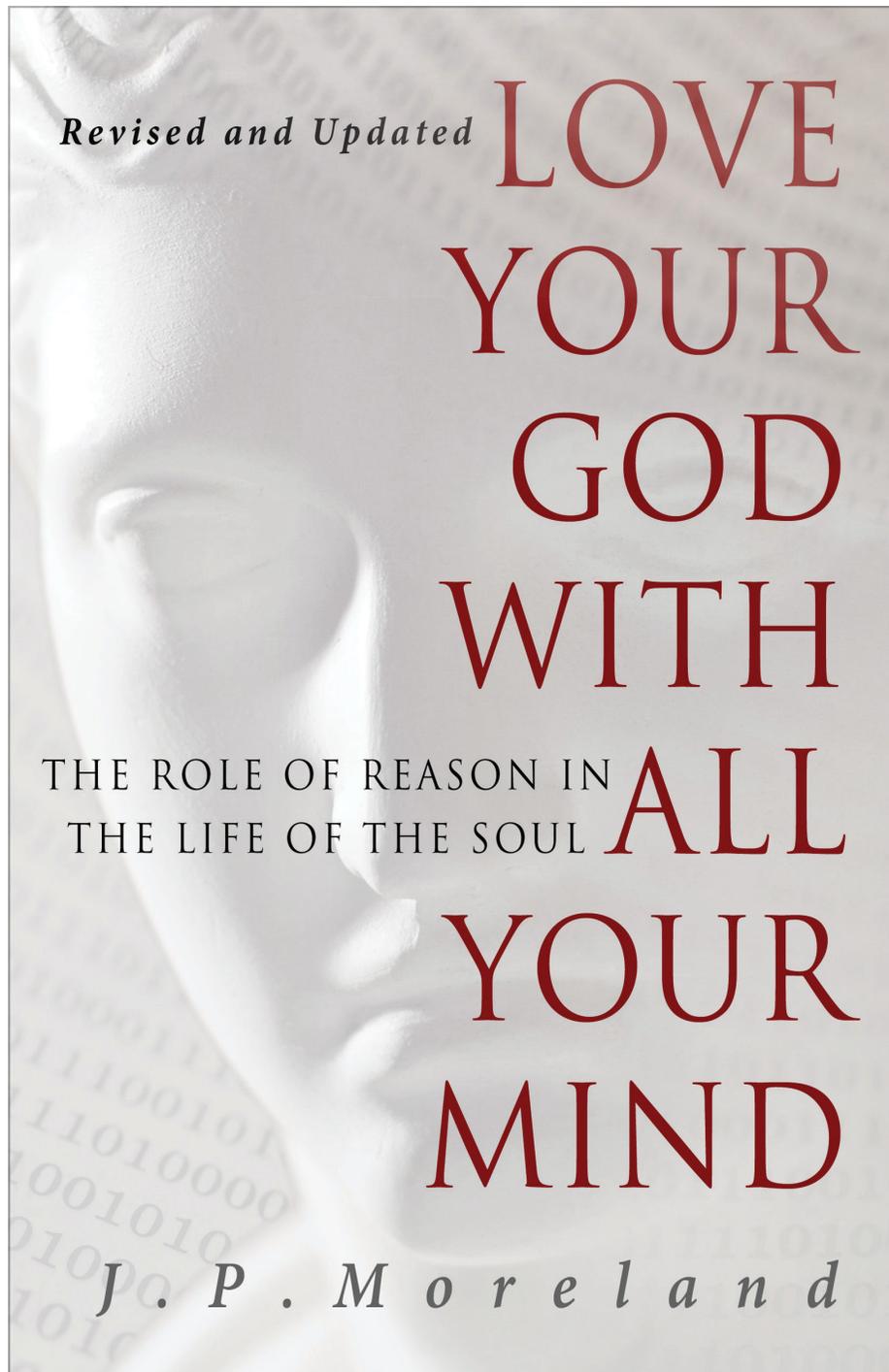


Love Your God with All Your Mind: Discussion Guide

by Joseph E. Gorra



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INTRODUCTION

How might you approach a study of *Love Your God with All Your Mind*? Is there a way to read it that is both *meaningful* and *fruitful* for your life? YES! How?

First, consider how to read this book from the standpoint—no, the *advantage point!*—of *your* actual, everyday life and service to others. Read it *from the standpoint of your vocation(s) in this world as an earnest Jesus follower*. If you are studying this book in a small group, encourage each other to *see* the benefits of this book for both spiritual and vocational formation under the direction of Christ by His Spirit through the people of God.

One of the great myths of the “intellectual life” or the “life of the mind” is that it is solely the privilege and responsibility of “intellectuals,” “scholars,” or other academic types. That’s a myth, if only because of its flawed anthropology. If all people have a mind – and they do! – then it merits cultivation and attention. J. P. did not write this book merely to exhort his academic colleagues—although, to him who has ears to hear, let him hear! He wrote this book, at least in part, to help envision the “role of reason in the life of the soul” for all people, and especially for readers who desire their mind and life apprenticed to the way of Jesus Christ, regardless of their profession, specialization, educational background, or social status.

I went to college and did graduate school for the very same reason that I read this book when it first appeared in 1997: I wanted to become *a more resourceful person for the sake of the people that I serve* in view of my vocation in God’s kingdom. That reason has continued to ring true. The discussion questions are meant to help encourage thoughtful interaction with J. P.’s perspective as well as help you discern the benefits of this book for your life. To read this book from the standpoint of how you serve others, consider the following examples:

- If you are a *student*, how might you read this to gain a reliable framework to see how lifelong, intellectual cultivation amounts to more than “getting a degree”?
- If you are a *teacher*, how can you help your students gain essential skills and practices to engage their world—indeed, our Father’s world—with care, concentration, and joy?
- If you are a *pastor*, how might you read this book to foster a wisdom-loving, educational environment in your church for the sake of empowering people in their vocations?
- If you are a *parent*, how might you read to help your child gain an appreciation for the Christian tradition’s respect for intellectual growth and leadership and your important influence toward that end?
- If you are a *doctor*, how can you use this book to help your patients recognize the value of their life and the wisdom to know how to gain insight into life’s “big questions”?

- If you are a *business leader*, caught in a constant world of action, how can you read this book to know how to foster opportunity for circumspect reflection amid (or even in spite of) your busyness?

Second, I encourage you to read *Love Your God with All Your Mind* multiple times in different contexts. Considering the reader feedback that J. P. has received over the years, I recommend that you:

- Study J. P.'s book with a tender spirit and a tough mind that's ready to work. This book can inspire change. But change from the status quo, whether in an individual life or a church, can be messy and uncomfortable. Resolve to embrace the challenge and grow!
- Read it by yourself, attentive to context of your own roles and responsibilities.
- Discuss the book with two or three other people, especially those who might be at different stages of growth and understanding. It's wonderful how "iron sharpens iron."
- Read it as a doorway into other literature. The Appendices in the book have been designed for further study. Focus on topics that connect to your needs.
- Find someone who would benefit from this book and encourage him or her to study it in a similar way that you have done.

Overview

Love Your God with All Your Mind has four parts and ten chapters. Before you study its parts, step back and consider its overall structure and orientation. For example, you might want to consider the following:

- How might Part One be an important basis for the rest of the book? What is J. P. attempting to do in these chapters that lays a foundation for the rest of the book?
- Notice how Part Two and Part Three are deeply interrelated. In the former, he is answering the question, "How do you go about developing a Christian mind?" In the latter, he is considering, "What does a mature Christian mind look like?" Both parts form the crux of the book.
- In Part Four, he is interested in "guaranteeing" a future for the Christian mind through discipleship in the local church. This is where you, dear reader, are especially commissioned and exhorted to play your part.

As you read and study *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, may you also pray and act with a confidence formed out of dependence on the Spirit of God, who enlightens our soul with real knowledge, wisdom, and understanding for life.

Amen.

Joseph E. Gorra
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PART ONE
Why the Mind Matters in Christianity

There are three chapters in Part One. In some sense, they act like a foundation for the rest of the book. For the sake of context, consider the following:

1. As you preview Part One, how do you see these chapters as being foundational to the rest of the book? How do they help to shape the conversation that follows?
2. How are the topics interrelated in chapters 1–3?
3. Consider some of the overall questions prompted by Part One:
 - How did we lose the Christian mind? Why does it matter?
 - How does a secular view of knowledge affect society?
 - What is the biblical view about the “life of the mind”? Why does this matter? How does it illuminate this topic?
 - Are there different kinds of knowledge?
 - Is the Bible the only source of knowledge for the Christian?
 - What is the structure of the soul, and why does it matter?
 - What is the role of reason in the life of the soul?
 - How might we think of the relationship between mind, truth, and reality?

Chapter One
How We Lost the Christian Mind and Why We Must Recover It

1. The “loss of a Christian mind,” institutionally and culturally speaking, did not happen overnight. There is a history. For example, consider the role of nineteenth-century American revivalism.
2. How did the emerging anti-intellectualism during the nineteenth century help encourage the church’s withdrawal from society?
3. J. P. lists several ways that anti-intellectualism has impacted the church. Which ones strike you as being most consequential for the long term, and why?
4. Explain how the following could be examples related to “anti-intellectualism”:
 - A misunderstanding of faith’s relationship to reason.
 - The separation of the “secular” and the “sacred.”
 - A weakened world missions.
 - The spawning of an irrelevant gospel that doesn’t address all of life.
 - A loss of boldness in confronting the idea structures in our culture with effective Christian witness.
5. J. P. says that American culture is “secular.” What does that mean? How do you see this to be the case?
6. In what way is secularism primarily a view about knowledge? What difference does it make to view secularism in this way? Can you think of some examples where secularism is at work in our culture?

7. What is a secular view of scientific knowledge, and how does it affect our understanding of “traditional morality”?
8. J. P. says, “The secularized perspective is constituted by two worldviews—naturalism and postmodernism.” How is that the case? What does it look like?
9. What are the major components of “scientific naturalism”? How do you see this worldview at work in our culture?
10. What are the major components of “philosophical postmodernism”? How do you see this worldview at work in our culture?
11. J. P. says that “the central defining feature of our secular culture is this: *there is no non-empirical knowledge, especially no theological or ethical knowledge.*” What does that mean? How do you see it influencing our public discussions in American culture on topics about human identity and purpose, marriage, family, etc.?

Chapter Two

Sketching a Biblical Portrait of the Life of the Mind

1. In this chapter, J. P. talks a lot about reason. How does he define “reason”? (For those of you who are philosophically interested, notice that J. P.’s sense of *reason* is not identical to some cold, narrowly construed notion of “rationalism.”)
2. As you survey J. P.’s discussion about “a biblical sketch of the value of reason,” what do you find to be the most compelling reasons and evidences that he offers for this sketch?
3. In what sense is God portrayed in the Bible as a “reasonable God”? How is He unique in this way, compared to other deities in other religions?
4. What do you find to be a compelling reason for how the Bible as divine revelation points us to having a “Christian mind”?
5. How does the Holy Spirit help us understand the Bible? What is the role of reason in helping us understand the Bible?
6. J. P. explains three important biblical texts regarding the imperative to cultivate a Christian mind (Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 22:37-39; 1 Peter 3:15). How do each of these texts contribute to our understanding of how the Bible views the role of the mind in our lives as disciples of Jesus?
7. In the second part of this chapter, J. P. poses the following question: “Do we the disciples of Jesus possess through Scripture and other means a reliable source of knowledge of reality, or do we not?” Why is this an important question? How is it a relevant question regarding the contribution of Jesus’ disciples in the world?
8. J. P. offers a simple, workable definition of “knowledge.” Does it practically correspond to your experience of what it means to have knowledge of what is real?
9. Why does knowledge have *nothing* to do with having certainty about what you know? How does the claim of certainty confuse what knowledge is?

10. Why does it matter that one can know something without knowing *how* one knows it?
11. Why is it significant that one can know without *knowing that* one knows?
12. J. P. says that there are three kinds of knowledge: knowledge by acquaintance, propositional knowledge, and know-how? How would you distinguish between these kinds of knowledge? Why distinguish these different kinds?
13. Why does knowledge not begin with one's presuppositions, language, concepts, cultural standpoint, or worldview?
14. How is knowledge by acquaintance ("simple seeing") or direct awareness of reality a basis for "*seeing that*" and "*seeing as*"?
15. The Bible puts a distinct emphasis on knowledge. What stands out to you in this area as you ponder the scriptural passages that J. P. mentions in this chapter?
16. What are some reasons for thinking that Scripture values "extrabiblical knowledge"? How is this value important for thinking about the truth of Scripture in light of truth discovered in other bodies of knowledge and life?
17. In the history of Christianity, various confusions have surfaced about the nature of faith in relationship to knowledge. Consider the following:
 - Sometimes Christians have claimed that passages from 1 Corinthians 1–2 and Colossians 2:8 indicate that there is biblical precedent to resist the "intellectual life." Why is that claim mistaken?
 - Since all human beings are finite and fallen, does it follow that reason is irrelevant? Why or why not?
 - Is the biblical nature of faith a matter of the "heart," not the "head? Why or why not?

Chapter Three

The Mind's Role in Spiritual Transformation

1. How is the New Testament concept of transformation related to the Old Testament concept of wisdom?
2. How is the mind involved in spiritual transformation? What does that look like?
3. What is the soul, and how is it different from the body? How is the soul related to the body?
4. The soul has at least five different types of states: sensation, thought, belief, desire, and an act of will. How would you distinguish each of these states? Why are these distinctions relevant?
5. The soul has various capacities. How would you distinguish between “first-order” and “second-order” capacities? Why are these distinctions significant?
6. What is a faculty of the soul? What are some examples of different faculties of the soul? How might these faculties be interrelated yet distinguished?
7. Beliefs and their formation play an important part in the mind's role in transformation. How would you distinguish between the *content* of a belief, the *strength* of a belief, and the *centrality* of a belief?
8. How do we change beliefs? What does that process look like?
9. In what way do beliefs form the “plausibility structure” of a culture?
10. How do *simple seeing*, *seeing as*, and *seeing that* feed our minds and help us see what is real more clearly?
11. How does the mind interact with other parts of the person?

12. J. P. says, “The mind places me in contact with the external world, and when functioning properly it conforms itself to the nature of the object of thought itself.” How does the *intentionality* of the mind and the *internal structure* of the mind figure into this process of being in contact with reality?

PART TWO

How to Develop a Mature Christian Mind

Part of what it means to steadfastly think and live Christianly is to learn to address that which hinders such growth. In many ways, that's what Part Two is about, along with fostering some intentional practices for growth. For the sake of context, consider the following:

1. How might these chapters further capitalize on the discussion in Part One concerning the role of reason in the life of the soul?

2. How are chapters 4–5 interrelated?

3. Consider some of the overall questions being asked in Part Two:
 - What is an “empty self”? Why is it problematic?

 - How do inferiority and pride affect the development of the Christian mind?

 - How does “keeping a sense of control” affect the development of the Christian mind?

 - Why is the formation of virtue so important to the health of a mind?

 - How might study be viewed as a spiritual discipline?

 - What are some essential principles of reasoning and argument? Why do they matter?

Chapter Four

Harassing the Hobgoblins of the Christian Mind

1. J. P. opens this chapter with some exhortation about our purpose in the kingdom of God. How do these comments help you gain perspective about your life—indeed, including the cultivation of the life of your mind—in the kingdom of God?
2. According to J. P., the “empty self” is as a “hobgoblin to the life of the mind.” What does he mean? How is this characterization helpful?
3. J. P. identifies seven traits of the empty self. Which trait do you find to be most influential in society?
4. How is the empty self inordinately individualistic, infantile, and narcissistic? How do you see those features at work in our society?
5. In what sense is the empty self passive? Why is this problematic?
6. How is the empty self sensate? How has that affected the “art of developing an interior life”?
7. In what sense is the empty self hurried and busy? Why is that problematic?
8. In what ways are empty selves a danger to society and the church? How do they hinder a society or a church from flourishing?
9. How can we deal with the empty self? J. P. offers several suggestions. How would you improve upon these as a leader of a group?
10. J. P. closes this chapter with identifying two “thieves of the Christian mind.” How are inferiority and pride interrelated, and how might they keep the Christian intellectual life from flourishing well?

11. How might a sense of control rob us of growth? How can we deal with that in the context of those we lead?

Chapter Five

Clearing the Cobwebs from Our Mental Attics

1. According to J. P., “A mature person has a tightly integrated, well-ordered soul.” Drawing upon previous chapters, what does that mean? Why is that significant? How is a developed mind crucial to this maturity?

2. How might we think of the value of the virtues with regard to the “good life”?

3. J. P. says there are five groups of virtues important for cultivating a Christian mind. With each of the following groups, consider *what each virtue means*, how they are *interrelated in each group*, and how they might be *relevant to a healthy mind*:
 - Truth seeking, honesty, and wisdom.

 - Faith (trust) and hope.

 - Humility, and the associated traits of open-mindedness, self-criticality, and non-defensiveness.

 - Ardor, vigilance, and fortitude.

 - Fidelity to God and dedication to His cause in the world as one’s chief end.

4. Of these five groups of virtues, which one do you feel especially called to develop in your life? Given what you know about the virtues, how might you grow in this group of virtues? How might you arrange your life in such a way to be prepared to practice these virtues on a regular basis?

5. How might we think of study as a spiritual discipline? What difference does that make for the practice of studying? How does this understanding of study alter your view of how to study?

6. What is the difference between an *argument* and being *argumentative*? Why does that difference matter?
7. What is the difference between an *inductive* and *deductive* argument? How do you see these arguments at work in your everyday world, even if they are not articulated as deductive or inductive ways of reasoning?
8. What is the difference between a deductive argument being *sound* versus *valid*? Why does that distinction matter?
9. J. P. notes that there are three important syllogisms to know. But what is a syllogism?
10. What is the difference between these three syllogisms?
 - Modus Ponens.
 - Modus Tollens.
 - Disjunctive.
11. What is the difference between the following formal fallacies? How are they relevant examples of invalid reasoning?
 - The fallacy of affirming the consequent.
 - The fallacy of denying the antecedent.
12. What is the difference between *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions? Offer some examples of these conditions at work.
13. What is the law of identity? Why is it important to recognize?

14. What does it mean for a statement to be self-refuting?

15. There are several informal fallacies to recognize and avoid. How would you explain and illustrate the following? Why are they fallacious?

- Appeal to pity.
- Appeal to the people.
- Ad hominem argument.
- Genetic fallacy.
- Straw man.
- Red herring.
- Begging the question.

PART THREE
What a Mature Christian Mind Looks Like

J. P. is not providing a comprehensive picture of all that a mature Christian mind entails. But he is aiming to show how a mature Christian mind looks in service to others through the significant tasks of apologetics and evangelism. Indeed, most of his chapters in Part Three amount to a case for the reality of God. For the sake of context, consider the following:

1. How might the chapters in this part of the book model what a mature Christian mind can look like? How does chapter 6 on evangelism help shape a framework for thinking about the task of offering reasons and evidences for the Christian view of God?
2. How are chapters 6–9 interrelated?
3. Consider some of the overall questions being asked in this part:
 - What is the interrelationship between evangelism and apologetics?
 - Why is apologetics valuable?
 - What does it mean to offer a cumulative case for the existence of God?
 - How might we argue for the existence of God based on the origin and design of the universe?
 - How might relevant and meaningful features of the moral life point to the existence of God?
 - What are three important criteria for choosing a religion?
 - What is the most compelling evidence to trust the New Testament accounts about the person, words, and works of Jesus Christ?

Chapter Six
Evangelism and the Christian Mind

1. J. P. says that “no movement—political, religious, or otherwise—can survive with dignity or flourish in a culture” if it allows certain conditions to arise. What are those conditions, and how are they relevant?

2. What is the difference between evangelism and apologetics? How are they interrelated?

3. How do we see apologetics evidenced throughout Scripture? Give some examples.

4. How does a life of study and intellectual growth enhance one’s effectiveness in personal evangelism?

5. J. P. offers some anecdotes about the value of apologetics training for children. What do you observe and learn from these examples?

Chapter Seven

The Question of God (Part I)

1. In this chapter, J. P. seeks to disclose his own intellectual and spiritual journey in order to get at the “God question.” What do you notice and appreciate about this approach?
2. How does being able to “defend your views about God” relate to “loving God with all your mind”?
3. How does J. P. suggest that we think about the diversity of religious claims and their interrelationship? How might his explanation and analogy be helpful for interreligious dialogue?
4. What is wrong with the question, “Is it possible to prove there is a God?”
5. What is a “cumulative case inference to the best explanation,” and why is it a preferred intellectual approach to the God question?
6. J. P. attempts to show the relevancy of the following three premises to the question of God’s existence. Give some compelling evidence for each premise below.
 - The universe had a beginning.
 - The beginning of the universe was caused.
 - The cause of the beginning of the universe was personal.
7. How and why is the following concept of God relevant to J. P.’s discussion in this chapter: “God as a necessary being who is the self-existent, uncaused—indeed, uncausable—creator of everything”?

8. Why is the distinction between event-event causation and agent-causation relevant to the God question?

9. Why is science incapable of genuinely explaining the ultimate cause of the universe?

Chapter Eight

The Question of God (Part II)

1. What do you make of the intellectual conversion of former atheist philosopher Antony Flew? What might it suggest about the role of evidence in one's worldview formation?
2. What is the "design argument," and how does it provide relevant reasons for the existence of God? What do you find to be the most compelling evidence for this argument?
3. What is "irreducible complexity," and how does evidence of it point to a fine-tuned universe?
4. How are several features of the moral life and the objectivity of purpose in life best explained by the Judeo-Christian God?
5. What is a "moral absolute," and how do we know that it exists?
6. What are "non-natural, intrinsically normative value properties," and how does their existence point to the existence of an ultimate moral being?
7. How does the existence of evil and dysfunctionality in the world count as evidence *for* God's existence?
8. How is the question—*why should I be moral?*—relevant to whether atheism is a satisfying, alternative explanation to Christian theism?
9. Why should we conclude that there is only one personal God instead of many finite, polytheistic gods?

Chapter Nine ***The Evidence for Jesus***

1. J. P. offers three criteria that are central for choosing (and not losing!) one's religion. Review these so that you understand their meaning and significance. How are they interrelated? Why would it be in someone's best interest to have these as their criteria for choosing a religion?
 - Does the depiction of the Supreme Being in each religion "harmonize" with what we already know about God from creation?
 - Does the religion provide the most profound diagnosis of the human condition and the most adequate solution to that diagnosis?
 - Is the best explanation of both the origin and continued history of the religion one that employs supernatural activity on God's part?
2. How would you respond to the following claim: "Only simple-minded folk trust the New Testament and intellectuals, on the other hand, are all convinced it is filled with legend"?
3. J. P. makes a distinction between a "high Christology" and a "low Christology"? What does that mean? How is it a relevant distinction to his discussion on the historical Jesus?
4. What is so significant about an earlier dating of the Gospels as accounts of the historical Jesus?
5. Why does J. P. argue that the book of Acts should be dated around AD 60–62? What do you think of his reasons? How is his argument relevant to seeing the gospel accounts as trustworthy and credible?
6. How do hymns in Paul's epistles, along with the dating of Galatians, offer further evidence for an early "high Christology"?

7. Scholar Royce Gruenler has applied what is called “the criterion of dissimilarity to the sayings (and actions) of Jesus.” What does this criterion mean? How is it significant to understanding the uniqueness of Jesus’ claims and actions?
8. When you consider the extra-biblical data and the time factor evidence for the plausibility of the New Testament accounts about Jesus, does your confidence grow in the trustworthiness of the Bible? Does it help your beliefs about Jesus and the New Testament become rooted in knowledge?
9. The nature and role of oral tradition in first-century Jewish culture, J. P. argues, offers powerful evidence for the historical reliability of the Gospels. How is that the case? Why is that significant?
10. What evidence is there for thinking that the New Testament writers were careful to record the truth of what Jesus said and did?
11. First Corinthians 15:3-8 is a crucial text that shows how the account of Jesus’ bodily resurrection was carefully handled among early Christians. What are the three key facts that this passage evidences? Why are they significant?
12. Since the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, millions of Christians globally have encountered the power and presence of the risen Jesus in their own lives. How might this stand as further evidence for the credibility of Jesus’ message and mission?

PART FOUR
Guaranteeing a Future for the Christian Mind

Every generation of Christians should freshly dedicate themselves to the cultivation and furtherance of the “Christian mind.” The need for careful, winsome thought-leadership is not an option but essential for the life and health of the church’s witness in society. For the sake of context, consider the following:

1. Given the knowledge presented in this book thus far, how might you maintain, develop, and spread this knowledge as a steward?

2. How is chapter 10 related to the contributions of chapters 1 and 2?

3. Consider some of the overall questions being asked in this part:
 - How might our philosophy of ministry be (re)formed as a result of the overall argument in this book?

 - How might our churches better reflect the ideal of the Pauline model for leadership and education?

 - What are some practical ways that the life of the mind can be encouraged, modeled, pastored, empowered, and commissioned through our local churches?

Chapter Ten

Recapturing the Intellectual Life in the Church

1. J. P. poses three important questions for evangelicals concerning the state of the “life of the mind” in our churches. From within your own church, how would you honestly yet gracefully assess the state of things?
 - Why is our impact (in society) not proportionate to our numbers?
 - Why are ministers no longer viewed as the intellectual and cultural leaders they once were in their communities?
 - How is it possible for a person to be an active member of an evangelical church for twenty or thirty years and still know next to nothing about the history and theology of Christian traditions, the methods and tools required for serious Bible study, and the skills and information necessary to preach and defend Christianity in a post-Christian, neopagan culture?
2. How has the role of a pastor evolved over the last forty to fifty years? How has this shaped the teaching ministry and authority of the local church?
3. In what way is the church supposed to be both a “hospital” and a “war college”? Why are both necessary? How might we be tempted to emphasize one over the other?
4. J. P. has a section on “philosophy of ministry.” Especially if you are a church leader, does your philosophy of ministry enable or hinder your congregation to intentionally grow their mind? If you are a parishioner in a local church, do you regularly experience opportunity for your mind to grow as a Christian? Why or why not?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the “senior pastor model”? How might this model shape the ethos and activities of the church as a knowledge and educational institution?

6. How is the distinction between *forms* and *function* in the church relevant for appreciating the ministry and mission of a church?
7. If a local church is really supposed to be a wisdom-forming, educational institution, how might we think of the function and value of the following in this endeavor?
 - The purpose and significance of the sermon.
 - The church library.
 - Classes and study centers at a church.
8. What are some practical ways that you could encourage both a thoughtful presenting and thoughtful hearing of a sermon in order to help people gain an appreciation of what it means to think Christianly about a topic?
9. How might a local church help foster a culture of reading and learning that seeks to empower a church's engagement in her community?
10. How might small groups in a church be good at *enfolding* and *educating*?
11. How might a local church help celebrate, commission, and pastor people who see as their vocation the call to serve others as a Christian scholar in *academe*?
12. How can a church gathering and its teaching ministry become more attuned to the need for "vocational integration"?
13. How might pastors help foster an environment where Christian professors and graduate students could feel less estranged from the sociological ambience in a local church? How might such academic types be supportive and less cynical of pastors and the local church?

14. How might a local church help support financially the work of Christian scholars and their scholarship? Come up with some creative ways, whether as an individual congregation or with partnering congregations?

15. The prospects for future Christian thought leaders are dependent on the church. How might a local church think and plan toward investing in the future in this way?

For additional resources related to the themes in *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, visit www.JPMoreland.com

Joseph E. Gorra is the founder and director of Veritas Life Center, a Southern California religious nonprofit focused on developing understanding and educational resources that advance the authority, winsomeness, and practicality of the Christian knowledge tradition as a wisdom tradition fruitful for human flourishing. For more information, visit www.VeritasLifeCenter.org.