what we are to value – from the mind to the conscience. What priorities must guide our decisions and actions, according to these verses (v. 7)?

3. In v. 12, what are we called to guard against? How might we know when that was beginning to rear up within us?

4. A mind set on heavenly things, a conscience submitted to the Word of God, and a heart clean and full of faith: these must be our constant focus for ongoing renewal in the inner person, just as Columbanus indicates. What help does v. 13 suggest? How might that work out in your situation?

5. Summarize what we learn from this passage about maintaining renewal in the inner person:

Sing Psalm 34:1-5
Week 10, Day 2
Columbanus counsels us to “see the truths you ought to love” if you would have true discernment and know the joys of the life to which God has called us.

Read Hebrews 4:11-13
Here the writer of Hebrews bears down on a critical component of the renewal of the soul in love for God.

1. What a strange juxtaposition of concepts: “strive to enter that rest” (v. 11). The rest, of course, is the rest from doing our own works in our own strength to resting in the finished work of Christ and the ongoing work of His Spirit. How would you counsel someone to “strive” for that rest?

2. The Word of God is crucial to entering and staying in that rest, and to the ongoing renewal of our souls. Explain each of the following ideas related to the Word of God:
   - living:
   - active:
   - two-edged sword:

3. The Word reaches to our souls and accomplishes a kind of “spiritual sorting-out” as it is received there (v. 12). How does the Word accomplish this “discerning” work in your soul? How do you experience it? Would you say that it sheds light on all three of the components of your soul?

4. Who else is watching as the Word does its work in your soul (v. 13)? How should this help us as we are involved in reading and studying the Word? How should we take advantage of this?

5. Briefly summarize the role of the Word of God as it relates to the ongoing renewal of your soul. Are you experiencing this work as fully as you would like? Explain.

Sing Psalm 34:6-9
Week 10, Day 3
God’s grace is available to help us in our striving, Columbanus reminds us; but we need to make sure that we are doing all that is required of us as well.

Read Philippians 4:4-9
Every time I read one of these crisp Pauline summaries of what I need to be doing, I’m reminded of Steve Martin’s routine about how to be a millionaire: “First, get a million dollars.”

1. What is the promise of the renewed soul (vv. 7, 9, the “priority” or “value” we might say)? Why is this such a blessing – to us, and to others?

2. When we feel our souls becoming troubled about something (“anxious”) we need to respond in appropriate ways, lest anxiousness set in and our souls become distressed. Outline Paul’s prescription for how to keep your soul renewed in the face of threats to fear and anxiety, following the verses as indicated:
   - v. 4:
   - v. 5:
   - v. 6:
   - v. 8:
   - v. 9:

3. How can you see from this passage that the heart (affections), mind, and conscience all need to be addressed if we are to realize what Paul holds out for us (peace)?

4. Summarize in a single sentence Paul’s approach to keeping our souls renewed as you see it in this passage:

5. Now, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest rating, assess your own practice of this approach to maintaining the renewed soul you described. Why did you choose the number you did?

Sing Psalm 34:10-14
Week 10, Day 4
David clearly understood the importance of having our souls right before the Lord in everything we do. See how his words in today’s passage resonate with the exhortation of Columbanus.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-22
David is here using “heart” as a synecdoche, in which the one part of the soul (heart) is made to stand for the whole (heart, mind, and conscience).

1. The people have just accomplished an enormous offering of treasure for the construction of the temple in Jerusalem (vv. 1-9). How can you see in vv. 10-13 that David anticipated Columbanus’ mindset in this project? How do you suppose David maintained that mindset as all that treasure began to be heaped up at his feet?

2. How would you describe David’s attitude in the midst of this project (vv. 14, 15)? How might what he says in v. 17 have helped him in maintaining this attitude?

3. Look at v. 18, which, in the ESV, includes the phrase, “keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people.” Why didn’t David just pray, “Lord, always give us so much stuff”?

4. David prayed that God would keep the souls of His people “upright” (cf. Eccl. 7:29 – “in original condition”). What does this suggest for us as part of a strategy for maintaining renewal in our inner persons?

5. What do we learn from this passage about how the souls of people, rightly related to God, affect the work they’ve been called to do? Apply this to yourself in a sentence or two.

Sing Psalm 34:15-9
Week 10, Day 5
Maintaining renewal in our souls is an ongoing work. It begins, as Columbanus reminds us, with a proper focusing of mind and heart on the things that matter most, so that true discernment (the work of a “good conscience”) might proceed.

Read Proverbs 4:20-27
Solomon learned from his father well, and counseled his own son concerning the importance of maintaining constant vigilance over his ways.

1. We cannot love God — and, therefore, the people around us — unless our minds are submitted to God’s Word faithfully. Summarize Solomon’s teaching on this matter in vv. 20-22:

2. Likewise, we must “keep” (the Hebrew is, “guard”) our hearts “with all vigilance.” Why (v. 23)? How would you counsel someone to “guard” his or her heart?

3. Verses 24-27 talk about the kind of practices that issue from a soul with right priorities. Such a soul depends on keeping the conscience valuing the things that matter most. What does each of the following words suggest about the kinds of values that ought to characterize our renewed consciences?
   - crooked (v. 24):
   - devious (v. 24):
   - sure (v. 26):
   - evil (v. 27):

4. Summarize from these verses the kinds of priorities that we should be nurturing in our consciences, so that they will be able to arbitrate between heart and mind in such a way as to issue in practices demonstrating our love for God:

5. What do you do daily to practice Solomon’s advice in this passage?

Sing Psalm 34:19-22
Week 10 Final Exercise
Review all the work you have done this week on the subject of maintaining renewal in the inner person. In the space that follows, outline a strategy for daily practicing what Columbanus and our Biblical writers recommend:

Meet with your prayer partner and mentor to share your conclusions. Are you ready to covenant with God and them to take up this discipline day-by-day?

Week 10 Worldview Observation
As surely as you covenant to “strive” more diligently for the renewal of your soul, the enemy of your soul will throw obstacles in your path to keep you from your objective. What might some of those obstacles be? How will you deal with them when they appear, so that you can continue in this crucial self-watch, which is the beginning of loving God and others?
PART 3: LOVING GOD

“You shall love the Lord your God . . .”
Week 11: Loving God with Your Eyes

Martin Luther (1483-1546) understood as well as anyone in Church history the radical power of the Gospel to liberate the whole person to a life of loving God and others. In his 1520 tract, “The Freedom of the Christian”, he develops some of the implications for loving God with our bodies of the fact that the Christian is the slave of no man, but the servant of all.

“Now let us turn to the second part, the outer man. Here we shall answer all those who, offended by the word ‘faith’ and by all that has been said, now ask, ‘If faith does all things and is alone sufficient unto righteousness, why then are good works commanded? We will take our ease and do no works and be content with faith.’ I answer: not so, you wicked men, not so. That would indeed be proper if we were wholly inner and perfectly spiritual men. But such we shall be only at the last day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. As long as we live in the flesh we only begin to make some progress in that which shall be perfected in the future life. For this reason the Apostle in Rom. 8:23 calls all that we attain in this life ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ because we shall indeed receive the greater portion, even the fullness of the Spirit, in the future. This is the place to assert that which was said above, namely, that Christian is the servant of all and made subject to all. Insofar as he is free he does no works, but insofar as he is a servant he does all kinds of works. How this is possible we shall see.

“Although, as I have a said, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day even to the future life; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check. The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained.”
Psalm 101

Tune: Jesus, I Come – “Out of My Bondage, Sorrow, and Night”

vv. 1, 2
I will of lovingkindness now sing –
Praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
Justice and mercy, Lord, let me bring –
Praise to You, holy Lord!
I will the blameless way ever heed;
No worthless thing my eyes shall impede.
When will You come and care for my need?
Praise to You, holy Lord!

vv. 3-5
I will the works of wicked men scorn –
Praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
They will not grip me, evening or morn:
Praise to You, holy Lord!
Separate every sin from my heart;
Slanderers all from me shall depart.
I will not suffer pride in my heart:
Praise to You, holy Lord!

vv. 6-8
Let me with saints and faithful ones dwell –
Praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
He Who is just shall care for me well:
Praise to You, holy Lord!
Naught of deceit or falsehood shall be
Ever allowed a place within me.
Daily let sin and wickedness flee:
Praise to You, holy Lord!
Week 11, Day 1
Loving God means learning to control our bodies for the purposes of loving others. We begin by considering what the Scriptures have to say about loving God and others with our eyes.

Read Luke 11:33-36
*The goal is to have our eyes “full of light” and altogether empty of the darkness of sin. Therefore, as Jesus said, we need to “be careful.”*

1. Jesus says the eye is to the body as a lamp is to a room. How many different ways can you explain this metaphor? How is the eye like a lamp to the body?

2. A “healthy” eye, Jesus said, is one that fills the body with light. If the eye is going to be able to fill the body with light, it will need to open itself fully and often to the light of God (Ps. 36:9). What kinds of disciplines (recall Luther) does this involve?

   Are you satisfied that your present practice of such disciplines is sufficient to bathe your whole body with the light of God?

3. What kinds of things assault your eyes with darkness? Does this happen to you inadvertently? Willingly? Unwittingly? What steps can you take to begin blotting out the darkness that comes into your body through your eyes?

4. Complete the following: Jesus said I must “be careful lest the light in you be darkness.” For me, this means…

5. In v. 33 Jesus indicates that a well-lighted lamp (body) gives plenty of light to others. What kinds of things will tell you, as you begin to see them, that you are using your eyes more for the purpose of bringing light to your body than darkness?

Sing Psalm 101
Week 11, Day 2
According to John, it all comes down to what we love. If we love the darkness we will seek the darkness. But this has unhappy implications. Better to train our eyes away from those things which are passing away to seek out those things which can never fade.

Read 1 John 2:15-17
John seems almost to be offering a commentary on Jesus’ remarks about the eye being the lamp of the body.

1. Our natural tendency is to desire inordinately the things of the world. How would you explain each of the following:
   - the desires of the flesh:
   - the desires of the eyes:
   - the pride in possessions:

2. How do the eyes feature in betraying our inner persons and our bodies with respect to these kinds of things?

3. What is the effect of seeing such things on the heart (affections)? The mind (thought processes)? The conscience (values and will)?

4. Can we love such things and love God, too (v. 15)? Why not? What do we need to remember about such things (v. 17)?

5. We can’t help seeing these things as we go about in the world. But, is there a difference between seeing them and looking at them? What’s the difference?

How would you suggest to a new believer that he or she begin to discipline his or her eyes to see only and not to look at such things? What might they hope to gain from learning to do this?

Sing Psalm 101
**Week 11, Day 3**
Disciplining our eyes to let in the light and keep out the darkness is part of the larger work of disciplining our whole lives to live for God, as Luther explained. David has some good thoughts about this.

*Read Psalm 101*
*See how David blends the disciplining of his eyes with his affections, thoughts, tongue, and works.*

1. Look in vv. 2, 3, 6, and 7. Summarize David’s approach to disciplining his eyes:

2. The discipline of his eyes is part and parcel of the larger discipline of his life. For example, what can you say about David’s approach to disciplining
   - his affections (vv. 3, 4, 5)?
   - his thought life (vv. 2, 4, 6, 7)?
   - the way he uses his tongue (vv. 1, 5, 7)?
   - his general tolerance of wickedness (vv. 2, 3, 5, 8)?

3. Are you presently practicing disciplines designed to improve each of these areas of your life? Explain.

4. Can you expect to gain victory over your eyes apart from a broad-based disciplining of every other aspect of your life? How might you begin to improve this work?

5. What are the likely consequences of failing to work hard at loving God with your eyes?

*Sing Psalm 101*
Week 11, Day 4
Job also knew a thing or two about disciplining our eyes so that we use them to love God and others. Like David, he shows us that using our eyes in the service of loving God is a whole-life proposition.

Read Job 31:1-23
Job shows that how we use our eyes is directly related to how we feel about God.

1. Job “made a covenant” with his eyes against the darkness. How do you suppose a person might do that?

2. What was motivating Job to make such a covenant (vv. 2-4)? Can this function as a proper motivation for us as well?

3. Job says that his heart (affections) worked restraint on his eyes (v. 7). What kinds of affections of the heart can keep the eyes working for light instead of darkness?

4. Job saw the needs of others with his eyes, and he was quick to respond (vv. 19-23). What do the needs of the people around you each day look like? Do you see those needs? Do you show the love of God in response?

5. Ultimately, Job knew that one day he would see something in the light of which he would give account of everything else. What was that (v. 23)? Is it possible to “see” that glorious sight at present? Can learning to “see” this help us in using our eyes to love God and others? How?

Sing Psalm 101
Week 11, Day 5
Solomon was perhaps the most observant man in all of Scripture. Nothing got past his eyes without some reflection concerning what he might learn from what he saw for the sake of God’s wisdom.

Read Proverbs 6:6-11
There’s more to what we see each day than what at first glance meets the eye. If we can train our eyes to “see” beyond the surface of things, we might gain more of the light of God for our bodies.

1. Ants: we see them every day. Solomon saw more than bugs in the ants that made their homes around his palace. What did he “see” of the light of God in the ants?

2. How did seeing the ants in this light help him to see himself, or, perhaps, to see certain human tendencies?

3. Seeing the ants led Solomon to see human tendencies, and then to “see” the future. How did Solomon hope that his son (v. 1) would benefit from his observations of the ants?

4. Look around the room where you are right now. Fix your gaze on one item. Now study it carefully. Try to “see” it as Solomon saw the ants. Does anything of God’s wisdom or glory suggest itself? Do you learn anything about yourself?

5. Do you think your work of learning to love God with your eyes might benefit from doing this exercise a little more consistently? How does Psalm 19:1-4 encourage you to make this part of your regular discipline?

Sing Psalm 101
Week 11 Final Exercise
Review all your work for this week. Have you consciously surrendered your eyes to the work of loving God? Do you renew that commitment regularly? How do you practice the disciplining of your eyes so that they are only used in loving service to the God who made them?

Meet with your prayer partner to discuss your answers to these questions. Pray together that God might give you greater consistency and earnestness in loving Him with your eyes.

Week 11 Worldview Observation
The secular world is constantly appealing to our eyes. In our day “image” has surpassed “idea” as the most important way of communicating. How is our secular age working to attract our eyes? To what kind of worldview do the images of our secular age invite us to subscribe? Spend some time paying attention to the ways that secular propagandists appeal to the eyes of people. What devices are they using to capture attention? How do they try to hold that attention? What are they conveying through the images they present? Can a steady diet of this, uncritically imbibed, help us to love God with our eyes? How would you counsel a young believer to begin “reclaiming” his or her eyes for the love of God?
Week 12: Loving God with Your Ears

Luther, like the apostle Paul (Rom. 6), was very concerned that believers learn to master their bodies, so that they could employ them entirely in the service of the Lord and their fellow men. He was an enthusiast for gymnastics and music for just those reasons; these disciplines provided opportunities for people to get control over their bodies, use them for the love of God, and develop skills and disciplines that would transfer to other areas of life. One of the primary parts of the body that needs to be disciplined for the love of God is the ears.

“‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ Let us then consider it certainly and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing. This is why the prophet in the entire Psalm 119 and in many other places yearns and sighs for the Word of God and uses so many names to describe it.

“On the other hand, there is no more terrible disaster with which the wrath of God can afflict men than a famine of the hearing of his Word, as he says in Amos 8:11. Likewise, there is no greater mercy than when he sends forth his Word, as we read in Psalm 107:20: ‘He sent forth his word, and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.’ Nor was Christ sent into the world for any other ministry except that of the Word. Moreover, the entire spiritual estate – all the apostles, bishops, and priests – has been called and instituted only for the ministry of the Word.”
Psalm 143

Tune: Divinum Mysterium – “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

vv. 1, 2

Hear my earnest prayer, O Lord! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, Lord, with Your loving servant, Lord:
None can stand before Your Word.

vv. 3, 4

See, the enemy pursued my soul; he has crushed and cast me down.
He has made me sit in darkness, Lord, like those dead and in the ground.
Thus my spirit faints within me, Lord, faints within my weary soul,
And my heart is no more whole.

vv. 5, 6

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate –
All the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O Lord, and great.
Lord, my thirsty soul cries out to You! To You, Lord, I reach my hand
In a dry and weary land.

vv. 7, 8

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

vv. 9-12

Rescue me from all my enemies! Lord, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O Lord my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, Lord, and make me whole!
Week 12, Day 1

Luther was a prolific writer – sermons, books, tracts, letters. He believed that the ears of the German people had been so stuffed with misinformation that it fell to him to offer a different voice for them to hear.

Read Luke 8:4-18

Different people hear the same thing in different ways, as this parable makes clear. Jesus’ exhortation in v. 18 gets right to the point of loving God with our ears.

1. Jesus said that the sower sows the Word of God. Luther sought every possible means of reaching the “ears” (or the eyes) of his contemporaries. To what kinds of sowing of the Word do you regularly submit your ears?

2. Different “soils” represent different ways of hearing the Word. Based on what we see in vv. 12-15, what kinds of things influence the way we hear the Word of God? Are any of these things obstructing your ability to hear the Word?

3. Suppose you were called upon to counsel the people in the first three soils (vv. 12-14) on how they might improve their ability to hear the Word. What would you say to each?

4. Jesus says we must “take care then how you hear.” Why? What reason does He attach to this warning?

5. How do you practice the discipline of “taking care” of what you hear? Are your ears sufficiently devoted to the work of loving God?

Sing Psalm 143
Week 12, Day 2
So much depends on what we listen to, what we hear. The vitality of our faith is intimately connected to the quality of our “hearing.”

*Read Romans 10:5-18*
*Like Luther, Paul was a man who employed many avenues into the ears of his contemporaries.*

1. According to Paul, how important is hearing the Word of God? For whom?

2. People cannot hear the Word where it has not been broadcast. What kind of people faithfully broadcast the Word – by whatever means?

3. The more we hear the Word – the more we devote our ears and eyes to input from the Word of God – the more our faith will grow, and the readier we will be to proclaim the Word to our contemporaries. But the “voices of the three soils” continue to plead with us, through both our ears and our eyes. Are you subjecting yourself to more dissuasion from the Word of God than you should?

4. Paul insists that God speaks to us from the creation ‘round about (v. 18). Do you “hear” Him there? In what ways?

5. Unbelievers don’t listen to the voice of God – either in creation or in the Word. But this does not excuse us from listening, or from broadcasting and proclaiming what we hear. How might you begin to improve your use of your ears for the purposes of loving God?

*Sing Psalm 143*
Week 12, Day 3
The ears and eyes are intimately connected to the heart and mind. Where our inner person is directed, our outer person will follow. Luther understood this well. So did Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 6:8-13
Sometimes people’s inability to hear the Word indicates that the judgment of God is already upon them.

1. Have you ever experienced the situation God describes to Isaiah in vv. 9 and 10? How, as one who broadcasts the Word to dull ears, does that make you feel? Does it affect your love for the people who refuse to hear you? For the God who sent you to this fruitless task?

2. Dull hearts mean heavy ears and blind eyes. What causes people to be dull in their hearts? Why should this affect what they hear or see? Is there any dullness of heart yet lingering in you?

3. This condition, unchecked, leads to further judgment (vv. 11-13). Below, illustrate the process that goes from dullness of heart to waste and destruction:

4. Why did God send Isaiah to a people like this? Do you ever experience the kind of “heaviness” of hearing that God describes here? What causes that? How do you shake yourself out of it?

5. What do you hear in Isaiah’s, “How long, O Lord?” Do you ever feel like that? Do you think God ever feels like that with you?

Sing Psalm 143
Week 12, Day 4
Much of Luther’s writing was to recover the ears of his contemporaries from what he regarded as
the false teaching of his day. He knew that false teachers abounded, that they could be very
persuasive, and that, in order to overcome them, he would have to speak louder, clearer, and
more convincingly than they.

*Read Deuteronomy 13:1-18*
*Moses warned the people to hear the siren voices of false prophets, but not to listen to them.*

1. Ultimately, what are the siren voices of today’s false prophets trying to get us to do (v. 2)? What does that look like in our day?

2. The false prophets of Moses’ day could be really impressive (vv. 2, 3). What is the
antidote to listening to the words of false prophets (v. 4)? Are you getting enough of this
antidote to enable you to resist the false prophets of our day?

3. Sometimes it’s not false prophets wooing us, but others – such as we see in vv. 6 and 13.
Why can these voices be so powerful in our ears? What advice does Moses give in v. 14
for dealing with these voices?

4. We don’t kill the false prophets that are wooing us today, but perhaps we need to work a
little harder at separating ourselves from them? By what media are you presently
subjecting yourself to the voices of contemporary false prophets? How do you make
certain that, while you may *hear* their messages, you’re not *listening* to them?

5. Below, outline a conversation you might have with a teenage believer, trying to counsel
him or her to resist the voices of contemporary false prophets:

*Sing Psalm 143*
Week 12, Day 5
Luther’s great conviction was that the pure voice of Jesus had been drowned out in the noise of ecclesiastical claptrap. He resolved to let that voice resonate through to the people of God clearly once again.

God Himself instruct His disciples where the primary focus of their ears must be directed.

1. Seeing Jesus in His glory must have been a memorable event. Peter recalled it many years later as a high point in his own life (cf. 2 Pt. 1:16-18). But it is instructive that, when God made Himself known in this situation He did not command the disciples to remember what they had seen. What did He say, and why is this so important?

2. Jesus is the heart and core of everything God wants to make known to us. Consider each of the following texts. How does each make this assertion?
   - John 5:39:
   - 2 Corinthians 1:20:
   - Luke 24:27:
   - Hebrews 1:1-3:

3. Jesus, it seems, is to be the prism through which all God’s revelation is rightly understood, and the focus by which all our lives must be guided. Summarize your practice, at present, of “hearing” Jesus in God’s Word and of being guided by His voice day by day:

4. What other “voices”, besides that of Jesus, are presently receiving an audience in your ears? Would you say that your ears are wholly devoted to Jesus?

5. How would you counsel a young believer to begin honing in on the voice of Jesus more clearly and consistently?

Sing Psalm 143
**Week 12 Final Exercise**

We live in a world filled with noise. The voices that press in upon us day by day have a message to declare. Here some of the sources of the voices seeking to gain a hearing with us. How would you describe the basic message of each?

- the conversation of friends:
- advertising:
- pop music:
- television programming:
- the demands of work:
- news:

In the midst of so much noise we need a careful strategy and consistent discipline in order to love the Lord with the strength of our ears. What have you learned this week to help you in devoting your ears more consistently to the Lord?

Meet with your prayer partner and share your observations and conclusions. Leave time to pray for one another.

**Week 12 Worldview Exercise**

Pay attention to the various voices coming at you this week. What devices do they employ to catch and hold your attention? How effective are these? Can you learn anything from these voices about helping others hear the voice of Jesus?

Now think about Jesus in His teaching: what devices did He employ to gain and hold the attention of His listeners? Are you using any of those devices in your own communications with others?
Week 13: Loving God with Your Tongue

Luther devoted his tongue to the Lord and, even though he could be biting and coarse in his speech and writing, he succeeded more than any person of his generation in using his tongue to advance the glory of God. He laid a foundation for all the great reformers to follow in his preaching, teaching, discipling, and conversation.

“Christ, like his forerunner John, not only said, ‘Repent’ [Matt. 3:2; 4:17], but added the word of faith, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ We are not to preach only one of these words of God, but both; we are to bring forth out of our treasure things new and old, the voice of the law as well as the word of grace [Matt. 13:52]. We must bring forth the voice of the law that men may be made to fear and come to a knowledge of their sins and so be converted to repentance and a better life. But we must not stop with that, for that would only amount to wounding and not binding up, smiting and not healing, killing and not making alive, leading down into hell and not bringing back again, humbling and not exalting. Therefore we must also preach the word of grace and the promise of forgiveness by which faith is taught and aroused. Without this word of grace the works of the law, contrition, penitence, and all the rest are done and taught in vain.”
Psalm 9
Tune: Diademata – “Crown Him With Many Crowns”

vv. 1, 2
I will give thanks, O Lord, with all my heart to You!
I’ll tell the wonders of Your Word, so many and so true!
With joy to You I cry; Your glory I will raise;
Your matchless Name, O Lord on High, will I forever praise!

vv. 3-6
Backwards my foes shall fall before Your holy face.
You rescue all who on You call by Your all-glorious grace.
The nations lie in ruins; the wicked are no more;
Our enemies have come to doom in wrath and judgment sore.

vv. 7-10
Lord, You forever reign in judgment on Your throne.
The world in bitter wrath and pain Your righteousness will own.
All those who know Your Name, though in this life oppressed,
You shelter from the storms of shame and keep them ever blest.

vv. 11-13
Praise then the Lord of Zion; declare His deeds abroad!
Praise Judah’s mighty saving Lion, the ever-bless-ed God!
Whose blood has washed us clean, Who hears our plaintive cries,
Who good to us has ever been and lifts us to the skies!

vv. 14-16
Lift up your voice in praise before glad Zion’s gate!
Rejoice in Jesus’ saving ways; His glory celebrate!
The nations fail and fall, condemned by their own hands;
The Lord Who showed Himself to all o’er them in judgment stands.

vv. 17-20
All who forget the Lord shall perish evermore.
Condemned by His blest holy Word, their punishment is sure.
The poor and troubled rest in God’s all-loving care;
While fear of Him, Whose Name is blest, grips nations everywhere.
Week 13, Day 1
We all know what can happen when, as the old cliché has it, we get our tongues engaged before our brain is in gear. James reminds us that the tongue can do many things, not all of them good.

Read James 3:1-12
Teaching is a work of the tongue, primarily; therefore, unless we know how to discipline our tongue for everyday use, we ought to be careful about aspiring to teach.

1. As you read through this passage, how hard does it seem to “bridle” the tongue and devote it wholly to the loving service of God? Why is this?

2. Explain the metaphors of the tongue and what they teach us about its power:
   - the tongue as bit and bridle:
   - the tongue as rudder:
   - the tongue as fire:

3. What’s the nature of the problem James laments in vv. 9-12? How does the existence of this problem hamper our work of advancing the Kingdom of God?

4. From this passage, what is required of those who take up the calling to use their tongues in the service of the Lord as teachers?

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = highly successful, to what extent have you managed to succeed in devoting your tongue to loving God? Is there room for improvement? Where?

Sing Psalm 9
Just a word of exhortation here: One of the benefits of singing, and, in particular, of singing the psalms, is that it helps in training our tongues for loving God. We use His words on our tongues to accomplish His purpose. Sing on!
Week 13, Day 2
Those whose tongues have been devoted to the loving service of God must not hesitate to
instruct others in how their own tongues must be used.

Read Ephesians 4:25-5:12
Paul knew, like James, that everything we sought to do in loving the Lord and others could be undone by an unruly tongue.

1. How many different commands concerning the use of the tongue can you find here (there are at least six, by my count)? List and define them:

2. In 5:8 and 9, Paul gives the rationale for why we are to use our tongues as he instructs. What is it?

3. Go back to the commands you listed above. Of which of these are the Christians you know most frequently in violation? Does this hurt their witness? Does it hurt them?

4. How does our psalm (9) teach us to use our tongues? Does this mean just when we’re together with other Christians, as in worship?

5. Besides singing, what are some disciplines that you have found helpful in keeping your tongue from slipping back into the ways of darkness and, instead, of furthering the ways of light?

Sing Psalm 9
Week 13, Day 3

Tongues, eyes, ears, lips – all these different parts of the body must be tamed and put to the service of loving God. At the same time, they are all symbols of all our bodily strength and exertions.

*Read Proverbs 15:1-33*

*Solomon knew a thing or two about using the tongue to honor the Lord.*

1. Each of the following verses has something to say about loving God with our tongues. Briefly state what you find in each:
   - v. 1:       - v. 2:       
   - v. 4:       - v. 7:       
   - v. 8:       - v. 12:      
   - v. 14:      - v. 23:      
   - v. 26:      - v. 28:      
   - v. 29:

2. Taking all these verses together, complete the following: The wise tongue…

3. According to these verses, what kinds of benefits come from using our tongues wisely?

4. Is there a connection between what we *see*, what we *listen to*, and how we use our tongues? Explain:

5. How does using a wise tongue serve the cause of advancing a Biblical worldview? How does failing to use our tongues wisely hinder it?

*Sing Psalm 9*
Week 13, Day 4
Wise tongues deliver good messages, and make the feet of them that bring them beautiful to those who hear.

Read Isaiah 52:7-12
Isaiah’s summary of the Gospel is one of the most important in all of Scripture. He provides a focus for us in assessing our own teaching, as well as all the ways we use our tongues.

1. The Good News, according to Isaiah, consists of the following components. Explain each:
   - peace:
   - happiness:
   - salvation:
   - proclamation of Christ’s reign:

2. What is the effect of this salvation on the way we use our tongues (vv. 8, 9)?

3. How does v. 11 instruct us concerning the way we use our tongues?

4. Should we use our tongues to proclaim the Gospel and praise the Lord, and, at the same time, to traffic in the things of the darkness? Why not? But do Christians often do this? In what ways?

5. Isaiah is instructing us in the use of the tongue in loving God. What is our responsibility toward other believers in this matter? How should we seek to fulfill that responsibility?

Sing Psalm 9
**Week 13, Day 5**

Luther was writing about the use of the tongue in instructing sinners. He believed we needed to work for repentance as well as faith in the Lord. OK, but how?

*Read Colossians 4:2-6*

Paul gives a concise summary of the way we should use our tongues in helping others come to know the Lord.

1. First, Paul believed that those who bear witness for Christ are served well by others using their tongues on their behalf. How can you see that in vv. 2, 3?

   Are there people in your life who pray specifically for you and for your ministry?

2. In v. 4 Paul says there is one particular responsibility of those who teach and proclaim the Good News. What is it?

   In the light of yesterday’s study (especially question 1), what does this require?

3. Paul says our speech should “always be gracious”, especially toward those outside the faith. Based on all we have examined this week, how would you explain what this means?

4. What is the purpose of seasoning of food? What is suggested by the image of our speech being “seasoned with salt”? How well seasoned is your speech when it comes to teaching the Good News to others?

5. We must be prepared to “answer each person” (v. 6). Paul seems to think that being able to do that is at least as much a matter of how we use our tongues as what we know. Why do you think this is so?

*Sing Psalm 9*
Week 13 Final Exercise
We have examined so far the use of the eyes, ears, and tongues in loving God. Below, briefly explain the relationship between each of these as aspects of loving God with all our strength:

Meet with your prayer partner to share your observations and pray together.

Week 13 Worldview Observation
From the verses we have examined this week, could you construct a catalog of the different ways people use their tongues? For example, to comfort, frivolously, foolishly, coarsely, to edify, and so forth. Write your catalog down in the space that follows under the appropriate headings:

   The “Dark” Side of Speech     The “Light” Side of Speech

Over the course of the coming week, pay attention to the times in which you are using your tongue with others (teaching, work, conversation, etc.). Do any negative aspects of your catalog intrude? How much of your time speaking is used in expressing the “light” side of this catalog? Does this exercise in self-awareness help you to be more alert to the ways you use your tongue?
Week 14: Loving God with Your Hands

God, Luther knew, had given us bodies as vessels through which to express love – for Him and for our neighbors. In “The Freedom of the Christian” he was especially concerned to emphasize devoting ourselves to works that would benefit others.

“Lastly, we shall also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others, as Paul says in Rom. 14:7-8, ‘None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.’ He cannot ever in this life be idle and without works toward his neighbors, for he will necessarily speak, deal with, and exchange views with men, as Christ also, being made in the likeness of men [Phil. 2:7], was found in form as a man and conversed with men…

Man, however, needs none of these things for his righteousness and salvation. Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbor. Accordingly the Apostle commands us to work with our hands to that we may give to the needy, although he might have said that we should work to support ourselves.”
Psalm 39

Tune: Woodworth – “Just As I Am”

v. 1
I said, “My ways now let me guard, that I may not sin against You, Lord;
When wicked men surround me hard, then guard my mouth, I pray, O Lord!”

vv. 2-4
No word I spoke, and sorrow grew; with burning soul I turned to You:
“Lord, make me know what I must do to live this fleeting life for You.”

vv. 5-8
Though life is short and men are vain, who labor but for wealth and gain,
Lord, rescue me from sin and pain. Redeem me, Lord, from ev’ry stain!

vv. 9-11
Remove from me Your heavy hand; against You let me no more stand.
Reprove me by Your firm command – how brief the life of ev’ry man!

vv. 12, 13
O Lord, give ear and hear my cry! No more be silent to my sigh!
Look gladly on me with Your eye through all my life, until I die.
Week 14, Day 1
The right use of our hands and bodies in loving God and others is a matter of obedience to what God has clearly revealed. Faith toward and love for God come to expression in works of love done toward others.

Read Deuteronomy 11:13-25
There is an intimate, oh so intimate, connection between what we entertain in our hearts and what comes out in the work of our hands.

1. How many different verbs can you find connected to the “heart” in vv. 13-18? Explain each of them:

2. The heart is the seat of our affections – desires, longings, hopes, feelings, and so forth. How would you explain the connection between “heart” and the works done in our bodies, as this text suggests?

3. The words that are to be kept with care in our hearts are also to be “bound” as a sign on our “hands” (v. 18). The hand here is a metaphor for the whole body. What does it mean to bind the words of God to our hands? Isn’t it enough to have them in our hearts? Why not?

4. As “hands” are a metaphor for the body, “doorposts” and “gates” (v. 20) are metaphors for cultural institutions and norms – family, civic order, and everything that goes into these. What would be some examples in your own experience of writing the words of God on your doorposts and gates?

5. In vv. 21-25, summarize God’s promises to Israel if they will be faithful in getting His words from their hearts to their hands and throughout their cultural lives. How would you put that in terms meaningful to your own situation?

Sing Psalm 39
Week 14, Day 2
Most of our best strength is expended in the work we do each day – all kinds of work, and all of which has its place in showing love to God and our neighbors.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15
Failure to employ our bodies in loving others is a grave sin.

1. How did Paul describe his work habits among the Thessalonians? What was he trying to show them by this?

2. Our own hands should be employed in meeting our personal needs (vv. 10-12). But is the work that supplies our needs the full extent of the work God calls us to do (v. 13)? What purposes for all our work can you derive from this passage?

3. We might say that the work we’ve been given to do is greater than the job at which we work. This being so, what is “idleness” (v. 6)? What forms might idleness take?

4. How are we to regard those who refuse to work hard, either to meet their own needs or to do good to others (vv. 6, 14)? This seems rather harsh; but why is it so important?

5. Explain v. 15 in dealing with idle brothers or sisters. How would you apply this in the context of the work (ministry) of a local church?

Sing Psalm 39
Week 14, Day 3
Paul would have agreed with Luther that we must be careful to “serve and benefit others” in all we do, “considering nothing except the need and advantage of his neighbor.” It’s a big challenge, but if we love God, we will follow His commands.

Read Colossians 3:17-25
Here are some very specific applications of the requirements of love.

1. What does it mean to “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus”? How should giving thanks enter into the work we do with our bodies?

2. A number of verbs in vv. 18-25 are merely a sharper focusing of ways we express our love to God in terms of love to our neighbors. Define each of the following:
   - submit (v. 18):
   - not be harsh (v. 19):
   - obey (v. 20):
   - not provoke (v. 21):
   - with sincerity (v. 22):
   - heartily (v. 23):

3. Evaluate the work you do, using the definitions you prepared above. How well are you showing love for God and others through the various aspects of your work?

4. What is promised to faithful workers (v. 24)? What is this, and how should we expect to realize it?

5. Do you find it interesting that the negative term contrasted with all these forms of showing love through the work of our hands is “wrongdoer”? Explain.

Sing Psalm 39
**Week 14, Day 4**

Love for the Lord demands the total surrender of our bodies to His good and perfect will.

*Read Luke 9:57-62*

*Surrendering to Jesus sounds noble enough – until you actually have to do it!*

1. Loving the Lord with our strength implies sacrifice. What kinds of sacrifice are indicated in this passage?

2. Jesus indicates that devoting our bodies to Him – *working* for Him – can be lonely, uncomfortable, sorrowful, and hard. But implied in His comments is the thought that it’s well worth it. How do you see that (hint: vv. 60, 62)?

3. What is it about the Kingdom of God that makes it worth enduring such sacrifice and hardship? Do you experience this blessing?

4. Each of the people to whom Jesus responded in these verses had said, “I will follow You.” They might just as well have said, “I love You.” As Jesus saw it, how must such claims of love for Him be validated in our bodies?

5. What is the role of the mind and heart in preparing our bodies to love God and others in these kinds of ways?

*Sing Psalm 39*
Week 14, Day 5
Unhappily, our bodies do not always readily conform to the requirements of love for God and others that our minds and hearts recommend.

Read Romans 6:15-19
So we need to be a little, well, rough on them at times.

1. Paul says we will all serve something larger than ourselves with our bodies, in everything we do, every use to which we put our hands. What alternatives does he propose?

2. In order to avoid serving sin, unto death, we need to work at bringing all the members of our bodies into obedience to the Lord. Of what value, therefore, is it for us to keep in mind what Paul teaches in vv. 17 and 18?

3. Explain what Paul means by “present your members as slaves to righteousness” (v. 19). What should the end result of this be (v. 19)?

4. Do the Christians you know pay the kind of attention to how they use their bodies that the texts we have looked at this week demand? Explain. How might you help them to take this challenge more seriously?

5. What practical suggestions might you make for someone who sought your help in learning how to surrender his hands – and the rest of his body – to doing the work of loving God and others?

Sing Psalm 39
**Week 14 Final Exercise**
Our focus this week has been on loving God with our hands, more specifically, with the work we do with all the members of our bodies. What have you learned this week about how and why we need to concentrate so emphatically on this matter?

Meet with your prayer partner to share your observations and pray together.

**Week 14 Worldview Observation**
Why do other people work? How do other people approach their work? With what motivations? To what ends? With what kinds of attitudes? Spend some time observing and talking with people around you. Jot down some of your observations or some of the things others say about these questions:

Why is the work of our hands represent such a strategic opportunity for showing that we love God and others? How can you improve in this area?
Week 15: Loving God with Your Feet

“Feet” and “walking” are often used metaphorically in Scripture to represent things like purpose, direction, and daily obedience. Our “feet” and our “walk”, therefore, are also important ways that we show love for God and others.

“Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval.

Behold, from faith thus flow love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one’s neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligations. He does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or gains a reward…

Hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians.”
Psalm 23
*Tune: The Gift of Love – “Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire”*

vv. 1, 2
Because the Lord my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!
He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

vv. 3, 4
My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.
Though I may walk in death’s dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

vv. 4, 5
The Lord is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.
A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my Lord anoints my head.

v. 6
Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,
And in the house of God, my Lord, shall I abide forevermore!
Week 15, Day 1
We need to keep an eye on where our feet might take us. There’s always danger lurking not too far away.

Read Proverbs 1:8-19
Two “ways” are spread before Solomon’s son; two paths lie before him – and us!

1. What kind of love dominates the walk of those who are described invv. 11-16? How might you be able to tell when that kind of love was beginning to find a home in you?

2. Why are “feet” and “walking” apt metaphors for Solomon to use in warning his son against this kind of life (v. 15)?

3. What are some of the “snares” that might trip up your feet as you pursue the path of righteousness? Can you see where these have been laid for you? How do you prepare yourself each day to avoid them?

4. What is promised to those who keep their feet in the right path (vv. 8, 9)? What is implied in these images? Why should this make us want to walk in the right path?

5. Meditate on v. 19: how does this serve to warn us away from the path of mere self-love?

Sing Psalm 23
Week 15, Day 2
Prophets like Isaiah and Amos chided the people of Israel because they “walked” into God’s house with the “dirt of the world” on their feet.

*Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7*
*Solomon warned his son against trying to walk two opposing paths.*

1. In this passage feet and mouths and hands (v. 6) are all jumbled together. What seems to be the point of these combined metaphors?

2. Suppose Rehoboam had asked his dad, “What do you mean, ‘guard my feet’?” How would you counsel a young person to carry out this advice? Why should he or she?

3. How would you characterize Solomon’s advice to his son in this passage concerning how he should “walk” before the Lord? What counsel can you find in this for us in our day?

4. Solomon says that our walk should be characterized, not by an abundance of words, but by the fear of God (v. 7). In what sense do you suppose he means to oppose these to one another?

5. Add the message of this text to that of yesterday. So far, how would you describe the kind of “walk” a wise person should undertake?

*Sing Psalm 23*
Week 15, Day 3
Sometimes our feet take us into troubling places, but, even there, we can know power of God at work in our lives.

Read Psalm 23
Thinking of our walk like sheep before their shepherd is a most useful metaphor for the life of faith.

1. The shepherd leads; the sheep follow (vv. 1, 2). Along what kinds of “paths” do you expect the Lord Jesus to lead you (vv. 3, 4, 5)?

2. What promises inhere to those who follow faithfully along those paths?
   - v. 1:
   - v. 2:
   - v. 3:
   - v. 4:
   - v. 5:
   - v. 6:

3. Our feet must be devoted to following the Shepherd as He leads us through the trials and blessings of this present life to the bliss of His eternal home. What kinds of obstacles can keep us from pursuing this path? How do you deal with each of these?

4. What is our responsibility to the other sheep in the flock, when it comes to the Lord’s path for our feet?

5. How do you practice the presence of your faithful Shepherd along your daily paths (v. 4)?

Sing Psalm 23
Week 15, Day 4
Learning to walk the paths marked out for us by the Lord takes time, and involves every aspect of our being.

Read Psalm 25
The psalmist wants to keep his feet in the paths of the Lord, but this is a demanding walk.

1. David wants to make sure his feet walk where they ought to (vv. 4, 5, 8-10, 12, 15). How does he characterize the Lord’s “paths” or “way”? How would he be able to recognize it?

2. If we are to walk the way God wants, we must allow ourselves to be taught by Him (vv. 4, 5, 8, 12). Given the nature of the path (recall days 1-3), how should we expect the Lord’s instruction of us to proceed? Is this something that only happens as we are reading the Bible?

3. David commands us to “wait on the Lord” in order to know His direction for the paths He has chosen for us (vv. 3, 5, 21). What does this mean? How does waiting on the Lord relate to learning His paths and walking in them?

4. Again, the fear of the Lord appears as part of learning to walk His paths (vv. 12-14). What does the Lord promise those who fear Him?

5. How does this psalm complement the one we looked at yesterday in helping us to gain a fuller picture of the path the Lord has marked out for our feet, how we may know that path, and what the challenges and promises are in seeking it?

Sing Psalm 23
Week 15, Day 5
New Testament writers frequently took up the metaphor of running to indicate how we ought to follow the Lord.

Read Hebrews 12:1-13
We have a race to run. Are our feet up to it?

1. Why is running an “endurance” (v. 1) race a good metaphor for the life of faith?

2. How does love for Jesus – “looking” to Him, v. 2, or “considering” Him, v. 3 – help us to fulfill the demands of this race?

3. The writer injects the subject of discipline (and disciplines) into his discussion about running the race of the life of faith. In athletic terms, how do disciplines and discipline serve the athlete?

4. What are some of the forms of discipline we might expect to encounter or employ as we run the race of faith? How do these serve us in our running (vv. 10, 11)?

5. What does this metaphor of “running” add to that of “walking” in helping you to understand the life of love for God and neighbors to which Christ has called you?

Sing Psalm 23
Week 15 Final Exercise
Summarize what you have learned about “using your feet” to love God and your neighbors from the passages we have examined this week:

Meet with your prayer partner to share your observations and pray together.

Week 15 Worldview Observation
The world is continually putting obstacles and snares in our way, seeking to divert us from the path the Lord has called us to walk, and to join them on the broad path to destruction. Spend some time thinking about various ways the world tries to pull you away from God’s path for your feet. Are you always aware of the obstacles and snares lying in your path? How do you avoid them? Escape them? How do you experience the “leading” of the Lord as you are going about your daily “walk”? Is it possible to improve that sense of His leading, to be more sensitive to His presence as He guides you along the paths of righteousness? How?
THE CENTURIONS PROGRAM

The Centurions Program is a distance learning/networking program that equips Christians to think Christianly in order to apply biblical truth to all of life and to engage and shape culture out of a biblical framework.

Around 100 men and women are selected each year to participate in the program and are trained through an intense combination of rigorous reading assignments, teleconferences, three weekend residencies, worldview devotionals, weekly newsletters, monthly meetings with accountability and prayer partners, and a thriving online forum that supports a free-flowing exchange of ideas and experiences.

Program participants who complete the first year of intensive training and meet the requirements for certification are commissioned and sent out to their churches, communities, and cultural spheres of endeavor to put their training into action by teaching others and living out their faith.

Commissioned Centurions are joined together in regional cohorts as an ongoing and ever-deepening fellowship or network of like-minded Christians who are together being trained, discipled and transformed to be cultural change agents and to serve one another through encouragement, prayer and resource and idea sharing. Commissioned Centurions also participate in ongoing teaching and training by Centurions Program faculty via teleconference, online forums, and annual conferences.

For more information about the Centurions Program, visit www.breakpoint.org/centurions or contact:

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