



## Loving God with All of You<sub>(Part 4)</sub>

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"The next time you think you're perfect, try walking on water." This is a bumper sticker that perplexed me for a long time. It's a categorical mistake.

"Perfection" deals with moral character. "Walking on water" deals with supernatural power. How does perfection entail supernatural power? Does it mean that the more holy you become, the better you perform miracles? What the bumper sticker is trying to say is that Jesus is the standard and that you and I need him, but it isn't clear the way it says it.

I don't want to build my life around bumper sticker theology nor sound bite philosophy, but there is a bumper sticker that I think hits a truth we need to ponder: "If you don't live it, you don't believe it."

It's as straightforward as the alarm clock in the morning. And both the sticker and the clock tell us it is time to wake up.

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength." The last three days we have dealt with different words in this verse. Today we will look at "mind."

The mind is the center that generates thoughts and ideas, holds beliefs and shapes desires. It is the part that informs our emotions and our wills. It is the gift of God we use to help order our whole self.

The two most outspoken Apostles in the New Testament both emphasized the necessity of the mind. Paul said, "Be not conformed to this world," then tells us exactly how to do it, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Peter also emphasizes the mind when he tells the readers of his letter, "Prepare your minds for action."

I'm afraid the mind has been neglected for many decades as an important part of spiritual development. Much emphasis has been placed on feeling with the emotions or commitment with the "will." But the life of the mind has been a bit forsaken as a necessary component to the enterprise of spiritual transformation until recent years.

I believe the idea, "If you don't live it, you don't believe it," is in line with New Testament teaching. We may say we believe it. We may want to believe it. We may even go to a church that believes it. But the actions of our bodies and choices of our wills are born out of the beliefs of our minds. If we are a thief, it is because we believe stealing is actually better and more beneficial for us than not stealing. If we commit adultery it is because we believe there is something about adultery that will actually benefit our lives more than not committing adultery. We may say we believe the opposite of our actions, but our actions do not lie. They reveal what is really going on in our minds.

Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." That is, by the actions and behaviors of people, you will know what they believe and what they are made of on the inside.

The difficulty, however, is that we cannot directly will to change our beliefs. For example, if I told you that I'd give you a million dollars if you believed there was a live, polka-dotted unicorn in your kitchen, you would not be able to believe it, no matter how badly you wanted the million dollars. Truth is, we believe, generally, what we bend our

minds to dwell on for long periods of time. If I dwell on MTV all the time and do not feed my mind on other things, I will eventually start to believe what MTV teaches. I might even start to become puzzled why someone else would have a problem with it. Likewise, if I dwell on what the Apostle Paul recommends in Philippians 4—what is pure, good, honest, and lovely—then I will start to believe those things.

My beliefs can only change if I will myself to attend to those things that are true. I cannot will my beliefs to change. I must put myself in a position to be influenced by what is good, true, and beautiful. This is the nature of belief.

And this is why it is a true discipline to love God with all our minds. It isn't merely a matter of feeling good about God or even wanting to love God; we must grow in our beliefs of God. We must dwell on Him. We must study to understand Him more: His love, His character, and His actions in the world. We must reflect on what it means to be made in His image and so have the capacities to love Him in return. There is a treasure-trove of knowledge that God wants to share with us. He is the greatest

thought our minds can hold. What are we waiting for?

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