


GATHER

WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER FROM  IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH





*“You shall love
the Lord your
God with all
your heart and
with all your
soul and with
all your mind.”*

Matthew 22:37

Cover Art:

“Love Your Neighbor”
Alice Long, 2026

BUT GOD

As we closed out 2025 and entered a new year, I thought about our focus verses for Women's Ministry—Matthew 22:37-39—and, in particular, verse 37: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

Jesus said this is the greatest commandment, so that means loving God is the most important command for me to keep. But as I have studied Romans and Ephesians the last few years and honestly looked at my own natural heart, it seems impossible to keep this command. And I am not wrong about that. In my flesh, it is not humanly possible to love God with all my heart and soul and mind. On my own, I cannot please God or save myself. But God did not leave me without hope or to save myself. This verse does not fill me with despair, but shows me my need for a Savior and drives me to the cross.

Christ cleansed my sin by His blood and gave me His righteousness. He also sent the Holy Spirit to indwell me and empower me to grow in holiness and love. May

these truths never get old or cease to cause me to praise Him. I know I cannot love God as I should and He deserves on my own, but I am not on my own! Christ has redeemed me and the Holy Spirit is at work in my heart to transform me day by day and year by year.

God has also given me His Word and the church to help me grow and mature. Recently, two dear friends gave me the exact same little sign with only two words on it—**But God**. I have one in my office and one on the windowsill over the sink in my kitchen (my other “office.”) I love these signs and their reminder of God's miraculous intervention and rescue in my life. I was utterly lost, incapable of loving or pleasing God. **But God** in His rich mercy and love stepped in and saved me.

As I depend on and yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, God will continue to mature and grow me in my love for Him. Sisters, let's grow together to the glory of God.

Serving with love,

—Bethany

LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

by Zelly Zim

“What does it mean to love God with all your heart?” All my heart implies an encompassing, maybe even overwhelming level of devotion, yet the potential deceitfulness of the heart encroaches on the edges of this thought. (Thanks, Jeremiah!) Can my heart, and her follies, be trained into joyful submission?

Our everyday secular language uses the heart as imagery to capture feelings, sometimes disconnecting it from our mind or from our reason. This creates a tension that has us furrowing our brows at phrases like “follow your heart.” However, in turning to our Bible, Jesus adds context to pull us out of our modern understanding and broaden our perspective on what the heart is capable of.

Matthew 22:36-37 says, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”—and Mark 12:30 adds “and with all your strength.” The heart may be leading, but the rest of the faculties are in

lockstep right behind it. Where the heart goes, so the rest of us goes: there is no dividing of the desires of the heart and the intellect. Once the implications in the phrase “all your heart” become clear, going on to include soul, mind, and strength is welcome redundancy—every part of my being must be involved in the practice and pursuit of my Savior.

All that said, if my heart is leading my soul, mind, and strength, and it is prone to wickedness as Jeremiah warns (Jeremiah 17:9), it must be cleansed (Matthew 5:8). Because of sin, our desires can be crooked when something that was initially good becomes evil. In times of peace and definitely in trials, the Lord cleanses and refines our hearts. Isaiah’s unclean lips were refined and purified with the burning coal (Isaiah 6:5-7). (I can’t even think of the word refined without thinking of “But Who May Abide” from Handel’s Messiah).

A. C. Troxel offers this encouragement: “If we find ourselves in constant conflict with sin, then we should not be cynical. The ferocity of the battle that persists in us at times should not be seen as

evidence that we are losing ground or that Christ's faithfulness has waned. The struggle suggests the very opposite, that we are right where we are supposed to be... [t]hese battles may frighten us (they should) or humble us (they ought to) or hurt us (they will). But the battle is where we belong... Christ is committed to seeing this process through."

This necessary purification burns as we gird our hearts against the corruption of her desire. In this process, we become of one heart—a heart that is fixed on loving and glorifying Him.

In our transformation and continued sanctification (2 Corinthians 10:5), our heart learns to love what God loves. Loving God with all our heart is an active process of renewal. Remember Ephesians 4:21-24 (ESV): "...assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

In putting on the new self, the Holy Spirit brings us to a posture where God's glorification can be the desire of our heart, mind, soul and strength, in a truly overwhelming and beautiful way only our all-powerful God can construct.

Immediately after citing the "great and first commandment" in Matthew's gospel, Jesus shares the second commandment, saying: "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This second commandment is the outpouring in action of the first,

leaving no doubt about the fruit of a healthy heart that loves the Lord.

In the ESV, this section, titled "The Great Commandment," ends with Jesus saying, "On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." When framing the Great Commandment, Jesus pushes us back to the declaration of faith in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). The Great Commandment is not new: God has knit together the fabric of this revelation from the eternal past and in all His interactions with His people through the Law and the prophets and carried them to us, the children grafted into the promise. With the saints that preceded us, we repeat the same statement of faith and welcome the Refiner's fire that trains our hearts to His desires.

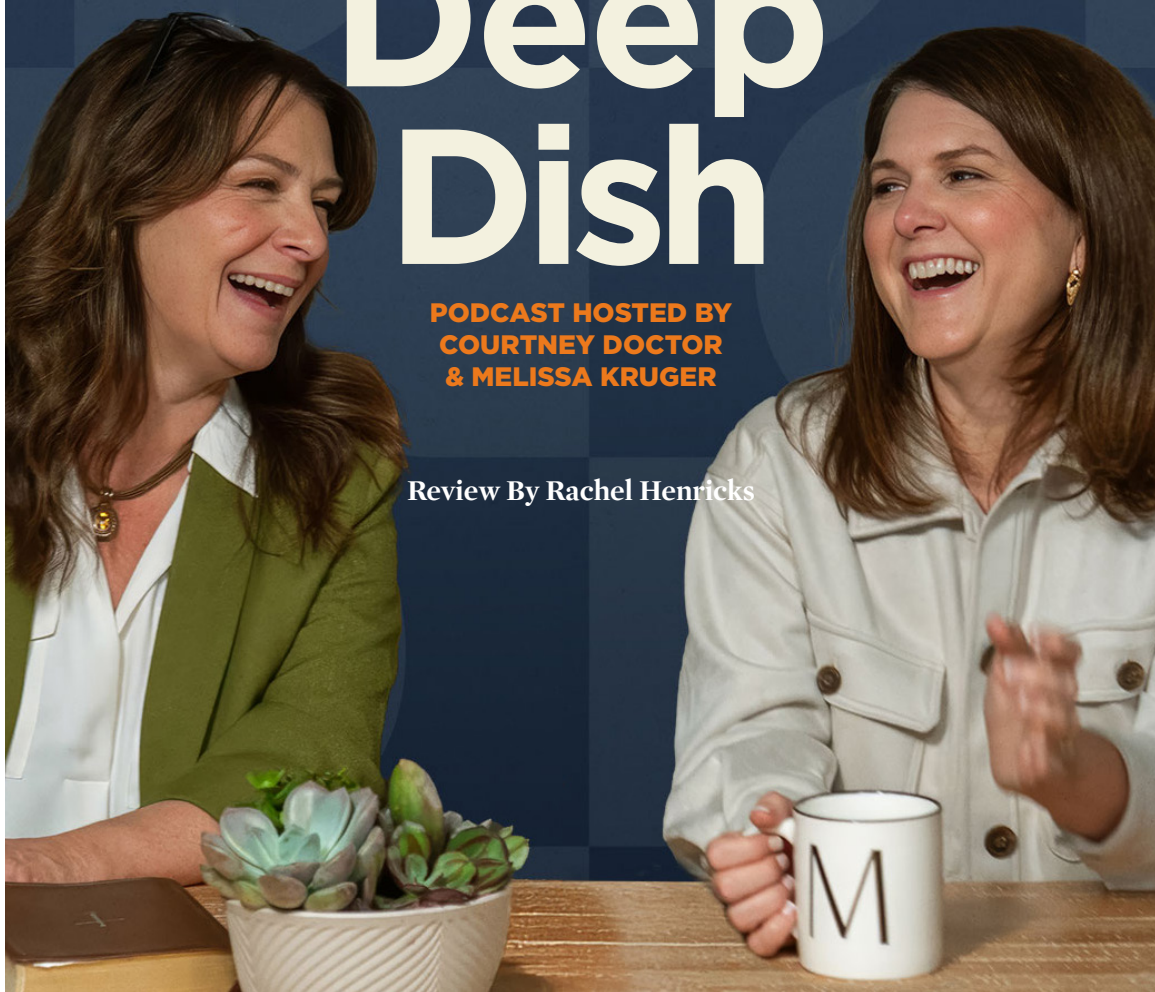
A conversation with me wouldn't be complete without a book recommendation and a hymn, so I humbly suggest "With All Your Heart: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will Toward Christ" by A. Craig Troxel. I am indebted to Troxel's beautiful book for deepening my understanding of how the word "heart" is used in the Bible, as well as encouraging the continued practical wrestling to train our hearts to fully love God.

As for a hymn, Frances Ridley Havergal's "Take My Life, and Let It Be" kept coming to mind this winter. Though the heart is not explicitly mentioned in the lyrics, the actions the hymnist prays to execute are the results of a heart that is seeking to love God fully. I pray that the Holy Spirit encourages us, nudges us, and pushes us as we strive to love God with all our hearts. I pray that we are "ever, only, all for Thee."

THE Deep Dish

PODCAST HOSTED BY
COURTNEY DOCTOR
& MELISSA KRUGER

Review By Rachel Henricks



Maybe you know the old catch phrase, “What’s the dish?” or maybe I am just showing my colors too much? Either way, this phrase is something I’ve jokingly said to friends wanting to catch up quick or find out what is new in their lives. I’m sincerely seeking an update from my friends when I inquire about “the dish” and when I heard about the Gospel

Coalition’s Women’s Initiative latest podcast series, The Deep Dish, my ears perked up.

In March 2025, the Gospel Coalition launched their newest podcast, The Deep Dish, hosted by Courtney Doctor and Melissa Kruger. The structure of the podcast is simple—each episode the hosts welcome different women to engage in conversations about Biblical truths for some tough topics, with the purpose of, “equip[ing] women to engage in richer discipleship relationships in their local contexts.” The topics include “the dish” you and your

friends would discuss, ranging from the trustworthiness of the Bible, being stewards of our bodies, relationship with husbands, the local church, and discipleship—just to name a few. The guests on the show are women and men who are passionate and deeply versed in these topics—Nancy Guthrie, Whitney K. Pipkin, Mark Vroegop, Vanessa K. Hawkins, etc. Have I convinced you to have a listen yet?

Allow me to continue. This podcast has become one of my most shared resources over the past year because it does exactly what it has set out to do. The first episode I listened hooked me. It was a discussion between Courtney Doctor, Melissa Kruger and Nancy Guthrie regarding “Conversations with God,” aka

prayer—pondering the question of why we should pray when we believe God already knows what will happen. Especially walking with many women carrying heavy loads of life, this episode dove deep into God’s Word—from the Old Testament to the New Testament—discussing what God has to tell us (you can’t argue against the truth of God’s Word).

Another episode that most recently encouraged me was their bonus episode, Bonus: Preparing for a Holiday that Will Disappoint. Just before Christmas 2024, I broke my right wrist with three little boys at home (1, almost 3, and 5) and



felt Christmas memories run away from me in many ways, struggling for most of that season to remember the joy of the season when many of my memory making and joyful traditions could not happen. When this episode dropped, I knew the Lord was kindly guiding me to have the right heart attitude en-

tering the 2025 holiday season. The hosts discussed six practical, God-centered habits to build into the holidays which inevitably never live up to childhood memories, but always provide an opportunity to grow in the Lord and our dependence on Him.



Finally, a quick plug for two other episodes I highly recommend—although there has not been one yet that I have not appreciated for its thoughtfulness and Biblical truth. First was an episode from June 2025, “Grief, Loss, and Gratitude in the Christian Life,” and the second was back in October 2025 when Megan Hill came on the show to discuss “Going to Church When It Hurts.” Neither of these shows



were light. In fact, I remember exactly where I was walking and listening to the conversation regarding grief. The Biblical truths and realities of living in a sinful world have become significant encouragements to me, and both shows drew me humbly to God’s Word and refreshed my compassion for my brothers and sisters in our church body at IBC.

Furthermore, each podcast gives access to discussion questions and resources, both to help guide us to next steps in light of the information shared in the topic and to foster these deep-dish conversations to go further in our communities. So, if you’ve got a group of ladies you regularly meet with or maybe you are looking to foster new relationships or even just looking to go deeper Biblically on some common subject, consider picking an episode to listen to. Every episode leaves me wanting more.





HOW DOES MUSIC HELP YOU LOVE GOD MORE?

Music is a gift from God that I get to return back to Him! It helps me learn scripture, recite truths about God, and marvel in the beauty and creativity of how God can decorate time. Singing praise to The Lord trains my heart to be affectionate towards my Creator who saved me!
– Heidi Ower

The Lord has blessed me with the ability to sing and be a good musician, and when I'm using those talents for Him it makes me feel that much closer to Him. Music itself is very emotional, but even more so when I'm using music to worship and praise my Savior.
– Dara Sigsbee

Time and time again in His Word, the Lord calls us to praise Him through music, and we show our love for Him through obedience. We strive to honor the way He calls us to live a life of worship, stewarding well the gifts He's given us. Yet, music is a generous gift in and of itself as an expression of God's love for us. Music gives us a way to cope through the hard times and shift our focus to our Healer and Sustainer; a way to spread joy and point others to Christ, and a way in every season to rejoice in the Lord.
– Josie Anderson

I love music because listening to music makes me sing. I'm the one you hear in a store humming if I don't know the words or singing softly if I do while I'm shopping. I especially enjoy songs about our Lord, which ministers to me as I praise Him at home, at church, in the car, and yes, while shopping. Music is a gift from my Lord and I'm so thankful.
– Ruth Nieboer

God's beauty is revealed in countless ways, and to me, music is one of His most extraordinary gifts. The intricate laws of music reflect His order and intentional design, offering a profound way to draw closer to Him. Singing in the choir unites my voice with others in collective worship, and playing in the IBC jazz band unites our instruments together in both a fun and joyful way that creates a sound pleasing to His ears. In addition to music's beautiful melodies, harmonies, and rhythms, the truthful words of hymns both old and new speak deeply to me and draw me nearer to God.
– Judy Payne

What Does It Mean to Love God?

by PENNY WOOD

“To know God is to love God.” That is my spontaneous reply to the question—yet it is far too simple, for there is infinitely more to know and infinitely more to love. I will spend the rest of my life discovering who He is and what He has done (Jeremiah 9:23–24). God is the greatest gift humanity has ever known.

His sacrificial death for our sins, and the imputation of His perfect righteousness to all who believe, is nothing less than divine love incarnate (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He willingly submitted Himself to pay the price, endure the pain, and open the door of salvation for me—and for you (John 10:17–18).

Consider His prayer on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). Though His soul weighed heavy with the suffering before Him, His heart remained fully

surrendered to the Father’s will (Hebrews 5:7–8).

That same night, as the guards approached on the Mount of Olives, Peter sprang into action. Drawing his sword, he struck the servant of the high priest, slicing off Malchus’ ear (John 18:10). Jesus’ response revealed the depth of His love and obedience. He healed Malchus instantly (Luke 22:51) and rebuked Peter, saying, “Put away your sword... Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?” (John 18:11).

In that moment, Jesus demonstrated true love—not through force or resistance, but through willing obedience to the cross (Philippians 2:8). Authentic love comes from God, because God is love (1 John 4:7–8).

Oh Father, give me that kind of love. Equip, enable, empower me to understand what it truly means to love You (Ephesians 3:17–19).

Thank You, Lord.



Under the direction of Ali Procopio, over 60 women helped to create this work reflecting on the faithfulness of Jesus during the 2026 Women's Conference.



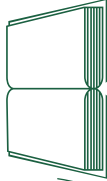
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Missions Statement:

Equipping and Encouraging
women in everyday faithfulness to:

Love God | Love His Word | Love others

Learn more at ibc.church/women



IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH

6911 BRADDOCK ROAD, SPRINGFIELD VIRGINIA 22151

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 2157