

# Matthew 22:37-38

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-22/matthew-2237-38/>

*Jesus answers the lawyer's question about the great commandment. He tells Him it is this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

The parallel gospel account of this event is found in Mark 12:29-30.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees' question: "Which is *the great commandment* in the Law?" (Matthew 22:35-36) by quoting a familiar passage from Moses's book of Deuteronomy.

*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.'*

In answering this question about which is the *great commandment* Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5. This is the foundation of all morality. It is the ethical pinnacle of human behavior. It serves as a divine constitution by which every moral attitude and thought, expression and action are ultimately measured. It was the foundation of *God's* covenant with Israel. Israel's welfare and well-being was completely dependent upon whether they followed *God's* ways of loving others, or their own impulse to satisfy fleshly desires through exploiting others.

The central directive of this *commandment* is to *love the LORD your God* with the entirety of one's life and being. It is a charge to be completely committed to *God* alone. It is a mandate to subject every aspect of one's choices (internal and external) in such a way to serve *God* and His kingdom without any allowance for competitors or rivals.

*The great and foremost commandment* is divided into two parts.

The first part instructs what we are to do: *You shall love the Lord your God*.

The second part is divided into three ways that describes the manner and limitless extent to which we are to do it: we are to *love God, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind*.

## ***You shall love the Lord your God***

The opening phrase *You shall love the LORD your God* is an all-encompassing command. It has a sweeping range of implications: including to cherish; to delight in; to be devoted to; to serve; and to obey.

The Greek term translated as *love* in this passage is "Agapao." The noun form of "Agapao" is "Agapé." New Testament writers, such as Matthew, generally avoided or seldom used the more widespread Greek terms for *love* such as "Eros" (desire) and "Philos" (companionship) in their

writings. Instead, they took the generic and rarely used term for *love*—“Agapé” and infused it with their own meaning.

Unlike Erotic-love, which means seeking to fulfill an appetite—often sexual; or Philos-love, which refers to the affection of a mutual friendship; Agapé-love through Biblical usage, applied to Christian-living, came to mean sacrificial and unconditional devotion to a person, cause, or system. It is a choice to *love*, based on values. Agapé-love can also be making a choice based on poor values, as in 1 John 2:15, which encourages believers not to choose (“agapé”) the lustful things of the world. The key to agapé-love is to *love* the right things. That begins with choosing to *love God* and seek His ways first and foremost.

All three kinds of *love* orient and direct our lives. The objects we *love* are not only people, things, or ideals we seek, find, and enjoy. They profoundly shape the kind of people we become. What and who we love changes us. That is why *love* is such a powerful force.

Sometimes the things we *love* conflict with each other. When these conflicts occur, we must choose and prioritize which things we *love* most. Ideally, we will do this based on a clear understanding of the highest and best values, including *the foremost commandment*.

Ultimately, we can only have absolute agapé-love for one person, system, or thing (Matthew 6:24). And that is what *the great commandment* is about. This is a *commandment* to agapé-love *God* the most in every circumstance and aspect of our lives. We are to seek and serve Him with *all* of our being and *with* the utmost fervor and devotion. We are to order all other loves under the pinnacle *love of God*, choosing to believe that His ways are for our best (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

This *commandment*, from *the Law* of Moses, was the essential directive for every Jew. It called for Israel to display an undivided *love* and loyalty to *the LORD* because He alone is their *God*. His laws were devised to create good for them, to free them from addictive desires, and build communities based on *love* and service. It distinguished Israel from the exploitative polytheistic paganism of the surrounding cultures and designated them for *God’s* purposes alone. It grounded Jews in their identity as *God’s* chosen people.

Centuries later, in Jesus’s day, choosing to *love God* was still regarded as the defining expression of what it meant to be a faithful Jew. Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and He is *the Lord God*. His entire ministry was an elaboration and fulfillment of *the great and foremost commandment*:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

(Matthew 5:17)

Jesus spoke to the principle of ordering *the great commandment to love God* as *the foremost* of all *love* when He taught His disciples that “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37). If *God* comes first, then nothing should come before Him—including family. This clearly

indicates that this *love* is a choice, based on faith. The faith is primarily that *God* knows what is best for us, and seeks our good. It is a belief that if we follow *God's* ways, we will gain the best life can provide for us. The entire book of Deuteronomy, from which Jesus quoted to answer this question about *the great commandment*, is organized around the principle that *God's* ways are for our best, and will bring us the greatest possible blessings.

Upon reflection, this ought to be intuitive. If a family or community cares for one another, seeks the best for one another, loves and forgives one another, that community will thrive. This is *God's* way. Conversely, if a community competes to see who can best exploit one another, they will tear each other apart.

As the first part of *the great commandment* bids its hearers to *love God*, the second part depicts the limitless extent to which we are to *love Him*.

Matthew records Jesus as saying that we are to *love God* in three specific ways: *with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind*. That is to say, with all our being.

### **The First Way we are Commanded to Love God is with all our Heart.**

The Greek term translated as *heart* is “kardia.” It refers to the innermost part of a person. It is not only the source of our desires; the *heart* is the seat of our will.

A person's life and their faithfulness is largely a projection of their *heart*:

“As in water a face reflects the face,

So the heart of a person reflects the person.”

(Proverbs 27:19)

Throughout the Bible, the *heart* is depicted as the fountainhead of a person's life (Proverbs 4:23). All of a person's loves, fears, and whom they trust issue from their heart (Psalm 119:10, Proverbs 3:5; Proverbs 28:14, Romans 10:10). The *heart* is where the choice is made. Perhaps that is why our *heart* is the first thing we are told to *love the LORD your God with*, in *the great commandment*.

The *heart* predisposes a person to whether or not they can hear and receive a message. Its inclinations greatly influence the *mind* and its thoughts and opinions. If the *heart* is closed to a message or against someone from the outset it is very difficult for that person's *mind* to hear and consider the word their opponent shares:

“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”

(Titus 1:15)

That is why having a pure *heart* is so vital. A pure *heart* trusts *God*, fears *God*, and loves *God* above *all* other things. It is purity of *heart* that enables people to see *God* (Matthew 5:8).

There are three basic things any human can control: 1) who or what to trust or depend on 2) what perspective, attitude, or mindset to adopt and 3) what actions to take. All three of these choices are made at the *heart* level. *All* of our choices, *all* of our attitudes are expressions and reflections of our *heart* (Proverbs 27:19, Matthew 12:34). There is nothing we do that does not come from our *heart*. Everything we are flows from it.

When we are commanded to *love God with all* our hearts, we are commanded to *love God with* the very wellspring of our choices. We are commanded to submit ***all*** of our desires and choices to *God* alone. We are to strive to choose what is best as He would have us choose what is best. At the very foundation of this agapé-love is a choice that God's ways are for our best.

Psalms 37 gives great insight into how we can begin the process of aligning our *heart* with *God's heart*:

“Delight yourself in the Lord;

And He will give you the desires of your heart.”

(Psalm 37:4)

As we delight in *God*, He gives us new desires that align with His good will for our lives. When we seek what *God* seeks for us, we live in harmony with Him. When we live in harmony with Him, we discover fulfillment of our deepest and strongest desires, desires that exceed mere appetites, such as a desire to fulfill the purpose for which we were created.

Choosing to fully follow *God* from the *heart*, is loving *God with all your heart*.

### **The Second Way to Love the LORD your God: With all your Soul**

The term used for *soul* in Greek is “psuché.” It refers to a person's core identity, their true life. The “psuché” is the essence of who a person is. It is their inner character. The “psuché” continues to exist after the body returns to the earth as dust. The organs of the “psuché” are the *heart*, *mind*, and will. In the book of Genesis, the Greek Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) says when *God* breathed into man's body, that “man became a living psuché” (2:7). Man has a body; he has a spirit; but he fundamentally is a *soul* (“psuché”).

When *God* made us in His image He made us a unique “psuché.” Our “psuché” is our “self.” There is no other self exactly like you. You are a fearfully and wonderfully made, one-of-a-kind person (Psalm 139:14). No one in the history of the cosmos has your particular giftings, talents, personality, or destiny. A person's *soul* (psuché) is who that individual uniquely is. And it is the uniqueness of each *soul* that makes each individual an individual.

“*Psuché*” occurs over a hundred times in the New Testament. Depending on the translation, it is rendered “life” about half the time, and “soul” the other half. This also demonstrates that “*psuché*” indicates our “self,” our life and identity. It is the essence of who we are.

When we are commanded to *love God with all* our souls, we are commanded to *love God* with who we are. But what does this mean? How do we *love* Him with all identity, our sense of self?

Our “*psuche*,” our *soul*, our identity, our personhood, our self is *God’s* first gift to us. But who we choose to become is based on our response to *God*.

The choices we make influence, affect, and shape the person we become. Again, the three things we decide are: 1. who we trust; 2. which perspective we will have; 3. our actions. These choices have positive or negative effects upon our self (“*psuche*”). *All* of our choices will either bring us closer to our destiny of having a kingly character like Jesus or they will take us further from it. Our destiny as believers is to be shaped into the kingly character of Christ (Romans 8:28-29). It is clear from scripture that there are immense rewards associated with choosing to view all trials and difficulties of life as opportunities to refine our faith, and win the crown of life (James 1:2-3,12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:11-19; Philippians 2:5-10; Revelation 3:21).

If we boldly embrace the person and identity *God* made us to be, we experience harmony with *God* and we will realize the fullness of our divine destiny and achieve our greatest potential. Making courageous choices to follow *God* with all our heart and soul is the path to becoming an “overcomer” (Revelation 3:21).

This is what it means to *love the LORD your God with all your soul*. It is to reject the worldly and fleshly temptations to be someone less than He made, and to embrace the good identity He has given you. It is to choose the life and everlasting destiny He has in store for you.

Jesus promises a reward of lasting satisfaction for anyone who overcomes and rejects the worldly demands and fleshly desires that tempt us to become less than who *God* created us to be. The world and the flesh exert tremendous pressure upon everyone to reject their divine self and choose a shabby, second-rate identity. Much of our present age is consumed with identity. The present age loudly demands our right to be whoever, indeed whatever, we fancy.

Like Esau who cast aside his great inheritance for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:29-34; Hebrews 12:16-17), *God* respects our right to choose to reject the incredible identity and unimaginably wonderful destiny He has in store for each of us. In this sense we decide the person our *soul* will become. But *God* does not spare anyone, especially believers, from the consequences of their choices (Matthew 16:27; Luke 12:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Peter 4:17). Our acceptance by *God* is a gift, we are given spiritual birth into *God’s* family, and have *God* as an inheritance simply by receiving this gift through faith (John 3:14-16; Ephesians 2:8-9). But just as with the gift of physical birth, who we become depends upon how we steward our choices.

There is great blessing and reward for those who overcome the world’s demands and the desires of our flesh, and trust and *love God* by following His good commands to accept and become the unique and magnificent person He created us to be.

But even as we illustrate these truths, it is important to recall that one's eternity, whether with God or separated from Him, is not determined by our ability to follow any *commandment*—including this *great and foremost commandment*.

Our eternal salvation and belonging in *God's* family is entirely based upon whether we ever believed in Jesus as *God's* Son (John 3:14-16). Being justified in the sight of *God* has everything to do with *God's love* for us, not our *love* for Him. *God* justifies humans based on faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 3:23-24; 4:3). Being justified in *God's* sight has everything to do with His Son's completed work on the cross and His resurrection. It has nothing to do with our works—whether good or bad for Him. Being justified in *God's* sight is *God's* gift to whoever believes in Jesus. It is a gift of pure grace on the basis of simple faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 affirms this wondrous—even scandalous—truth that it is by *God's* grace that we are saved through simple faith in Jesus; and that this salvation from the penalty of sin has nothing whatsoever to do with our ability to behave, either before or after we are justified in *God's* sight, and given the free gift of being born into His forever family. Because of Jesus, there is nothing left for us to do or prove in regards to our eternal belonging, other than to receive Him and His amazing gift by faith.

That understood, there are significant blessings in this life that can be enjoyed, and everlasting rewards in the life to come to be earned for following Jesus daily, walking by faith, following the Spirit.

Some Present Blessings for obeying the Lord's commands include:

1. Partnership with *God* in establishing His Kingdom (Matthew 9:37-38; 28:18-20)
2. Friendship and Intimacy with Jesus (John 15:14-15; 17:3; Revelation 3:20)
3. Contentment and Rest (Matthew 11:28-30)
4. Everlasting Purpose and Significance (John 15:5)
5. The Opportunity to have true Community with other Believers (1 John 1:7).

Some Future Rewards for obeying the Lord's commands include:

1. Receiving Jesus's Approval (Matthew 10:32-33; 25:21, 23)
2. Obtaining our Eternal Inheritance (Matthew 19:16-24; 1 Peter 1:4-9)
3. Having Authority in Christ's Kingdom (Matthew 18:4; 1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21)
4. Receiving Glory and Eternal Crowns (authority) (Romans 8:17-18; James 1:12; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 2:10; Philippians 2:5-10)

As believers who have been given eternal life through a new spiritual birth, if we do not *love* Jesus and follow Him in this life in our daily choices, we cannot lose our place in *God's* family; *God* never rejects His people as being His people. But we can, and we will, tragically miss the present blessings and future reward if we do not *love* and follow Him.

If we reject Jesus's teachings and follow the world and our fleshly desires, the best we can receive are the fickle, unfulfilling, and ever-fading rewards of men in this life (Matthew 6:2; 6:19; 23:6-7; Luke 16:15; John 12:43; 1 John 2:16-17), and a loss of future rewards and our inheritance in the new heaven and earth (Matthew 7:21-23; 10:33; 22:11-13; 25:28-30; 1 Corinthians 3:15, 2 Timothy 2:12). The primary reward of following the paths of unrighteousness is to be given over to our lusts, which become addictions, to the point of losing our grip on reality (Romans 1:24,26,28).

But whichever rewards a believer seeks and finds (the world's, or *God's*), no believer can lose their eternal place in *God's* family. *God's* gifts are irrevocable, and cannot be lost (Romans 11:29; John 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39, 2 Timothy 2:13). Our position in *God's* family as His child is granted on the basis of our initial and simple faith in Jesus and was given to us on the basis of His grace, enough faith to look upon Jesus as Israel looked upon the bronze snake, hoping to be delivered from the venomous poison of sin (John 3:14-16).

We follow Jesus in our daily lives by trusting and obeying Him. Jesus equates obedient faith with *love*.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

(John 14:15)

And we follow the first *and foremost commandment* of loving *God* by obeying Him. If we *love the Lord our God with all our soul* (“*pusché*”), we will take up our cross daily and lose our *soul* (“*pusché*”) for His sake so that we might find it (Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:23-24)

Once again, when we are commanded to *love God with all our souls*, we are commanded to deliberately *love God* with who we are and who we are becoming.

We become the person *God* created and destined us to be by putting aside all wickedness and receiving in humility the Word (James 1:21). We become this person by first ignoring the luring temptations of the world and not obeying our flesh's selfish cravings and lusts; and second by listening to and doing what the word of *God* commands.

James tells us that the result of walking in obedience to Christ is literally the salvation (deliverance) of our souls (“*psuché*”) (James 1:21). In the context of James 1, when we replace our fleshly desires with the implanted word of *God*, our souls (“*psuché*”) are delivered from our own lusts (James 1:14). For the believer who endures and overcomes the trials of this life by trusting Jesus, his *soul*, life, self, identity becomes the glorious person *God* intended, and he experiences the fullness of his divine destiny through faithfulness in this life, for which *God* promises great reward (1 Corinthians 2:9). The writer of Hebrews mentions the need for endurance in continuing in faith in order to win the greatest prize of life:

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was

promised...But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the **preserving of the soul (psuché).**”

(Hebrews 10:35-36, 39)

When we walk in confidence (faith) that *God's* rewards are worth the cost (Hebrews 11:6), and continue in that faith, we gain our full reward, which delivers our lives (“psuché”) from wasting this immense opportunity.

### **The Third Way we are commanded to love God is with all our Mind.**

Both Gospel writers (Matthew and Mark) who documented this interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees’ lawyer, record Jesus as including *mind* as part of *the great commandment*. This is intriguing is for a couple of reasons.

The most obvious reason it is intriguing is because Moses’s original expression of this *commandment* did not explicitly use the word, *mind*.

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **might**.”

(Deuteronomy 6:5)

Matthew’s version of Jesus’s statement was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, and with all your **soul**, and with all your **mind**.”

Mark’s version of Jesus’s statement reads, “and you shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, and with all your **soul**, and with all your **mind**, and with all your **strength**” (Mark 12:30).

The Mosaic commandment explicitly includes three ways we should *love the LORD your God*—*with all your heart, mind, and might (strength)*. Matthew’s gospel also quotes Jesus as saying three ways to *love God*, but it includes *mind* instead of “might/strength.” And finally, Mark’s gospel account quotes Jesus as naming four ways we should *love God*: the original three ways from Moses, plus *mind*.

What is the reason for these differences and how are we to understand them?

One possible reason why Jesus used the word *mind* when Deuteronomy did not was because Moses and his Jewish audience were limited to the Hebrew language. And in Hebrew there is no separate word for *mind*. In Hebrew, the term for *heart*, “Lebahb,” includes the *mind*. In Jewish thought the *heart* and *mind* are neither separate nor distinct. The Greeks (and therefore the Romans) do make this distinction. As mentioned above, the Greeks see the *heart*—“kardia”—as the fountainhead of emotions, desires, and choices. The *mind*, according to the Greeks, is the cockpit of the intellect and mental consciousness.



Apparently, Jesus in His articulation of *the great commandment* validated the distinction between *heart* and *mind*. In doing so He demonstrated the important role the *mind* has in loving *God*.

This gives an explanation for why Jesus incorporated *mind* into *the foremost commandment*.

But why did Matthew drop “strength” or “might,” while Mark kept it? We aren’t entirely sure of Matthew’s reasoning for this change.

It is likely that Jesus said we are to *love God* all four ways (*heart, soul, mind, and strength*) because Mark recorded all four. Matthew may have opted to keep Deuteronomy’s Hebraic rhythm and pattern of the three ways *you shall love the LORD your God*. And he simply chose to emphasize the *mind* rather than “strength.” Matthew’s primary audience is Jewish, and he may have based this decision to include *mind* on the fact that the concept of *mind* is inferred in Hebraic construction, and without it being stated explicitly in Greek, it would have been absent, making it more likely to be overlooked by His Jewish audience, than the explicitly stated and much more familiar term of “might.” Therefore, he chose to list *mind* instead of might.

A less obvious, but no less intriguing factor of Jesus’s inclusion of *mind* in His restating the *great commandment* is because Matthew and Mark both used different Greek words for *mind* to capture what He said.

The term Matthew used for *mind* in Greek is “*dianoia*.” “*Dianoia*” specifically refers to one’s understanding, thoughts, or imagination. It is a person’s mentality or perspective.

Mark used a different Greek word for *mind* in his record of this conversation. The word Mark used was “*sunesis*.” In a broad sense, it too means understanding, but it is a pictorial definition rather than an abstract one. It describes a “flow of thought,” literally, “a running together” or mental convergence of ideas. The English word “synthesis” is derived from “*sunesis*.”

The fact that each used different Greek terms for the same concept (*mind*) suggests that Jesus said this statement in Aramaic (which was likely the language in which He usually taught), so that Matthew and Mark translated His words into Greek for their reading audience. For more insight into the different languages of Jesus’s day were utilized and impacted His ministry and the spread of the Gospel see the Tough Topics article: [“The Four Languages of Jesus’s Judea.”](#)

Matthew and Mark’s terms for *mind* each highlight that a person’s *mind* determines more than merely a mechanism for thought. It also includes what that person is thinking. The *mind* and its thoughts are the primary way a person sees the world. The *mind* is a person’s perception of reality, and it is their main way to consider their priorities. In this sense, the *mind* is one the three things a person has control over. In particular we get to choose what our minds dwell upon (2 Corinthians 10:5). And the *mind* influences the third thing we control—our actions. The *mind*, and its mental perception, drives a person’s behavior. People act based on what they think is real and important. The second greatest *commandment* infers humans will always seek their best interest. In inviting us to follow the second greatest *commandment*, Jesus invites us to choose a

perspective that our best interest lies in doing for others what we would like to be done for ourselves.

Truth is like light to the *mind*. Truth does not change reality. It only enables us to see reality more clearly. Falsehood is like darkness to the *mind*. It too does not alter reality. Falsehood only makes it more difficult for the *mind* to see it. It creates an illusion that charades as reality.

If a person's perception of reality is true—if it aligns with *God's* perception of the way things are—then it greatly enhances that person's capacity to avoid some difficulties altogether, and to deal with and overcome difficulties encountered. But if their perception is false then it greatly enhances the likelihood that hardships, difficulties, and misery will compound.

After a person's loves, a person's thoughts shape who they become. The outward projection of our actions reveals our thoughts and self-perceptions. Proverbs 23:7 reads,

“For as he [a person] thinks within himself, so he is.” Our behaviors and appearance are a reflection of our self-perception. This is why it is critical to have an accurate mental picture of our true identity.

But every human is both finite and subject to the effects of sin and the Fall. This means our minds are limited in their capacity to perceive reality. And it means that our minds are warped and prone to mistakes, and to believe falsehoods and deceptions—even evil. This was pointed out by Solomon, who wrote Ecclesiastes to deal with the issue. He concludes that if we attempt to grasp the reality of life through reason and experience, we will gain only folly, madness and evil. On the other hand, if we approach life through faith, we can enjoy life, and also have a good report before *God* at the judgment.

A *mind* can grow or shrivel in its capacity to see reality as *God* sees it. And every person is responsible for whether they grow or neglect their *mind*. What a person does with their *mind* is one of their most essential responsibilities. Being intentional about choosing a perspective that is true is one of our most important stewardships ([Sign up for Yellow Balloons devotional, which is a daily reminder to choose a true perspective](#)). It is so essential that Jesus went out of His way to highlight its importance in His telling of *the great and foremost commandment*.

How do we *love God with all our mind*?

While adopting a lifestyle of learning, whether through formal education or being self-taught, can play an important part in loving *God with all our mind*, we must remember, that these are always a secondary component to obeying this *commandment*.

Knowledge, while good in itself, can puff us up (1 Corinthians 1:8). Human education about reality and how things work, however beneficial they maybe, are poor substitutes for *God's* perspective. Loving *God with all your mind* has little, if anything, to do with how much a person knows—just consider the Pharisees and Sadducees who were the credentialed, religious experts of Jesus's day.

Accumulating knowledge and education without *God* tends to make a person arrogant by giving a false sense of independence from Him. The abuse of knowledge and education makes a person reliant upon their own understanding instead of trusting *God* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Such knowledge does not open or enlighten a person's *mind* but encloses and darkens it. Knowledge and education alone cannot save us from our most desperate needs. Only Jesus can.

The main way we *love God with our mind* is by aligning our thoughts, perspective, mentality, etc. with His. We do this by listening to and considering what He says is true and good; and then trusting Him. In James 1, the sequence offered by James to escape our own lusts and follow Christ is:

1. Learn to listen to others, and set aside the false view that we can control our environment using anger (James 1:19-20);
2. Then listen to and receive *God's* word, such that it is implanted in our souls (James 21).
3. The result will be that our souls/lives (psuché) are saved (delivered) from our inner lusts, and we are able to live out our faith as a living faith.

We *love God with our mind* when we accept His take on reality as authoritative and absolute. We set aside our opinions and murky perspectives and adopt His understanding and values.

Obviously, our immediate understanding of things is hardly *God's* complete understanding of things. *God* is all-knowing. We have a limited capacity to know things. His knowledge is perfect; ours is warped and dim. His ways are higher than our ways.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,

Nor are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord”

(Isaiah 55:8)

Even so, the Bible teaches multiple ways that we can begin to acquire *God's* perspective. And striving to acquire *God's* perspective about reality and His role for our lives in the world is loving *God with all our mind*.

Three ways the Bible says we can humbly begin to acquire *God's* perspective are through prayer; reading scripture; and allowing Jesus to curate our daily thoughts.

1. Prayer

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

(James 1:5)

In this particular passage, the prayer is for wisdom to be able to see all circumstances as opportunities to grow our faith, and win the crown of life (James 1:2-3;12).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 4:6-7)

## 2. Scripture

"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

(Psalm 19:7)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path"

(Psalm 119:105)

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."

(Matthew 7:24)

"Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

(James 1:21-22)

## 3. Daily Thoughts

"...taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

(2 Corinthians 10:5)

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."

(Philippians 4:8)

"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

(Colossians 3:1)

When we pray for God’s wisdom, seek His perspective through His word, and actively invite Jesus to curate our thoughts throughout our day, we are loving *God with our mind*. And when we obey the commandment our perspective changes and we are renewed and transformed.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(Romans 12:2)

When we do this, we change from a mindset of selfishness, sin, and hostility—literally death, to a mindset of serving, love, and harmony—literally life (Romans 8:6).

As believers we have access to the *mind* of Christ through *God’s* Spirit living inside us (1 Corinthians 2:16). *God* has revealed His thoughts to us (1 Corinthians 2:10). We are not limited to seeing things through the follies of the world point’s of view. We can see the things in our lives as *God* sees them. Through His Spirit, we as believers can see His estimation and appraisals of what really matters (1 Corinthians 1:14).

And when we view life through *God’s* perspective—especially when we perceive ourselves as He see us—we see the incredible kingdom opportunities that are before us every day. And everything we thought we knew about the world changes. Ordinary fields become the place of hidden treasures (Matthew 13:44). Humility and serving others become the path to everlasting greatness (Matthew 20:25-28). Showing mercy is far more advantageous than seeking retribution (Matthew 18:21-35). And going the extra mile becomes a joy instead of burden (Matthew 5:41).

When we *love God with all* our minds, we too can have the attitude and mindset which was also in Christ Jesus, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

### **The great and foremost commandment**

After Jesus answered the Pharisee’s question by citing Moses’s law about loving *God with all your heart, soul, and mind*, He underscored His answer.

He told the lawyer from the Pharisees: *This is the great and foremost commandment*. It was Jesus’s way of informing those listening to His response that this was His final answer to their question.

*The great commandment* was the source and fountainhead of Jewish ethics. The rest of *God’s* commands flowed downstream from this one. That is to say, the other commandments were ways to follow this *great commandment* in different and particular circumstances. That is what made it *great and foremost*.

It is still *the great and foremost commandment* today, if we follow *this commandment* as it is given and *love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength* we will be following all the other commandments. If we are not loving *God with all our heart, with all our*

*soul, with all our mind, and all our strength*, then it is likely that any obedience we have to the other commandments of *God* are empty and hollow.

### **Biblical Text**

<sup>37</sup> **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.’** <sup>38</sup> **This is the great and foremost commandment.**