In our world, we use the word heart to refer to our emotions. But the Bible uses the word heart to refer to the governing center of life. We need to grasp the true meaning of the heart in order to better understand ourselves, our sin, and our need for redemption. As we rediscover the heart as the source of all our thoughts, fears, words, and actions, we will discover principles and practices for orienting our hearts to truly love and obey God with all that we are.

"So much depends on a clear, scriptural understanding of ourselves, and Troxel has given us just that."

ED WELCH, Counselor and Faculty Member, Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

"Troxel carefully studies what God’s word teaches about the heart and discovers surprising answers that lead us to real solutions."

JOEL R. BEEKE, President and Professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; Pastor, Heritage Reformed Congregation, Grand Rapids, Michigan

A. CRAIG TROXEL (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is professor of practical theology at Westminster Seminary California. He previously served as pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Wheaton, Illinois, and Calvary Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Glenside, Pennsylvania.
“Craig Troxel’s *With All Your Heart* represents the mature fruit of a gifted intellect combined with tested and tried spiritual wisdom, both of which have been well honed by decades of pastoral experience. Every reader will benefit from its comprehensively biblical foundations, its spiritual insights, and its challenging as well as mind-clarifying expositions—all packaged in a way that is eminently readable. Asking the question ‘How many books have I read on the heart?’ (and probably answering it with ‘Very few’ or ‘None at all’) underlines both the importance of these pages and the extent to which we may have marginalized something the Bible sees as central. Here is a book to be welcomed enthusiastically, to be read carefully, and to be returned to frequently as a significant resource for Christian thinking and living.”

**Sinclair B. Ferguson**, Chancellor’s Professor of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary; Teaching Fellow, Ligonier Ministries

“Who am I? What is wrong with me? How can I overcome it? These questions all draw our attention to the heart. Craig Troxel carefully studies what God’s word teaches about the heart and discovers surprising answers that lead us to real solutions. He shows us how to become self-aware without being self-absorbed, authentic yet dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns over our hearts.”

**Joel R. Beeke**, President and Professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; Pastor, Heritage Reformed Congregation, Grand Rapids, Michigan; author, *Reformed Preaching*

“So much depends on a clear, scriptural understanding of ourselves, and Troxel—a pastor and instructor of pastors—has given us just that.”

**Ed Welch**, Counselor and Faculty Member, Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation

“Protestant theology often falls into one of two categories—an emphasis on doctrine that tends to overlook the concomitant experience, which thereby risks being vulnerable to the oxymoronic accusation of ‘dead’ orthodoxy, or an emphasis on experience, which downplays doctrine and risks being vulnerable to the accusation of being nothing more than subjective ‘enthusiasm.’ And if many of us are honest, we struggle to know how to balance our teaching and thinking to avoid these pitfalls. That is why this book is so welcome: drawing on many years of pastoral experience and demonstrating both the passion for truth and the passion for the Christian life that has always characterized the best Christian teachers, Craig Troxel presents a delightful account of the Christian faith from the perspective of the Christian heart. This is a book that teaches both by precept and example.”

**Carl R. Trueman**, Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Grove City College
“Craig Troxel has done the church a great service by writing a detailed account of a topic that is tragically unfamiliar to most contemporary Christians: our own heart. In a time of shallow diagnosis and superficial prescriptions, this work provides a desperately needed course on the most practical Christian doctrines: the anatomy of the inner man, the nature of his disease, and the cure found only in Christ. Saturated with Scripture references and Puritan wisdom, this book will help you better understand yourself, your sin, and your Savior. It should be required reading for every pastor who wishes to be a wise physician of the human soul.”

Dale Van Dyke, Senior Pastor, Harvest Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Wyoming, Michigan

“Skillfully sewing back together the tragically separated head and heart, Troxel points us toward a more fully robust biblical theology of the person. He takes us on a journey across the breadth and into the depth of the Scriptures with the intention to think, desire, and choose more faithfully, and in the process he challenges many of the modern mythologies of human identity. Troxel brings into view both the unity of the person and the complexity of the person, reflective of the God who made us and redeems us. The wisdom of many years of pastoral ministry dealing with human dysfunctions and the intrusions of God’s grace are manifest on every page of this book.”

Richard Lints, Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“Here is a devotional study of the heart that reflects the pulse of the whole Bible. Craig Troxel offers an anatomy of the thinking, yearning, and acting of the heart. He employs the surgical tool of Scripture to address the sins of the heart, and brings the reader to the Great Physician and Keeper of the heart. Would you like to meet a strong and sufficient Savior anew and afresh? Read With All Your Heart!”

Chad Van Dixhoorn, Professor of Church History, Westminster Theological Seminary; author, Confessing the Faith and God’s Ambassadors
With All Your Heart
WITH ALL YOUR HEART

ORIENTING YOUR MIND, DESIRES, and WILL TOWARD CHRIST

A. Craig Troxel
To Carol

cordi mei cordis

God gave me Carol,
Who is not passion’s slave,
And so I wear her in my heart’s core,
Aye, in my heart of heart.

(adapted from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*)
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Thanks go to my new friends at Crossway for their patience with an amateur. Al Fisher is to “blame” for his initial suggestion to bring this book into existence, and his wife, Diane Fisher, has supplied steady inspiration along the way. Lane and Ebeth Dennis have been so hospitable and supportive since I first met them. Dave DeWit’s gentle words allayed my fears when I finally submitted the manuscript, while David Barshinger’s careful editing has elevated the text by spotting omissions and by offering excellent recommendations.

Joel and Anna Carini, Charles Williams, Dr. Mark Talbot, and Dr. James R. Peters read some or even all of this manuscript and contributed many helpful comments. Former Bethel member Amanda Cizek chased down several references in the Puritans, and former intern Andy Smith double-checked every one of them.

Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Glenside, PA) and Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Wheaton, IL)—the two congregations I have pastored—have heard sermons and lessons on the heart but not in this crafted form. God has seen your forbearance. Several congregations, presbytery retreats, and conferences have heard variations of this material. Not to acknowledge them at all would be inconsiderate. To list them all seems boastful.

Much of this book is due to the love and prayers of my family, especially my parents. The marriage of my mother, Deanna Troxel, and my deceased father, Sterling Troxel, was a model of strength,
integrity, and enduring beauty. My siblings and their spouses—Scott and Lori Troxel, Candy and Jay Huston, and Dawn and Chad Meyer—have followed in their footsteps. It has been easy to admire and to adore you. My mother-in-law, Gail, and my deceased father-in-law, Ferman Lex, embraced and supported me as a son, and I have eagerly loved them in kind. Their two daughters and their husbands—Terry and Tim Sager and Linda and Scott Wright—have followed suit by accepting me, even as my affection for them continues to grow.

My loving children, along with their spouses, Lauren and Nick, John, Phil and Laura, Tommy, and Maggie, have consistently supported the old guy and made me so proud. You are the joy of your father’s heart and, thankfully, the reflection of your mother’s loveliness.

In August 1987 in Gordon-Conwell’s chapel, the gorgeous smile of a young lady sitting slightly behind me and to my left caught my eye. To her credit and to my joy, thirty years of marriage have not removed that smile. She who knows me best—better than I would wish—still loves me. Her wisdom and laugh provide what I enjoy most in life, along with her patient listening, gentle corrections, and unbelievable forbearance with someone who is less than her in every conceivable way. What would I be without the “heart of my heart”?

Last of all, I acknowledge my heart’s creed lest any reader misplace honor. If this book should happen to garner any praise, may it be for him who died my death, suffered my condemnation, and was raised so that I might live forgiven and accepted by his grace and might walk by his Spirit. All that I am and all that I have is a gift from him. And as grateful as I am for what I perceive are signs of grace in my heart, I have not found its “sweetest frame” to provide reliable footing. My confidence continues to be grounded in the incomparable grace that was ordained, accomplished, and applied by God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Such certainty comes from his faithful word. Thus, to him for whom no word is too
wonderful to speak or to fulfill, to him who sees what I am yet loves me, to him I offer my heart sincerely—as meager as it is. I am no expert on the heart, least of all my own. Indeed, I came to know my heart more and more as I wrote these pages. It was not a journey I would describe as pleasant. Nevertheless, it has put me, repeatedly, back on the path that leads to the abounding grace of God in Christ—the only sure road for one’s heart.

For those who seek, may you find,  
As I point to Christ—your strength and mine.  
For those who find, may you see,  
The joy of hearts—your Savior and mine.

A. Craig Troxel  
November 1, 2019
Introduction

Everyone knows what you mean when you use the word *heart*. If you have a change of heart, you think differently now. If you say, “She gave me her heart!” she’s in love with you. If you say, “She broke my heart,” then she no longer is. If your heart was in the right place, you messed up but meant well. When our friends speak from the bottom of their hearts, they’re telling the truth. When our children say, “I cross my heart,” they might be telling the truth (this time). Sometimes we do not have the heart to tell someone the truth. If we take it to heart, we’re listening well. If we know it by heart, we’re remembering well. If you have a heart of gold, you are kind. If you have no heart, you are mean. If your team lost heart, they gave up. If they showed heart, they rallied. When you wear your heart on your sleeve, you are transparent. When you put your heart into it, your passion is obvious. The lionhearted are courageous, while the chickenhearted are spineless. Sometimes we are coldhearted, and other times lighthearted. We work halfheartedly on Monday and wholeheartedly before a deadline. We can be callously hardhearted or cowardly fainthearted. Everyone important to you is dear to your heart. Everything important about you is secured in your heart of hearts.

So does the word *heart* really need defining? It regularly appears in our conversations, we paste it as our philosophy of life on a bumper sticker (“I ♥ Fishing”), and we hold our hand over
our heart when we sing the national anthem. Legends and stories from every culture regale listeners with the heart’s symbolism, and every religion on earth sees the heart as the defining organ of one’s inner life. When Dee Brown writes, “Bury my heart at wounded knee,” we know what he means.\(^1\) When the black clot is torn from the infant Muhammad’s chest and washed clean, we know what it means.\(^2\) When Egyptian antiquity says that the heart is weighed after death by Anubis, we know what it means.\(^3\) When primeval peoples ate the heart of a slain brave enemy or animal, we kind of know what it means.\(^4\) So transculturally, we all seem to be speaking the same language when we talk about the heart. Do we really need a book to explain it?

When Christ was asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” his answer showed where true spirituality begins: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Matt. 22:37–40; Mark 12:28–33; Luke 10:25–28; cf. Deut. 6:5). If this is as important as he says it is—and it is beyond what we could ever imagine—then we need clarity about what he meant, so that we will have greater clarity in how to obey. The heart is central to the Christian faith, as it is for other religions, but that is where the similarities end. The Bible reveals subtlety, range, and depth in its distinctive message about the heart—one that diverges sharply from ancient Greek philosophy, as well as from modern and postmodern philosophies. These differences should not be ignored—as they often are in Christian literature—in favor of the colloquial and anti-intellectual ways that Western popular culture speaks of the heart. The heart merits the careful study of Scripture. In fact, I hope to persuade you that the word “heart” is the most important word in the Bible to describe who you are

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within. There are three reasons why we should study the heart in Scripture.

**Heart Is the Most Used Word**

Appearing just under 1,000 times, the word “heart” is used in the Bible more than any other for the inner self.\(^5\) The Old Testament uses the Hebrew terms לֵב (leb) 598 times and לֵבָב (lebab) 252 times, and the New Testament’s Greek word καρδια (kardia) appears 156 times.\(^6\) Something that occurs that often in the Bible certainly merits a study worthy of its dignity. Think of the fact that the word “holy” is used to describe God more than any other term. Is this significant? Of course it is. In the same way, the frequent occurrences of the word “heart” in Scripture deserve to be taken seriously. The spotlight is often placed on the heart for its crucial role in what you treasure and say (Matt. 6:21; Luke 6:45) and in your inner beauty (1 Pet. 3:4), repentance (Deut. 30:2, 10; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Kings 8:48; Jer. 24:7), faith (Prov. 3:5–6), service (Deut. 10:12; 1 Chron. 28:9), obedience (Ps. 119:34), covenant faithfulness (1 Kings 2:4), worship (Ps. 86:12; Zeph. 3:14), love (Deut. 10:12; Matt. 22:37), daily walk (Isa. 38:3), and seeking of the Lord (Deut. 4:29; 2 Chron. 15:12; Jer. 29:13)—most of which you are to perform “with all your heart” (Matt. 22:37). To draw near to God “without our heart is to pretend devotion,” since God will not accept anything from us if it is not given from the heart.\(^7\)

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Heart Is the Most Misused Word

Os Guinness contends that the biblical understanding of the heart and our modern understanding of the heart are almost opposite. Today, heart is understood to refer to a person’s emotions. Biblically, the heart refers to the whole person, including our capacity to think. Many modern readers probably have the (false) impression that a believer is determined more by feeling than by reason. Greek philosophy has already infected Western culture with too great of a divide between the heart and thinking. The anti-intellectualism of pop culture has also spread to the evangelical church. Many Christians align the heart with the warm and emotional side of spirituality in opposition to the supposed coldness of theology. Some Christians will say they’re “speaking from the heart” in order to defend their genuineness (not to be confused with innocence). Some say things like “How can I deny what I feel? How can I deny my own heart? I must be true to who I am!” Think of all the adolescent nonsense that pop culture has taught us to justify with the inviolable maxim “Follow your heart.”

Such statements are not just common. They have become moral principles etched in cultural granite and are routinely used to excuse all sorts of laziness, disobedience, antinomianism, adulterous mischief, and self-indulgence that freely destroy other people’s relationships and lives. Not much can stand in its wake. Yet the Bible does not approve. And we need its clarity.

Heart Is the Most Appropriate Word

God gave words like soul, spirit, and conscience to reveal who we are as God’s image bearers. These words generally communicate one idea or one aspect of our inner nature. The word heart differs. In Scripture, its meaning shows more diversity. And yet

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9. Wolff, Anthropology, 40, 47.
it does this without clouding the unity of our interior self. Inner human nature is both coherent and complex. It is similar to how English-speaking peoples use only one word, *snow*, to describe what falls from the winter sky—no matter its texture (flaky or crusted, thin or deep, fine or wet, soft or heavy). In contrast, the tribal Yup'ik people in northern Alaska and Canada employ multiple lexemes to describe these different types and textures of snow.\(^{11}\) The word “heart” in Scripture does both. It reflects our singular core and yet it has a variety of nuanced meanings. “Heart” is the Bible’s inclusive term to communicate our unified *and* rich nature within.\(^{12}\)

**Unity**

Whenever we read the word “heart” in Scripture, we should first understand it as a comprehensive term that captures the totality and unity of our inner nature. For John Owen, the heart indicated all the faculties of man’s spiritual life and the one principle of our moral operations.\(^{13}\) Here is the source “of motives; the seat of passions; the center of the thought processes; the spring of conscience.”\(^{14}\) It’s like a “hidden control-center” in every person.\(^{15}\) Everything we think, desire, choose, and live out is generated from this one “controlling source” and is governed from this one point.\(^{16}\) Abraham Kuyper said that the heart is “that point in our consciousness in which our life is still undivided

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and lies comprehended in its unity, . . . the common source from which the different streams of our human life spring.”

From the heart “flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). What the physical heart is to the body for health, the spiritual heart is to the soul for holiness. As goes the heart, so goes the man. It is the helm of the ship.

**Complexity**

The Scripture presents the heart not just as a unity but also as a trinity of spiritual functions: the mind, the desires, and the will. To put it another way, the heart includes what we know (our knowledge, thoughts, intentions, ideas, meditation, memory, imagination), what we love (what we want, seek, feel, yearn for), and what we choose (whether we will resist or submit, whether we will be weak or strong, whether we will say yes or no). No other word “combines the complex interplay of intellect, sensibility, and will.”

This threefold scheme of the heart (mind, desires, will) that provides the structure to this book is by no means original. It is the lifeblood of Puritan theology. The Puritans understood, perhaps better than most, the importance of aiming for the heart. Their spiritual descendants and popularizers have taken up the

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20. Gen. 6:5; Pss. 19:14; 49:3; 77:6; 139:23; Prov. 15:14, 28; Matt. 5:19; Luke 2:19; 6:45; Rom. 10:9; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; Heb. 4:12; 8:10.


same scheme. This paradigm has withstood the test of time and has been assumed by much of contemporary biblical scholarship as well. So for the purposes of this book, we will operate with the following definition: The heart is the governing center of a person. When used simply, it reflects the unity of our inner being, and when used comprehensively, it describes the complexity of our inner being—as composed of mind (what we know), desires (what we love), and will (what we choose).

If it is true that the “heart” in Scripture is simple enough to reflect our inner unity and comprehensive enough to capture our threefold complexity, then this should be reflected in the heart’s sin and its redemption (see table on next page). We should expect Scripture to reflect the same wealth and nuance when it touches on sin’s effect on the heart and Christ’s redeeming work in the heart. This is the case. Scripture speaks of sin in its unity and continuity. Sin contains layers of knowingly doing what is wrong, perverting what is pure, and rebelling against what is good, and Scripture uses a cluster of terms to address these.

We see the same in the work of Christ. His three offices of prophet, priest, and king form one united ministry. As a threefold ministry, it complements the complex operations of our heart but without compromising its unified integrity. Which reminds us once again that there is nothing in our heart that the


Lord of our heart cannot make right.\textsuperscript{26} By the end of this book, I hope you will be able to embrace that comforting thought with all your heart.

The Heart, Its Sin, and Its Redemption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heart</th>
<th>Sin</th>
<th>Lord</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mind what you know</td>
<td>“Sin” to fall short (of what you know)</td>
<td>Prophet teaches and assures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desires what you love</td>
<td>“Iniquity” to twist, pervert</td>
<td>Priest redeems and renews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will what you choose</td>
<td>“Transgression” to rebel</td>
<td>King subdues and strengthens</td>
</tr>
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\textsuperscript{26} J. C. Ryle, \textit{Old Paths} (1878; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999), 355.
Part 1

KNOWING
The Mind of Your Heart

Knowing

Tin Man: “But, after all, brains are not the best things in the world.”

“Have you any?” inquired the Scarecrow.

“No, my head is quite empty,” answered the Tin Man. “But once I had brains, and a heart also; so, having tried them both, I should much rather have a heart.”
—L. Frank Baum, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

If your heart principally does one thing, it thinks. Admit it: that statement surprises you. We tend to side with the Tin Man and associate the heart with feeling, not thinking. As a result, we promote the heart at the expense of knowledge. It is not unusual to hear a Christian say something like “Having love for God in your heart is more important than having knowledge of God in your head.” Some Christians may even assume that thoughtful, theological
engagement is less desirable, if not less spiritual, than everything else in the Christian life. Warmth is to be favored over depth. As one scholar has warned with regard to the heart, “We must guard against the false impression that biblical man is determined more by feeling than by reason.”¹ For example, it has been said that Christian discipleship is of the heart, and therefore it is more noncognitive, intuitive, and subconscious than it is theological, intellectual, or taught.² How differently the Bible sees things.³

The Heart Includes Your Mind

Our intellectual abilities—our thinking and planning, ideas and insights, musing and meditation, memories and imagination, knowledge and ignorance, wisdom and folly, doubts and convictions—are all attributed to the heart in the Bible. It may surprise you that out of all the times that the Hebrew word for “heart” appears in the Old Testament, our intellectual and rational functions are most often in view.⁴ What modern people would attribute to the head or to the brain, Scripture applies to the heart. The heart is not primarily an organ of emotion and intuition. Rather, it is the location of all “higher” human functions. The church father Augustine said that his thoughts were generated from the core of his being and “sprang up in [his] mind even out of the innermost of [his] heart.”⁵ The heart includes the mind, and it is concerned with what we know.⁶

⁴. Wolff observes, “In by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart.” *Anthropology*, 46–47.
The Mind of Your Heart

Many passages show that thinking is located in the heart and that the heart is the place of reasoning, understanding, questioning, and doubting (Prov. 15:14; Matt. 13:15; Mark 2:6; Luke 24:38). Paul tells the Ephesians in his prayer for them, “May [God] give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened” (Eph. 1:17–18). It is the heart that receives the light of God’s truth. But the heart can also suffer “blindness and confusion of mind [lit., ‘heart’ in Hebrew]” (Deut. 28:28). It is from the heart that all thoughts spring, whether for good or for evil: “For out of the heart come evil thoughts” (Matt. 15:19). God says through his prophet that the knowledge of God is in the heart: “I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD” (Jer. 24:7). Simeon prophesied that through Jesus’s birth the “thoughts from many hearts” would be revealed (Luke 2:35). Jesus’s frustration with the religious leaders stemmed from their secret but cynical reasoning: “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” (Matt. 9:4).

Notice the parallel that David draws in Psalm 139:23:

Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!

His thoughts and heart are one. Proverbs 3:5 uses the same sort of parallel:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

The heart is where our intentions and designs are forged, whether for evil or good, as the following passages show:

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Gen. 6:5)
And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” (Gen. 8:21)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

When the Bible says that a person “lacks heart,” it may refer to his or her lack of compassion or courage, but just as often it also refers to a person’s lack of understanding or good sense (Prov. 7:7; 9:4, 16; 10:13; 11:12; 12:11; 15:21; 24:30). It is a rule of thumb in the book of Proverbs that when you encounter the phrase “lacks sense” (ESV), “has no sense” (NIV), “void of understanding” or “wanteth understanding” (KJV), or “lacks understanding” or “lacks sense” (NASB), it is a translation of the literal phrase “lacks heart” (see Prov. 9:16; 12:11; 15:21; 17:18; cf. Eccles. 10:3). For example, Proverbs 6:32 says, “He who commits adultery lacks sense [lit., ‘heart’].” The adulterer is not thinking things through. Neither is the one who belittles his neighbor (Prov. 11:12), rejoices in folly (Prov. 15:21), or acts as a sluggard (Prov. 24:30; cf. 9:4; 10:13).

Where the context is clear, English translations will often render “heart” with words like “understanding,” “consider,” “sense,” or, most often, “mind,” as seen in the following verses, among others:7

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind [lit., “heart’] of Pharaoh and his servants was changed

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7. Ex. 14:5; 36:2; Deut. 5:29; 28:28; 30:1; 1 Sam. 9:19, 20; 1 Kings 3:12; 4:29; 10:24; 2 Kings 6:11; 1 Chron. 12:38; 22:19; 2 Chron. 9:1, 23; Neh. 4:6; 6:8; Job 34:10, 34; Ps. 26:2; Prov. 6:32; 10:13; 12:8; 19:21; 24:30; 28:26; Isa. 32:4, 6; 46:8; Jer. 3:16; 7:31; 19:5; 23:16; 30:24; 32:35; 44:21; 51:50; Lam. 3:21; Ezek. 38:10; Dan. 4:16; 5:21; 7:4; 8:25; Hos. 4:11; Hag. 1:5. This is not a Western bias. The Chinese word 心 (“xin”) stands for both “heart” and “mind.” Gail Godwin, Heart: A Personal Journey through Its Myths and Meanings (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 61.
toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” (Ex. 14:5)

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind [lit., “heart”] to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people? (1 Kings 3:9)

Many are the plans in the mind [lit., “heart”] of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. (Prov. 19:21)

But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me . . . in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind [lit., “heart”]. (Dan. 2:30)

In Scripture, and especially in the Old Testament, the location of our knowledge is usually the heart.

The Reflecting Heart
The mind has a habit of returning to what it has learned, and reflecting on it over and over again. God commends this when he calls his people to meditate on his words, works, and character. Those who do so will be blessed (Ps. 1:1–2). The Psalms reflect this command in song:

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight. (Ps. 19:14)

My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding. (Ps. 49:3)

I said, “Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart.” (Ps. 77:6)

Scripture expresses private reflection by using the phrase “says to his heart.” For example, “Abraham fell on his face and laughed
and said to himself, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old?’” (Gen. 17:17). The phrase translated “said to himself” is in the Hebrew literally “said to his heart.” Abraham’s servant spoke in his heart to God in prayer (Gen. 24:45). Esau spoke in his own heart with malice (Gen. 27:41), Babylon with arrogance (Isa. 47:10), the “Day Star” with wicked ambitions (Isa. 14:13), Jeroboam with greedy desire (1 Kings 12:26), Hannah with prayer for a child (1 Sam. 1:10–12), and David with desire to seek the Lord’s face (Ps. 27:8). The one who speaks to his heart is a contemplative, strategizing, meditating person whose thoughts are like “deep water” (Prov. 20:5; cf. Ps. 64:6).

One goal in acquiring and reflecting on knowledge is to obtain wisdom. Biblical wisdom is much more than intellectual knowledge. It begins with “the fear of the Lord,” it is rooted in meekness, and it produces righteous fruit (Prov. 1:7; James 3:13–18). From beginning to end wisdom is acquired by the heart (Eccles. 1:16). This is shown dramatically by the word “heart” appearing around two hundred times in the Bible’s Wisdom Literature—over 20 percent of all its occurrences in Scripture! A person of wisdom is a person of heart (Job 34:10, 34; Prov. 2:10; 12:23; 15:14; 18:15; 22:17; 23:12). In the early days of Solomon’s reign, God gave him great understanding, that is, a “listening heart” (1 Kings 3:9, my trans.). Solomon’s demise came because the idolatry of his many wives turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9). So wisdom turned away from him.

The Remembering Heart

God holds us accountable for the things we have come to know, which depends on whether we remember them. God wants us to lock wisdom up somewhere safe. Usually such riches are stored in the heart. For instance, in light of the extraordinary activities surrounding the birth of Jesus, Mary “treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). When the prophet Daniel received remarkable visions and interpretations of dreams
from God, he said, “I kept the matter in my heart” (Dan. 7:28). The psalmist says,

I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you. (Ps. 119:11)

When Scripture speaks of what God has revealed, and thus must be reviewed and recalled, it exhorts us to “take it to heart.”8 God exhorts his people not to forget but rather to remember him (Deut. 8:11, 18) and to remember his commandments (Ps. 103:18), redemption (Deut. 5:15), covenant (1 Chron. 16:15), promises (Josh. 21:45), Sabbath (Ex. 20:8), and mighty deeds (Ex. 13:3).

To “write something on our hearts” is another way of speaking about knowing something well because we have committed it to memory through consistent meditation. With respect to remembering God’s law and commandments, Scripture tells the believer to “write them on the tablet of your heart” (Prov. 3:3; 7:3; cf. Jer. 17:1; 2 Cor. 3:2). God promises to help us do the same: “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts” (Heb. 8:10; cf. Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16). Just as we record the important events in our lives through pictures or videos, so also God wants us to record his word by placing it in our heart. Interestingly, the word record comes from cor, the Latin word for “heart.” So to “record” is to place something firmly in our heart so that we can recall it later. When God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel and the Great Commandment to love God with all our heart, he said, “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart” (Deut. 6:6). In like manner, Paul says that you must “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). If God’s word is not to “depart from [our] mouth[s],” then it must not depart from our hearts (Josh. 1:8; cf. Rom. 2:15). Things that are lost

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8. Deut. 11:7, 18; Job 22:22; Isa. 47:7; 57:11; Mal. 2:2. Such passages assume that the hearer understands what is revealed; see Isa. 42:25, which says that Jacob “did not understand; . . . he did not take it to heart.”
will never again, literally, “rise up into the heart” (Isa. 65:17, my trans.). Those things that we do retain teach us and remind us of God’s goodness to us all over again. The heart and our memories walk hand in hand.9

The Hearing (Understanding) Heart

The heart that reasons is a heart that listens to reason. Our ability to see and hear the truth is determined by the heart. This is very clear in Matthew 13:11–15, where Jesus explains why he speaks to the people in parables. He says Isaiah’s commission is being fulfilled in their hearing (Isa. 6:9–10). Many who are listening to Jesus are “seeing,” and yet they “do not perceive”; they are “hearing,” and yet they “do not understand.” Why? Because their hearts have grown “dull,” and they are unable to hear or understand spiritually. For the same reason, people who beheld Jesus’s miracles were not able to understand the significance of what they had seen, because “their hearts were hardened” (Mark 6:52). Conversely, there are those who do see, hear, understand, and believe: “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Rom. 10:10). Augustine spoke of the “ears” of his heart and how he gradually heard and understood God’s truth.10

The Heart in Relationship to Your Mind

The heart includes and encompasses the mind with all its cognitive abilities, like reasoning, meditating, remembering, and believing. This is why the words “heart” and “mind” often appear together in Scripture. In such instances, they are not being contrasted but coordinated. Often they are used synonymously. David prays to the Lord to “test my heart and my mind” (Ps. 26:2). Jeremiah puts it in poetic parallelism: “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind [lit., ‘kidneys’]” (Jer. 17:10). The Lord “sees the heart

9. No wonder the word “heart” appears around 180 times in Augustine’s Confessions.
10. Augustine, Confessions, 1.5.5; see also 4.5.10; 4.11.16; 4.15.27.
and the mind” (Jer. 20:12; cf. 11:20). David says that both the “inward mind and heart” are deep (Ps. 64:6). In the Great Commandment, Jesus commanded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37; cf. Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). The point is not that the heart, soul, and mind represent separate entities of our inner nature. To the contrary, they overlap and harmonize.

There is more to the heart than the mind. Our thinking is related to the other chambers of the heart. Our desires and will significantly influence our mind, just as our thinking affects our desires and will. God shaped our hearts in such a way that our thinking functions properly only if our desires and will are right with God.11 When our heart is not at peace with God, our thinking becomes hostile to God, darkened, futile, and debased (Rom. 1:21, 28; 8:7; Eph. 4:18). But when our affections and volition are righteous, our thinking is also heading in the right direction. B. B. Warfield told his theology students, “Put your heart into your studies.”12 Godly theology demands all the heart. Otherwise, as C. S. Lewis commented, we will have “men without chests”; that is, we will have men with brains but those who lack the moral compulsion to be brave or good.13 They do not think rightly.

Our heart tends to track with what we love most. The mind moves in a willful direction.14 It is usually intent on a particular errand. Paul says things like “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5), or “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). He is talking

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about the direction of one’s thinking—it’s tack, its trajectory, its agenda, its paradigm, or, as some might say, how it’s trending. Our thought life is shaped and manipulated by the state of the whole heart and its wider and deeper agenda, whether it is polluted or sanctified.

**The Heart and Mind Are Friends**

One of the most significant modern-day misconceptions about the heart—even among evangelical Christians—is that the heart is opposed to the head. It is said that if we really want to follow our heart, then we will be guided more by our intuitions and non-thinking subconscious than by our thinking and mind. That is, people are lovers before they are thinkers.¹⁵ To embrace this kind of thinking is to be true to Greek philosophy. Friedrich Nietzsche echoed this thought when he denied that great intelligence and a warm heart could coexist.¹⁶ But to put the heart and the intellect into a relationship of tension is not being true to Scripture. Such a false dichotomy is not just a form of anti-intellectualism; it is a misleading antithesis because it seems to create the impression that the mind is somehow less spiritual or less noble than the affective or volitional part of who we are. Actually, such ideas are nothing new. Paul heard the same complaint from the childish Corinthians and expressed how puzzled he was by their eagerness for the supposedly “higher” gifts that bypassed the mind (1 Cor. 14:12, 15, 19, 20; cf. 12:7).

When we put the heart at odds with thinking, then Christians who want to walk thoughtfully with Christ are accused of having an overly intellectual or rationalistic view of the Christian life.¹⁷ This is unfortunate. But what is worse is that it puts Christians who are struggling with doubts in a terrible bind. If they are discouraged from tackling legitimately serious questions of theology

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with robust intellectual integrity, what are they to do with their questions? If Christians are not encouraged to see their questions or doubts as crucial to their growth in faith, then it will inevitably lead to a sickly form of Christianity—one that feels threatened by any difficult theological challenge, one that understates the treasure of God’s revelation, one that is against doctrine. In moments of intellectual laziness, we yearn for any excuse to avoid grappling with the more difficult matters of Scripture, especially when swimming in the deep waters of Romans or Hebrews. We look for reasons not to think seriously and deeply about God, his world, and ourselves. On the contrary, we ought to “put our heart into our studies.” There always have been, and always will be, attempts to understate the reasoning function of the heart—especially from those who romanticize postmodern thought. These are luring voices. But they are ones that must be firmly checked at the door of our heart and corrected—gently and patiently, but checked all the same. They minimize what Christ affirms as most important, that is, to love God “with all your mind.” They have misunderstood what God has said about the heart.

On the other hand, when we hear friends place the heart against the mind in casual conversation, by saying things like “I know in my mind that what you’re saying is true, but my heart just doesn’t feel it,” then we need to be reasonable and show grace. True, based on what has been shown from Scripture in this chapter, such statements are technically and clearly at odds with God’s word. But we know what the person is trying to say, and we need to concede the point—which is a biblical one. They are trying to say that what they understand has not yet sufficiently captured their heart. It has not brought forth as much spiritual fruit in their Christian life as they would like. In a manner of speaking, they are admitting that they are accountable for what

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18. Guinness, *Doubt.*
they know but do not yet know as they should. They are affirming what my friend Lendall Smith likes to say, “If we would only believe what we believe.” If that is what they are trying to say, let your smiling nod show first. The theology lesson can wait until later.
In our world, we use the word heart to refer to our emotions. But the Bible uses the word heart to refer to the governing center of life. We need to grasp the true meaning of the heart in order to better understand ourselves, our sin, and our need for redemption. As we rediscover the heart as the source of all our thoughts, fears, words, and actions, we will discover principles and practices for orienting our hearts to truly love and obey God with all that we are.

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