



[Video:](#)

[Discussion with David Dufault-Hunter](#)

Chaplain's Office
University Passage Resource

David Esselstrom, Ph.D.
Chair, English Department

Toward the end of each semester's creative writing class, I tell my students that once enrolled in my class, always enrolled in my class. In other words, we can continue the discussion of creativity and their original work long after they receive a final grade for the class and graduate from the university. I can afford to be so generous with my time because, to date, only a dozen or so students have stayed in touch with me for longer than a few months. Once in a while, however, I get an email from a student asking for guidance, support, or a response to a particular writing problem. The below email asked me a question for which I did not have a ready answer. I took a stab at prying open the question and hoped, thereby, I helped the student in some way. I find the exchange an intriguing example of the interplay of faith and learning. I treasure this contact with a former student as one of those gifts that enrich this profession to which I am called.

Student's Question: I've been working on this novel for a few years, but now I'm trying to really develop the world I created and I'm a little stuck. The whole thing is an allegory where everyone is given three contracts at birth (to the mind, body, and heart), and one contract at conception (the soul). I'm just trying to make experiences tangible, such as what it means to give your heart to someone. So, I wrote rough drafts for the contract to the body and the heart, but I cannot figure out what I mean by the mind. I'm coming from a biblical basis, but taking off from there. So, here's my question to you: What do you think it means to love the Lord with all your mind? Is it just your thoughts? The thoughts that produce actions? Memories? If you could explain it in the simplest way, what would it look like to love God or anyone or anything else with your mind? This is the verse that inspired me: "He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27 NIV).

I'd really appreciate your insight! Thanks! And hope all is well with you.

My response: Loving God with all the mind involves a conscious and a subconscious ordering. Any attempt, for example, to think rationally presupposes a conscious understanding or acknowledgment that the gift of rationality itself is from God and therefore is best tempered with compassion and humility. The subconscious ordering is, obviously, a bit more complex and difficult. The simplest way to get at it is to realize that our conscious/subconscious being—the I that we call I and the I that constantly surprises and challenges us—is founded and flows from our relationship with a God who loves us. How does this play out? When you awaken in a cold sweat from a nightmare more troubling as you arise from slumber than it was while you slept, what comforts you is the felt knowledge of God's sustaining power and supporting love. It is this "felt knowledge" that lets us know our subconscious is ordered toward God and not toward chaos/despair.

David D. Esselstrom, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of English
Azusa Pacific University