



COMMITMENT 5

Disciple the Mind, Heart, and Will

ROMANS 12:1-2 · NIV

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.



THE FUNDAMENTAL REALITY

None of us meets the pressures of this culture one at a time. Our minds, our affections, and our actions are all being shaped at once, and the three are bound together. The culture around us is discipling all of us, shaping how we think, capturing what we love, and steering what we do. It presses hardest on our children, our grandchildren, and our students.

Whether you are raising children, praying for grandchildren, or sitting in a college classroom yourself, what follows is not a description of someone else. It is a map of the world we share, and of the ground on which the next generation is being formed.

Romans 12 speaks to the whole person. The renewing of the mind addresses the head. Offering ourselves as a living sacrifice addresses the heart. Testing and approving God's will addresses the hands. Commitment 5 calls us to disciple the next generation in all three, and to keep being disciplined ourselves.

HEAD	HEART	HANDS
The Mind <i>what we think</i>	The Affections <i>what we love</i>	The Will <i>what we do</i>
<i>"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."</i>	<i>"Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."</i>	<i>"Test and approve what God's will is."</i>
Recover the Christian mind	Renovate the soul	Restore the Spirit's power



HEAD

The Mind

RECOVER THE CHRISTIAN MIND

ROMANS 12:2

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

The culture works hard to pattern the way all of us think, and it starts early. Paul says: resist it. Recovering the Christian mind is not optional; it lies at the heart of discipleship. Here are ten of the strongest pressures on our minds, and especially on the minds of the next generation.

TEN INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES

1 MATERIALISM AND SCIENTISM

THE ASSUMPTION *Only what can be measured, quantified, and proven scientifically is real.*

God, the soul, spiritual reality, meaning, and purpose are all “unprovable,” so they become optional. Science becomes the measure of truth, and everything else is mere opinion or belief. We absorb this without noticing through school, media, and popular culture, and our children absorb it earlier and more thoroughly than we did. The result is a Christian who believes in God on Sunday but lives Monday through Friday as if he does not exist.

THE DAMAGE It becomes hard to think biblically about sexuality, healing, prayer, or God’s action in the world, because none of these is “scientific.” So we default to secular frameworks.

2 POSTMODERNISM AND RADICAL RELATIVISM

THE ASSUMPTION *There is no objective truth. Every narrative is a construct: “your truth” and “my truth.”*

The Bible becomes a story rather than the story. Christianity is one valid perspective among many, no truer than Islam, Buddhism, or atheism. “Judge not” becomes an absolute that leaves no basis for any truth claim, and moral reasoning collapses into “Who are you to say that’s wrong?”

THE DAMAGE When no truth claim may be more valid than another, defending the faith becomes nearly impossible. Even suggesting that Christianity is true can sound arrogant, and many students feel that tension in every classroom conversation.

3 CRITICAL THEORY AND IDENTITY POLITICS

THE ASSUMPTION *Reality is primarily about power, oppression, and identity categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and class.*

Everything is read through two questions: Who has power, and who is being oppressed? The Bible becomes a text about justice, narrowly defined, rather than redemption, and biblical categories like sin, grace, and holiness are recast in the language of social justice.

THE DAMAGE Progressive ideology can feel like Christianity because it speaks of justice. But it separates justice from theology and puts political activism in place of bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed. It can produce activists without theological grounding, who then walk away from the faith when the church seems “unjust” by progressive standards.

4 DUALISM: FAITH AND REASON, PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

THE ASSUMPTION *Faith is private belief; reason is public truth.*

You may believe in God personally, but you may not let that belief shape your public reasoning. Science, politics, education, and work run on “reason.” Church, prayer, and personal morality run on “faith.” And never the twain shall meet.

THE DAMAGE Christianity becomes compartmentalized. We can live as functional atheists through most of the week and “believe” on Sunday, without an integrated Christian worldview.

5 THE AUTHORITY CRISIS

THE ASSUMPTION *All institutions are corrupt, so distrust every authority: church, government, academia, and parents.*

Many of us have learned, sometimes for good reason, to question authority, but the culture offers nothing to put in its place except our own feelings and intuitions. The result is autonomous individualism dressed up as wisdom, with no transcendent authority and no submission to truth outside ourselves.

THE DAMAGE When every claim to truth sounds like oppression, it becomes very hard to receive teaching, and so very hard to be disciplined.

6 THE COLLAPSE OF SEXUAL ETHICS

THE ASSUMPTION *Sex is self-expression, and consent is the only rule.*

That is the culture’s message. The church often answers, “Don’t have sex before marriage,” but rarely explains why or places sexuality within a biblical understanding of what it means to be human. Many young people end up confused rather than convicted.

THE DAMAGE Pornography, hookup culture, gender confusion, and sexual brokenness follow, often because no one offered an integrated biblical sexual ethic. The culture’s framework wins by default when the church’s seems arbitrary, hypocritical, or hopelessly out of touch.

7 TECHNOLOGICALLY MEDIATED THINKING

THE ASSUMPTION *Algorithms, not curiosity or reason, decide what we see.*

Notifications fragment our attention, and short-form video has replaced long-form thinking. We learn to think in memes rather than arguments, and echo chambers keep us inside algorithmic bubbles. This is true of anyone with a phone, but it is the only world our children have known.

THE DAMAGE Deep, systematic thinking becomes difficult, and so does following a sustained theological argument. Conspiracy thinking spreads easily, finding patterns without evidence, and quiet, sustained reflection becomes rare.

8 THE META-CRISIS: ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE

THE ASSUMPTION *The world is ending, and there is nothing we can do.*

Our students are keenly aware of climate change, artificial intelligence, political polarization, cultural decline, and economic instability, and the dominant story tells them all of it is unstoppable. This is less depression than intellectual despair.

THE DAMAGE “Why think about the future? Why plan? Why study? It’s all falling apart.” Nihilism poses as realism, leaving no hope, no vision, and no reason to engage the world with the mind.

9 CHRISTIANITY AS ANTI-INTELLECTUAL

THE ASSUMPTION *Faith and reason are at odds, and churches often teach this themselves.*

Many churches say “just believe” rather than “think deeply about Scripture.” Pastors may not model intellectual rigor, there is little engagement with apologetics, theology, or philosophy, and education itself is viewed with suspicion: “Don’t go to a secular college.”

THE DAMAGE Young people conclude that Christianity is opposed to thinking. When students meet serious challenges to the faith at university without the resources to answer them, many walk away believing the faith cannot stand up intellectually. That is a failure of the church, not of the faith.

10 THE POST-CHRISTIAN CONSENSUS

THE ASSUMPTION *Christianity is no longer the default.*

It is one option among many, and an increasingly marginal one. The institutions that shape us, including education, entertainment, media, and technology, are openly hostile or simply indifferent to the faith. There is little cultural support for thinking as a Christian.

THE DAMAGE Believers can feel intellectually isolated, the odd ones out, with no peer group to reinforce Christian thinking and constant pressure to conform. Following Christ can feel like swimming upstream, and for a student it often is.





HEART

The Affections

RENOVATE THE SOUL



ROMANS 12:1

“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Our affections, our desires, our hearts belong to God, not to the screen, to pornography, or to whatever the culture is selling. Offering ourselves to God means saying no to what the culture is training us to love.

Here are ten forces at work on all of our hearts, pressing hardest on the young.

TEN CHALLENGES OF THE HEART

1 **PORNOGRAPHY** *The Corruption of Desire*

It trains the affections toward fantasy and self-gratification rather than real love, and it creates a broken reward system in which real intimacy feels inadequate. The shame it produces isolates and keeps people from confessing and receiving grace. Over time it teaches us to consume rather than to love, and it erodes the capacity for vulnerability and genuine intimacy.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Sexuality touches the deepest level of human connection. When desire is corrupted here, the whole capacity for intimacy and covenant is poisoned.*

2 **SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMPARISON** *The Cultivation of Shame*

It trains constant self-consciousness and endless measuring, replacing a God-given sense of worth with the approval of others. Inadequacy, shame, and anxiety become the baseline. We lose the ability simply to be; everything is performed for an audience.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *It shapes our basic emotional posture toward life: performance, fear, and comparison.*

3 **DOPAMINE ADDICTION** *The Loss of Contemplation*

Constant stimulation trains us to crave novelty. Sitting still, focusing, or tolerating boredom becomes hard, and the capacity for sustained joy and peace fades. Restlessness becomes the baseline.

“All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

— Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *It rewires the brain’s reward system, eroding the capacity for the deep, quiet joys that sustain the spiritual life.*

4 LONELINESS DISGUISED AS CONNECTION

Hundreds of online “friends,” and no one who truly knows us. Curated personas take the place of real selves, and algorithms sort us into echo chambers. Many are starving for love without realizing it.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *We are made for real community. Trained on counterfeit community, we can lose the ability to trust the real thing even when we find it.*

5 DESPAIR *The Loss of Hope*

Stories of catastrophe about climate, technology, and collapse train us in hopelessness, and young people hear them most loudly. The unspoken message is that nothing can be done and the future is already lost. Dread and resignation become the baseline.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Hope is foundational to discipleship. Without it there is no motivation to change, to grow, or to love sacrificially.*

6 CONSUMERISM AS IDENTITY

It teaches that I am what I own, wear, and consume, and it creates an endless craving for the next purchase that will finally complete me. Wanting replaces contentment, and gratitude becomes nearly impossible.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Greed is spiritual poison. When consumption defines identity and happiness, the soul withers.*

7 OUTRAGE AS IDENTITY

It trains us to find our identity in anger, so that what I am against becomes who I am. Algorithms amplify outrage because it keeps people scrolling, and anger, resentment, and bitterness become the emotional baseline.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *When anger becomes identity and purpose, we become enslaved to resentment.*

8 VICTIMHOOD AND HELPLESSNESS

It teaches that we are only acted upon by systems, never responsible within them. Passivity passes for awareness, and responsibility disappears. Helplessness and resignation follow.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *The gospel calls us to respond: to turn from sin, to grow, and to love. A story of pure victimhood leaves no room for that response.*

9 SEXUALIZATION AND GENDER CONFUSION

Early exposure trains desire before its time. Gender ideology offers “answers” to the pain of living in a body, replacing acceptance of the body with distance from it. The result is disconnection and deep confusion about identity.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *We cannot love God or others while at war with ourselves. Peace with the bodies God gave us is part of the peace he gives.*

10 SPIRITUAL NUMBNESS

Constant stimulation produces emotional numbness. It becomes hard to feel joy, grief, longing, or awe; everything is flattened. We end up overstimulated and emotionally empty.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *The life of faith involves the affections: awe, longing, repentance, and joy. When the affections are numbed, spiritual experience becomes nearly impossible.*





HANDS

The Will

RESTORE THE SPIRIT'S POWER



ROMANS 12:2

"Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Don't just do. Don't just achieve. Don't just stay on the treadmill. Test whether what you are doing is truly God's will or simply conformity to the culture.

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM · Q&A 111 · THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

A. That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.

TWO FALSE PATHS, ONE FAITHFUL WAY

	RESTLESS HANDS <i>activism</i>	IDLE HANDS <i>accommodation</i>	FAITHFUL HANDS <i>integrated</i>
MARKS	Activism without theology Social justice in place of the gospel Pragmatism without wisdom Running on human power alone	Privatized faith "God will handle it" Accommodation to the culture Waiting while evil advances	Action rooted in theology Word and deed together Flowing from a transformed heart Empowered by the Spirit
RESULT	Burnout, self-righteousness, spiritual emptiness	Passivity and no kingdom impact	Sustainable kingdom work and lasting transformation
ITS MOTTO	<i>"If we work hard enough, we can fix things."</i>	<i>"God will take care of it."</i>	<i>"God invites our hands and empowers our work."</i>
ROOTED IN	Human effort alone	Private belief alone	Prayer and work held together

SIX IDOLATRIES OF ACTION

These are the concrete places where our time, energy, and life choices are being spent, and where we often steer our children's as well. The problem is rarely passivity. Most of us are busy, productive, and driven, but often toward the wrong ends.

1 CAREERISM *The Cult of Achievement*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE At sixteen the question is, "What will get me into a good college?" At twenty it becomes, "What will make me successful, wealthy, and respected?" Every decision is weighed by whether it advances a career, and relationships, health, and even the soul are sacrificed to get ahead. The unspoken theology: my worth equals my success, my income, and my status.

WHAT IT DOES Work becomes an idol rather than a calling. By thirty many are burned out and hollow but cannot stop. Little time is left for God, family, or community, only striving, anxiety, and emptiness.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Churches and Christian parents often affirm this rather than challenge it. The goalpost keeps moving, and the promised "someday" never comes.*

2 ATHLETICS *Identity Through Competition*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE Sport becomes the organizing principle of life, and identity becomes "athlete." Elite programs, travel teams, and twenty or more hours a week push everything else aside, including school, faith, and family, often with parents leading the way.

WHAT IT DOES When the sport ends, the identity can end with it, if worth was built entirely on performance. It breeds both entitlement and fragility.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Discipline and teamwork are good gifts. But when sport becomes an idol it consumes the soul, and it always comes to an end.*

3 ACTIVISM *Meaning Through Warfare*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE Life is consumed by the fight against injustice, and activism becomes the source of meaning. It brings constant conflict, outrage, and public shaming, with little time left for prayer, reflection, or friendship.

WHAT IT DOES Activism becomes a substitute for faith and transformation. It is possible to be busy saving the world while our own souls fall apart, and the fruit is self-righteousness, burnout, and spiritual emptiness.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *It feels like discipleship and sounds like the gospel, but it replaces transformation with action and grace with works.*

4 **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT** *The Credential Treadmill*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE Test prep, AP classes, and college applications consume everything. GPA rankings and college prestige become the measure of worth, and graduate school brings debt and a delayed life. “Once I have the degree, then my life begins.”

WHAT IT DOES Life is put on hold. Constant measuring and comparing take over, debt becomes a burden for decades, and faith is often set aside because it doesn’t help with grades. The lesson learned: worth equals performance.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *Schools, parents, and the wider culture all affirm the treadmill, so it is rarely recognized as idolatry.*

5 **HUSTLE CULTURE** *The Endless Grind*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE Side hustles, personal brands, building an empire. Everything must be monetized, and the pressure is always to produce, grow, and optimize. Rest looks like failure, and Sabbath looks like laziness.

WHAT IT DOES There is no Sabbath, no rest, no stillness. Relationships become transactional. People end up exhausted and empty but unable to stop.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *The culture praises it as ambition and drive, yet it destroys the capacity for rest and peace. Jesus rested, and the life of faith has a rhythm.*

6 **SEXUAL CONQUEST** *Achievement Through Sexuality*

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE Hookup culture treated as achievement, “body count” as status, and relationships as conquest rather than covenant. Sexuality becomes a way to prove one’s worth.

WHAT IT DOES Sexuality is cut off from love, commitment, and covenant. Relationships become disposable, leaving loneliness behind all the activity.

WHY IT RUNS DEEP *It confuses conquest with intimacy and uses sexuality as a substitute for genuine love and connection.*





HOW HEAD, HEART, AND HANDS HOLD TOGETHER



We cannot disciple one part of a person and neglect the others. Each needs the other two.

WITHOUT THE HEAD	WITHOUT THE HEART	WITHOUT THE HANDS
We accept whatever the culture tells us about sexuality, power, and identity, with no intellectual resistance.	We may know the truth but not love it, and so not live it. Without transformation we remain trapped in the same addictions and shame.	We believe and are being changed, yet we stay passive. We make peace with the world and do not expect God to work through us.

THE RESULT: A THREEFOLD CRISIS

Left unchallenged, the culture forms people, and a whole generation, who are

- ◆ **Intellectually colonized**, unable to think as Christians;
- ◆ **Spiritually broken**, addicted, ashamed, self-absorbed, and lonely; and
- ◆ **Functionally powerless**, passive, accommodating, and without hope.

Paul's answer is not three separate repairs but one call to the whole person: do not be conformed to this world; be transformed, and offer yourselves to God.

FOR FURTHER READING

J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power* (Zondervan, 2007).

Dennis P. Hollinger, *Head, Heart & Hands: Bringing Together Christian Thought, Passion and Action* (InterVarsity Press, 2005).



Rooted: Discovering the Gospel Together



SEVEN COMMITMENTS



- ◆ Embrace a biblical vision for the faith of the next generation.
- ◆ Foster a robust partnership between church and home.
- ◆ Teach the breadth and depth of the whole counsel of God.
- ◆ Proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **Disciple the mind, heart, and will.** *this session*
- ◆ Pray with dependence on God's sovereign grace.
- ◆ Inspire worship of God, for the glory of God.