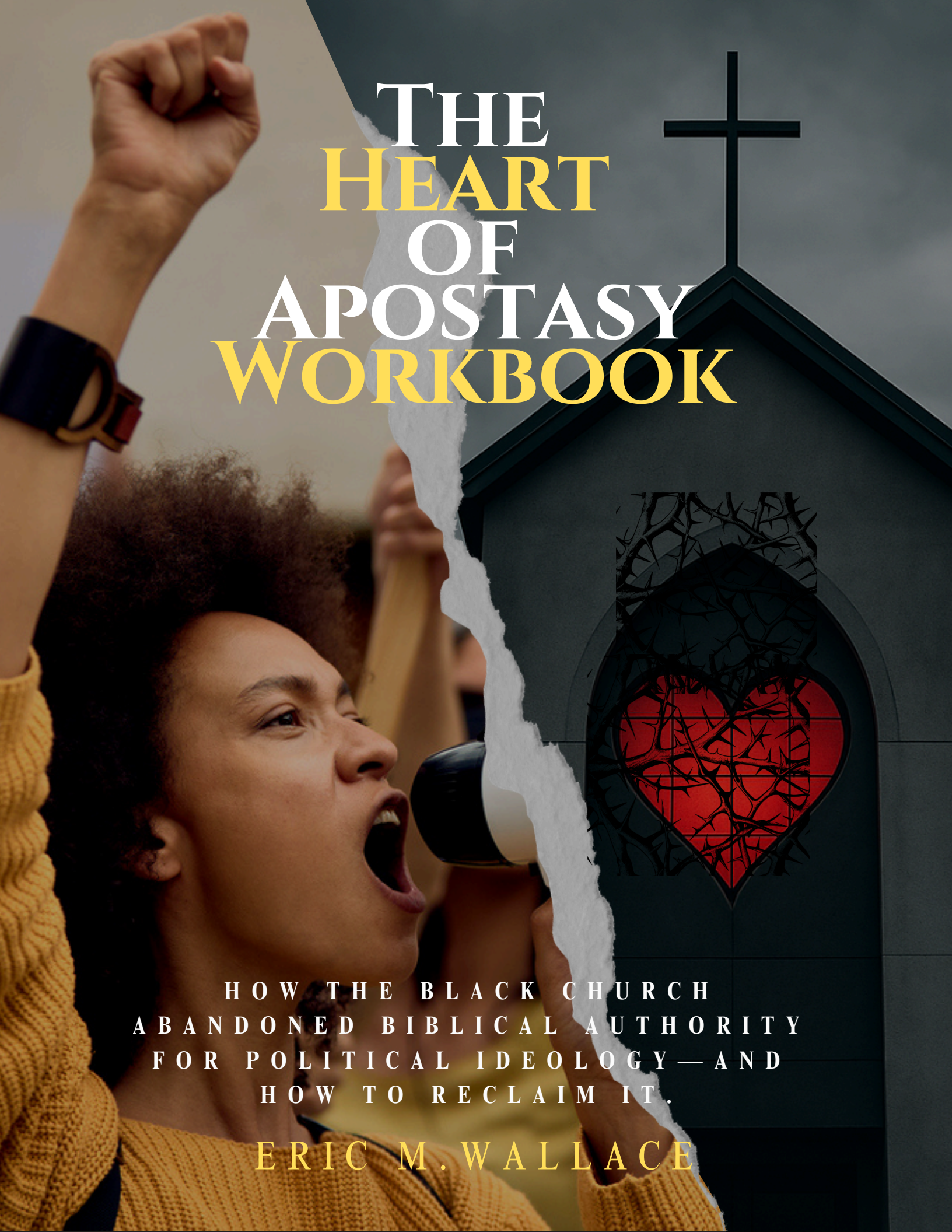


The background of the cover features a woman with a large afro hairstyle, wearing a yellow sweater, shouting into a megaphone with her right fist raised. She is positioned on the left side of the frame. In the background, a church building is visible, featuring a large cross on its roof and a heart-shaped window with a red heart and black thorns. A vertical tear in the paper effect runs down the center of the image, separating the woman from the church building.

# THE HEART OF APOSTASY WORKBOOK

HOW THE BLACK CHURCH  
ABANDONED BIBLICAL AUTHORITY  
FOR POLITICAL IDEOLOGY—AND  
HOW TO RECLAIM IT.

ERIC M. WALLACE

# **The Heart of Apostasy Study Guide**

**An Eight-Session Companion for Individuals and Groups**

**Dr. Eric Wallace**

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## How to Use This Guide

The Heart of Apostasy asks one question of every reader: to whom are you listening? This guide exists to keep that question from remaining an abstraction. It walks through the book chapter by chapter, turning its diagnosis into examination, its exposition into discussion, and its call into commitments that can be named, prayed over, and kept.

The guide is built for an eight-session study, one session per chapter of the book, and works equally well for personal study, small groups, Sunday school classes, and pastoral leadership teams. Each session follows the same pattern: a reading assignment, the session's key Scripture, a summary of the chapter's argument, questions for group discussion, questions for personal reflection, a concrete action step, and a closing prayer. Three of the book's excursuses accompany Sessions 6, 7, and 8 as boxed case studies with their own discussion questions.

Participants should read the assigned chapter before each session. The summaries in this guide are reminders, not substitutes; the book carries the full argument, the Scripture exposition, and the documentation. Groups pressed for time can complete a session in sixty minutes by selecting two discussion questions and one reflection question. Groups with ninety minutes can work through all of them.

A word to leaders. This study will surface disagreement, because it examines loyalties most of us have never been asked to examine aloud; political, cultural, and racial loyalties that sit close to identity. Let the text of Scripture arbitrate. The book models this discipline: every ideology it weighs, it weighs against the Word. Hold your group to the same standard, including during the book's own testing. The goal of these sessions is not agreement with an author but obedience to a King.

## How to Use This Guide

### The Governing Frame: One Parable, Four Hearts

The book is an extended meditation on the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:4–15. The same seed, the Word of God, falls on four kinds of soil, and the harvest differs not because the seed differs but because the soils do. Jesus interprets the soils as conditions of the human heart. The book names them the Detached Heart, the Disillusioned Heart, the Distracted Heart, and the Devoted Heart, and it argues that these four conditions explain the present state of the Church in general and the Black Church in particular. The premise, repeated throughout, is that the condition of the heart determines how a person hears the Word, and how a person hears determines whether they bear fruit.

| Heart                | Soil (Luke 8)                                     | Condition                                                                  | Book Chapter |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Detached</b>      | The path — seed snatched by the birds (vv. 5, 12) | Hears but never believes; the devil takes the Word away                    | Chapter 4    |
| <b>Disillusioned</b> | The rock — springs up, withers (vv. 6, 13)        | Receives with joy but has no root; falls away under testing                | Chapter 5    |
| <b>Distracted</b>    | The thorns — choked as it grows (vv. 7, 14)       | Grows but is choked by anxiety, riches, and pleasures; no mature fruit     | Chapter 6    |
| <b>Devoted</b>       | The good soil — hundredfold (vv. 8, 15)           | Holds the Word fast in an honest and good heart; bears fruit with patience | Chapter 7    |

### Where This Study Sits

This guide is the first movement of a larger discipleship pathway from Freedoms Journal Institute. The pathway begins here, with hearing, examining the heart against the Word through this book. It continues with seeing, the forthcoming four-part documentary series *Black Families Matter: Reclaiming a Community in Crisis*, which carries the book's four heart conditions onto the screen, with a companion guide to follow. It culminates in doing a full course of study in the R.I.S.E. Principles introduced in the book's conclusion, where diagnosis becomes practice in government, liberty, family, and economic life. Hear, see, do: that is the shape of the journey, and this study is its front door.

# Chapter 1

## The Heart Condition of a Different Gospel

**R** *ead*ing: Introduction (pages 1–11)  
**KEY SCRIPTURE**  
**Luke 8:10; Exodus 20:17**

*“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.’” — Luke 8:10*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The book opens in a barbershop. A former pastor and colleague asks the author, in front of the shop’s clientele, whether he is still a Republican, and the exchange exposes the book’s real subject. The question was not about policy; it was about allegiance. The author’s answer, “I vote for my Biblical values,” was dismissed because in much of the Black Church political affiliation has become a test of belonging that operates independently of Scripture. The Introduction argues that this is not merely a political problem but a theological one: the Black Church has exchanged Biblical justice for a political vision of social justice and, in doing so, has stopped hearing God’s Word with obedient hearts.

Two frameworks organize the diagnosis. The first is Thomas Sowell’s distinction between the constrained vision—humanity as fallen, requiring restraint and redemption—which the author identifies with the Biblical view, and the unconstrained vision, in which people are basically good and evil originates in systems. The author contends that many Black churches once embodied the constrained vision, placing their hope in the unchanging Gospel rather than in Washington, but have adopted the unconstrained vision under the banners of compassion, inclusion, and social justice. The second framework is the Tenth

Commandment. Covetousness, the author argues, has been dressed in ideological garments “equity,” “income inequality,” “inclusion” so that envy-based policy and theology now masquerade as justice while assaulting the Biblical concepts of stewardship, providence, and personal responsibility.

The Introduction closes by insisting this is not a partisan project. The author is not trying to make Republicans out of Christians; he is calling Christians to examine their political allegiances through the lens of Scripture rather than skin color, and he sets the Parable of the Sower as the diagnostic instrument for the whole book. The crisis is a crisis of hearing, and the question that will govern every chapter is already on the table: who are we listening to?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. The pastor’s barbershop question—“Are you still a Republican?”—assumed that a Black Christian’s political identity is settled by group membership. Where have you seen political affiliation function as a test of racial or church belonging?
2. Restate Sowell’s constrained and unconstrained visions in your own words. Which vision underlies the assumptions of your congregation’s preaching, programs, and public statements — and how can you tell?
3. The author claims that “equity” language often rebrands covetousness, the sin the Tenth Commandment forbids. What distinguishes a Biblical concern for the poor from an envy-based demand for equal outcomes?
4. The Introduction says the crisis is theological before it is political: “We’ve stopped hearing God’s Word with obedient hearts.” What would change in our public engagement if we treated the problem as a hearing problem rather than a voting problem?

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

1. When Scripture and my political instincts conflict, which one do I quietly adjust?
2. The author wished he had given a bolder answer in the barbershop. Where have I softened or hidden a conviction to keep the peace in front of others?
3. If someone audited my strongest reactions this month — what angered me, what I defended, what I shared — would they conclude my first allegiance is to the Kingdom of God?



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### **ACTION STEP**

Carry the book's governing question, "Who am I listening to?", through one full week. Each day, note the voices that most shaped your reactions to news, culture, or church life, and at week's end, write one sentence on which voice held the most authority over your heart.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord, You know my heart better than I do. Expose the allegiances I have never examined and the voices I have mistaken for Yours. Give me an honest and good heart that hears Your Word and obeys it, whatever it costs me. Amen.*

## Chapter 2

# Different Voices: A Divided Heart

**R** *ead*ing: Chapter 2 (pages 12–29)  
**KEY SCRIPTURE**  
**Luke 6:46; 1 Timothy 4:1**

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” — Luke 6:46*

### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 2 surveys the ideological voices competing for influence in the Black Church. From Steadfast Democrats it takes the concept of “racialized social constraint,” the peer pressure, enforced everywhere from Black media to the Church itself, that treats deviation from Democratic loyalty as racial betrayal. From Conservative but Not Republican it takes the paradox of congregants who hold socially conservative, Biblically informed convictions yet refuse to vote them. From The Grift it takes and answers the accusation that Black conservatives have sold out, responding that Cane assumes Black advancement requires liberal policy and ignores the data on what government dependence has done to Black families.

The chapter then examines the movements. Black Lives Matter is named a false gospel: a movement whose platform undermined the nuclear family, promoted positions antithetical to Scripture, and incorporated practices the author identifies as ancestor worship — offering allegiance based on skin color rather than the Cross. The Black Church PAC is weighed and found to have traded the prophetic voice for partisan endorsements, focusing on issues with political payoff while remaining silent on the collapse of the Black two-parent family. The politics of racial grievance is traced back to Booker T. Washington’s century-old warning about

## The Heart of Apostasy Study Guide

those who “make a business of keeping the troubles of the Negro race before the public” because it pays. Critical Race Theory is examined as a full worldview that replaces sin and redemption with oppressor and oppressed, and is judged by the standard of 1 Timothy 4:1.

The chapter closes with Orwell. Doublethink — holding two contradictory beliefs and affirming both — has entered the pews: believing the Bible while supporting those who oppose its teachings, standing for justice while remaining silent about abortion, preaching that Jesus is the way while following voices that reject His authority. The author calls this spiritual gaslighting and names it what the book’s title names it: apostasy. The way back is not cultural relevance but repentance.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Define “racialized social constraint” in your own words. Where have you seen it operate: in family, media, fraternal organizations, or church, and what does it cost the person who breaks it?
2. The chapter calls Black Lives Matter a false gospel. What makes a gospel false? Using the chapter’s criteria, how should a congregation evaluate any movement seeking its public support?
3. Booker T. Washington warned of leaders who profit from keeping grievances alive. What tests can distinguish a genuine advocate for justice from what the chapter calls a race hustler?
4. Give a concrete example of doublethink from contemporary church life: something believers are pressured to affirm publicly that they know contradicts Scripture. What sustains the contradiction?
5. The chapter says the focus of the Black Church’s public voice should be the re-establishment of the two-parent family and fidelity to the Gospel issues with no political payoff. Why do issues without someone else to blame get so little pulpit time?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Which voice in this chapter have I given the most uncritical trust: a party, a movement, a media diet, a peer group?
2. Have I practiced doublethink: affirming something publicly that I know in my spirit, and from the Word, to be false?
3. What would it cost me, socially, to be politically unpredictable and Biblically consistent?

**ACTION STEP**

Choose one voice that currently speaks into your life a commentator, a platform, an organization, a book and put it through the chapter's test: set its actual claims beside Scripture and write down where they align and where they diverge. Bring one finding to the next session.

**PRAYER**

*Father, forgive us for letting other voices shout over Yours. Deliver the Church — and deliver me — from doublethink, from fear of being cast out, and from every gospel that is no gospel. Restore to us a single, undivided heart. Amen.*

## Chapter 3

# Promise and Fulfillment in Luke's Prologue

**R** *ead*ing: Chapter 3 (pages 30–52)  
**KEY SCRIPTURE**  
**Luke 1:37–38; Luke 4:18–19**

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” — Luke 1:37–38*

### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Before the parable can diagnose the heart, Luke establishes why the Word can be trusted. Chapter 3 walks through Luke 1–4 and its governing theme of promise and fulfillment: God interrupting human history in real time and space, under the rule of Herod, Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius, to keep promises made to Abraham, David, and Israel. The announcements to Zechariah and Mary set up the book's first study in hearing. Zechariah hears the angel and doubts, and is silenced; Mary hears and submits, “let it be to me according to your word,” and becomes the model of faith. How one hears, Luke shows from the first chapter, determines everything that follows.

The Magnificat and Benedictus introduce Luke's theme of reversal: God bringing down the mighty and exalting the humble, a salvation that reaches the outsider and the person of low estate. Then the kingdoms clash in the wilderness. In the temptation, the devil offers Jesus bread ahead of obedience, the kingdoms of the world without the Cross, and a test of God's protection at the temple. Each temptation is a shortcut—glory without suffering, provision without dependence, proof without faith—and Jesus answers each from the Word. The author notes that the same temptations confront the Church today, especially when it seeks political influence without prophetic sacrifice.

At Nazareth, Jesus reads Isaiah 61 and announces His mission: good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed. The chapter presses on the word translated “release” —*aphesis*—which everywhere else in Luke-Acts means forgiveness. Real liberty, the author argues, comes through the forgiveness of sins, and the Gospel therefore carries both spiritual and sociopolitical implications: it transfers people from Satan’s dominion to God’s. Which raises the chapter’s confronting question: how can the Church preach deliverance while supporting policies that deepen dependency and deny Biblical truth?

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Zechariah and Mary both heard an impossible announcement from the same angel. What made their responses different, and which response more closely resembles the modern Church’s posture toward God’s Word?
2. Each wilderness temptation offered Jesus a legitimate end by an illegitimate shortcut. What shortcuts—political, financial, cultural—are offered to the Church today in exchange for its allegiance?
3. Luke’s theme of reversal declares that God exalts the humble and brings down the mighty. How does that differ from ideologies that promise to reverse fortunes through political power?
4. The chapter argues that the “release” Jesus proclaims comes through forgiveness of sins. What happens to a church’s mission when it seeks liberation for people without seeking their forgiveness and repentance?

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

1. Where am I demanding a sign like Zechariah rather than submitting like Mary?
2. Which of the three temptations—provision, power, presumption—most often finds a foothold in me?
3. Do I believe delay means denial? What promise of God am I tempted to stop waiting for?

### **ACTION STEP**

Read Luke 4:18–19 aloud each morning this week as the mission statement of the Church. Each evening, note one moment where you had opportunity to bring good news, release, sight, or liberty to someone—and whether you took it.

### **PRAYER**



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*God of Abraham, David, and Mary, You keep every promise You make. Teach me to hear like Mary, to refuse every shortcut the enemy offers, and to trust that the liberty You give through forgiveness is greater than any freedom the world can legislate. Amen.*

## Chapter 4

# Authentically Hearing the Word of God: The Detached Heart

*Reading: Chapter 4 (pages 53–70)*

### KEY SCRIPTURE

#### Luke 8:5, 12

*“The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.” — Luke 8:12*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Luke 5–8 shows crowds pressing in to hear the Word of God, and shows that hearing alone saves no one. The disciples hear and obey, and their nets fill. The Pharisees hear the same words and question in their hearts; Jesus links their hearing to their heart condition for the first time, and by the Sermon on the Plain the standard is fixed: the good person produces good out of the good treasure of the heart, the wise builder is the one who hears Jesus’ words and does them, and the question that indicts every generation is already asked — “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” The Centurion, an outsider, models the faith Israel’s insiders lack; the sinner woman honors the Lord the Pharisee merely hosts.

Then the parable. The seed on the path is the Detached Heart: it hears, but before the



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Word can take root, the devil—the same adversary defeated in the wilderness—snatches it away so the hearer may not believe and be saved. The author calls the devil the pickpocket of the heart. Detachment is not ignorance; it is a hardened surface, a heart not open to spiritual truth, and it is the devil's preferred condition because a person who never believes never needs to be lured into falling away.

The chapter closes by naming the modern instruments of the snatching. Joseph Graves's *A Voice in the Wilderness* presents evolutionary biology as humanity's savior, a false prophet's gospel, in the author's judgment, that lumps Biblical conviction with bigotry and plants ideological seed in soil where the Word has not taken root. Gonzalez and Gorka's *NextGen Marxism* documents how the old class struggle has been rebranded into identity politics that targets faith, family, and the next generation. Cultural Marxism, the author concludes, is the modern-day bird in the parable, swooping in to snatch the seed before it can take root, and the Church's answer is discernment: testing every voice against the Biblical text.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. The author observes that the Sower disappears from the parable after verse 5 — the messenger is inconsequential; the seed and the soil decide everything. How does that observation rebuke the modern preoccupation with personality, platform, and status in the Church?
2. What distinguishes the Detached Heart from simple unbelief? Why does the chapter say the devil prefers a heart that never believes to a believer who backslides?
3. The chapter treats certain ideologies as instruments that harden soil and snatch seed. How does an ideology harden a heart against Scripture without ever announcing itself as anti-Christian?
4. Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" The chapter says the competing voices answer: a good teacher, a moral man. Where do you hear that reduced Jesus preached or assumed today?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Is there a portion of Scripture I have hardened myself against—one I hear without letting it land?
2. Which contemporary ideas have quietly gained authority in my thinking without ever being tested against the Word?

3. When the Word confronts my politics, my money, or my grievances, do I let it germinate—or is it gone by Monday?

### **ACTION STEP**

Pick one cultural claim you encounter this week—from news, entertainment, or education— that carries an implicit view of humanity, justice, or truth. Write the claim in one sentence, then write what Scripture says on the same question, with the passage. Practice the discernment the chapter demands.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, break up the hard ground in me. Guard the seed of Your Word from the thief, expose every ideology I have received uncritically, and give me ears to hear — not as the crowd hears, but as a disciple hears. Amen.*



## Chapter 5

# The Disillusioned Heart: Belief Without Root

*Reading: Chapter 5 (pages 71–86)*

### KEY SCRIPTURE

**Luke 8:6, 13; Psalm 1:1–3**

*“And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.” — Luke 8:13*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The seed on the rock springs up and withers. This is the Disillusioned Heart: it receives the Word with joy but has no root, believes for a season, and in time of testing falls away. The chapter shows that Luke chose his words deliberately; the “testing” of the seed is the same word as the “tempting” of Jesus in the wilderness, so the believer’s trial is a continuation of the same war. Joy itself is not the problem; joy is the right response to God’s redemptive work throughout Luke. But joy is a response, not a strategy. Faith built on emotional experience withers when obedience begins to cost, and the word for falling away—*aphistemi*—is the word from which apostasy takes its name. This is the condition that gives the book its title.

Two disciples embody the test. Judas and Peter both failed under pressure: one



*The Disillusioned Heart*

betrayed Jesus, the other denied Him three times. The difference was not the failure but the response to it. Judas sought silver and ended in disgrace; Peter wept bitterly, repented, and was restored to strengthen his brothers because Jesus had prayed that his faith would not fail. Satan, the chapter reminds us from Luke 22, demanded to sift all of the disciples like wheat. Paul and Hebrews carry the same warning to the whole Church: in later times some will depart from the faith; take care lest an evil, unbelieving heart lead you to fall away from the living God.

The antidote is the rooted life of Psalm 1. The blessed man refuses the counsel of the wicked and delights in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night, and becomes a tree planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in season, its leaf never withering. Rootedness is a function of what you meditate on and whom you consult. The chapter closes with the war for allegiance: if the enemy cannot snatch the Word, he will tempt us to compromise it, luring us with false allegiance to party, to ethnic loyalty, to a cause, to anything but Christ. There is one race, the human race, and one identity that saves: being in Christ.

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. “Joy is a correct response, but not a strategy.” What does a church built on emotional experience look like, and what happens to it when obedience becomes costly?
2. Judas and Peter both failed. Why did one failure end in destruction and the other in restoration — and what does that teach about how we handle believers who have compromised under pressure?
3. The chapter connects the rock’s “testing” to racialized social constraint: ridicule, exclusion, and the charge of betrayal aimed at those who break ranks. What forms does that testing take right now, and what does it cost to withstand it?
4. Psalm 1 locates rootedness in delight and meditation, daily saturation in God’s instruction. What in your congregation’s common life actually builds roots, and what merely builds attendance?

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

1. Is my faith rooted in the Word or in an experience I keep trying to recreate?
2. When my convictions have been tested publicly, did I stand, soften, or vanish?
3. After a spiritual failure, is my pattern Judas’s despair, Peter’s repentance, or avoidance of the question altogether?

### **ACTION STEP**



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Adopt Psalm 1 as a daily discipline this week: read it each morning, and choose one passage of Scripture to meditate on — turning it over in your mind, day and night, as the psalm prescribes. Roots grow by repetition, not resolution.

### **PRAYER**

*Lord, root me. Sink Your Word so deep in me that testing finds me planted, not potted. And when I fail, for I will fail, give me Peter's tears and not Judas's despair, that I may turn again and strengthen my brothers. Amen.*

## Chapter 6

# The Distracted Heart: Beyond the Gospel

*Reading: Chapter 6 (pages 87–105) and Excursus I (pages 106–108)*

### KEY SCRIPTURE

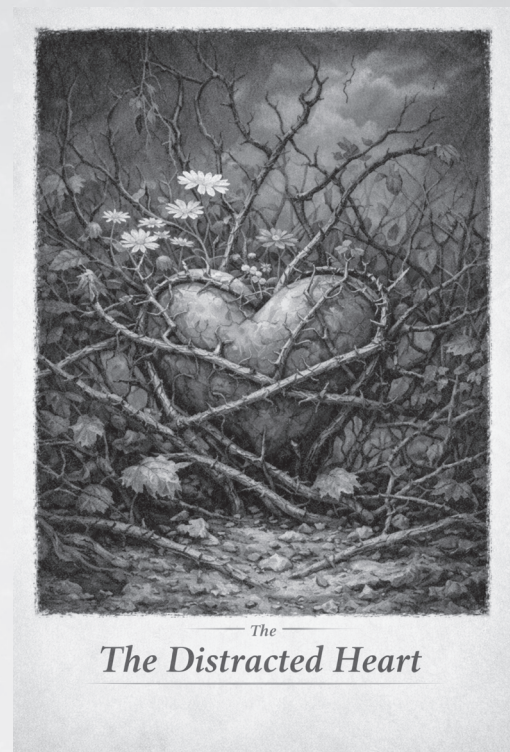
**Luke 8:7, 14; Luke 16:13**

*“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.” — Luke 8:14*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The seed among the thorns grows; that is what makes this heart different and dangerous. The Distracted Heart hears the Word, takes root, and shows every early sign of life; then the cares, riches, and pleasures of life grow up alongside it and choke it, and the fruit never matures. None of these rivals is evil in itself. The chapter's diagnosis is allegiance divided by increments: anxiety over provision, the pursuit and protection of wealth, the appetite for comfort, each gradually displacing the purpose of God until arrested development is the end.

Luke supplies the case studies. The rich fool stores up treasure for himself and dies before he can enjoy it. The rich ruler keeps the commandments from his youth but cannot



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part with his wealth to follow Jesus; his coveting of riches breaks the first commandment, and he walks away sad. Zacchaeus stands as the counterexample: a rich man who calls Jesus Lord, gives half his goods to the poor, and restores fourfold what he defrauded, wealth placed in service of the Kingdom rather than enthroned above it. Martha shows that distraction needs no fortune: anxious about much serving, she nearly misses the one thing necessary, while Mary sits at Jesus' feet in good soil. And the disciples are warned that fear of persecution can choke a testimony as surely as riches can.

The chapter closes with the Prodigal Son, read as the parable of the gracious father and two lost sons. The younger is lost to reckless living and comes to himself; the father runs, embraces, and restores. The older is lost while standing in the yard distracted by resentment, merit, and comparison, questioning the father's judgment and refusing the celebration. Both conditions are hearts lured away from relationship with the father. The parable ends unresolved, an open invitation: will the Black Church repent of listening to competing voices, stop prioritizing melanin over mission, and join the celebration—or remain outside?

### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Anxiety, riches, and pleasures: which of the three thorns most actively chokes fruit in your own congregation's life, and what evidence would you point to?
2. Set the rich ruler beside Zacchaeus. Both are wealthy men who meet Jesus. What exactly separates them, and what does that pair teach about the difference between having wealth and serving it?
3. Martha's distraction was duty, good service crowding out the one thing necessary. Where does church busyness itself become a thorn?
4. In the parable of the gracious father, the older brother is lost without ever leaving home. Where does older-brother resentment, merit-keeping, comparison, and contempt for the restored show up in church life?
5. The chapter ends by asking whether pastors will stop fearing the loss of congregants for preaching the unadulterated Word. What would change in our pulpit and our programming if that fear were gone?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What in my schedule and spending would an honest observer say I am actually devoted to?
2. Is my growth arrested by years of hearing with fruit that never matures? What choked it?
3. Am I the younger son, the older son, or the father in the story right now?

## ACTION STEP

Conduct a thorn audit. Review your calendar and your spending from the last month, and identify one care, one expenditure, and one pleasure that are crowding out the Word's fruit. Cut or reorder one of the three this week — and tell someone you trust, so the decision has witnesses.



### Case Study — Excursus I: The Progressive National Baptist Convention

The PNBC was born in 1961 of a noble impulse: pastors, aligned with Dr. King, who wanted the church actively engaged in the struggle for civil rights. But the excursus traces six decades of theological drift — from civil rights advocacy to liberation theology, identity politics, and social causes that directly conflict with Scripture. The author reads the PNBC as the thorny soil institutionalized: a prophetic voice choked by the cares of this world and the desire for cultural affirmation. The warning is precise: noble beginnings do not immunize a church from apostasy if its heart becomes divided.

#### FOR DISCUSSION

1. At what point does a church's engagement with justice stop serving Scripture and start replacing it? What early warning signs does the PNBC's trajectory suggest?
2. The excursus reframes the question from “What are we fighting for?” to “Whose Kingdom are we serving?” Apply that question to one cause your congregation currently supports.

## PRAYER

*Father, You run to meet returning children. Uproot the thorns I have cultivated — my anxieties, my accumulations, my comforts, my resentments. Reorder my loves until Your Kingdom is first and my fruit ripens. Amen.*



## Chapter 7

# Hearing with Integrity: The Good Soil

*Reading: Chapter 7 (pages 109–136) and  
Excursus II (pages 137–138)*

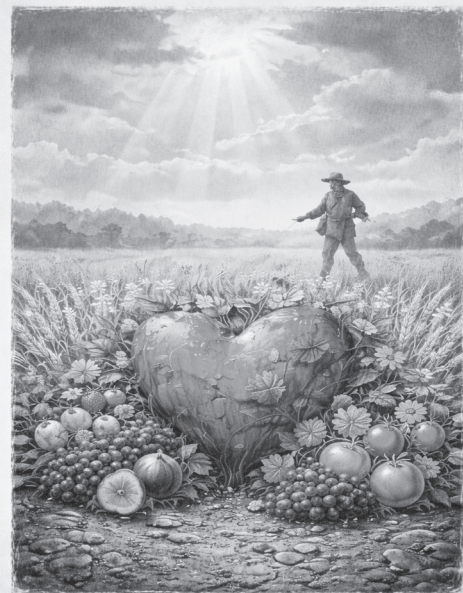
### KEY SCRIPTURE

**Luke 8:8, 15; Luke 9:23**

*“As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” —  
Luke 8:15*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Devoted Heart hears the Word, holds it fast, takes possession of it, and bears fruit with patience. Every term contrasts with a failed soil: it possesses what the Detached Heart lets the devil steal, endures what the Disillusioned Heart withers under, and stays focused where the Distracted Heart is choked. Its fruit is not hidden; no one lights a lamp and covers it. Its perseverance is the perseverance of a man unswerving from deliberate purpose amid the greatest trials; believers who will trust God, in the author's phrase, come hell or high water. Luke's Gospel supplies the portraits: Mary, Simeon, Anna, the Centurion, Zacchaeus, and Joseph of Arimathea, who stood against the entire Council and then risked association with a crucified man to bury Him.



*The*  
***The Devoted Heart***



How is such a heart obtained? The chapter traces Luke's answer: true repentance that bears fruit in changed behavior; authentic love, displayed in the Good Samaritan, which flows only from a heart wholly devoted to God; daily self-denial and taking up the cross daily that subordinates every allegiance, familial, national, and ethnic, to the Kingdom; and honest self-examination rather than the incrimination of others. All of it is sustained by the promised Holy Spirit and motivated by the redemptive death, resurrection, and promised return of Jesus. The delay of that return is not abandonment; it is the arena of faithfulness, and the persistent widow teaches the Church to pray always and not lose heart.

Then the chapter turns to the public square. Devoted hearts carry their allegiance into the voting booth, rooted in the Word rather than in party or race. The author summons historical witnesses: Dr. King's Birmingham letter, with its charge that the church be a thermostat that transforms society rather than a thermometer that records it; Francis Schaeffer's warning that a humanistic worldview would dismantle absolutes with mathematical certainty; the Manhattan Declaration's stand on life, marriage, and religious liberty. And it closes with Tilak's haunting phrase from colonial India: "instruments of our own oppression" applied to a church that props up, with its votes and its silence, the very ideologies dismantling its families and its witness. The way out is repentance, courage, and Kingdom allegiance above partisan loyalty.

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. "Hold it fast" means to take possession of the Word. What is the difference between attending to the Word and possessing it, and what practices move a person from one to the other?
2. Joseph of Arimathea dissented from the Council and then acted publicly at real risk. What makes his devotion instructive for believers embedded in institutions —councils, parties, denominations—moving the wrong way?
3. King's image: thermostat, not thermometer. In practice, what does a thermostat church do differently in its community, and where has our church merely recorded the temperature?
4. Work through Tilak's phrase, "instruments of our own oppression," as the chapter applies it. Where does the Black Church today supply the assistance that its own affliction depends on, and what would withdrawal of that assistance look like?
5. The chapter says the fruit of good soil cannot be secret. What visible, public fruit should a watching community be able to identify in a devoted congregation within one year?

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### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What has hearing the Word cost me in the last year? If the answer is nothing, what does that suggest?
2. Which allegiance—family expectation, ethnic loyalty, party, career— most competes with my allegiance to Christ?
3. Am I praying with the persistent widow's endurance, or have I quietly lost heart about something God told me to keep asking for?

### ACTION STEP

Choose one arena — home, workplace, church, or civic life — and commit to one act of visible, costly fruit in it this week: a truth spoken, a mercy extended, a stand taken, a generosity shown. The lamp goes on the stand, not under the jar.

#### Case Study — Excursus II: Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement

The book quotes Dr. King's Birmingham letter as historical witness — and then, in this excursus, refuses to look away from the harder questions: seminary papers that departed from core orthodox doctrines, documented concerns about his private moral life, and the socialist sympathies threaded through parts of the movement that later resurfaced in grievance-based ideologies. The author's standard is Luke 6: a tree is known by its fruit, and we must not evaluate leaders solely by the nobility of their rhetoric. Yet the excursus ends in grace, not iconoclasm: all of us are flawed, and God uses broken vessels for His purposes.

#### FOR DISCUSSION

1. How should the Church honor genuine achievements — the end of segregation, the securing of voting rights — while honestly assessing the theology and character of the leaders who won them?
2. “Do not evaluate leaders solely on the nobility of their rhetoric.” What would applying that standard consistently change about whom we platform and quote today?

### PRAYER

*King Jesus, give me an honest and good heart. Teach me to hold Your Word fast, to deny myself daily, and to bear fruit with patience —fruit that can be seen, weighed, and traced back to You. Make Your Church a thermostat again. Amen.*

## Chapter 8

# Conclusion: Repentance and the R.I.S.E. Principles

**R** *eading: Chapter 8, Conclusion (pages 139–147) and Excursus III (pages 148–152)*

### KEY SCRIPTURE

**Luke 18:8; Luke 9:62; Genesis 50:20**

*“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” — Luke 18:8*

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Conclusion brings the entire argument to a close with a call. If apostasy is the abandonment of truth, repentance must be the return—and not a return built on nostalgia, emotion, or political realignment, but a full-hearted, Biblically rooted rediscovery of who the Church is. The chapter names what must be repented of: the politics of covetousness, in which the neglected Tenth Commandment resurfaces as equity, inclusion, and redistribution; the grievance frameworks that treat disparities as proof of injustice; and the cultural and ecclesiastical compromise that has made many churches echo chambers for political agendas. Against bitterness, it sets a redemptive view of Black history, taking Joseph’s confession as its banner: you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. Our past is painful, but it is not purposeless.

The road back finds concrete expression in the R.I.S.E. Principles — Responsible Government, Individual Liberty and Fidelity, Strong Family Values, and Economic Empowerment. The book presents them as theological rather than political. Responsible Government: civil authority is God’s minister for good, bound by constitution and conscience, held prophetically accountable by a Church that speaks to government, not from it. Individual Liberty and Fidelity: freedom is not the ability to do what we want but

## The Heart of Apostasy Study Guide

the liberty to do what is right — liberty without virtue is anarchy, virtue without liberty is oppression. Strong Family Values: the family is a divine ordinance older than church or state, and its breakdown is a spiritual crisis before it is a cultural one. Economic Empowerment: Scripture teaches stewardship, not socialism: opportunity, work, property, and charity rather than coercion.

The Principles, the author insists, are not just about policy; they are about discipleship. They summon the Black Church to rise — not in rebellion against the country, but in repentance before the King of Kings. The final word returns to Luke: no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God, and the question that hangs over the whole book remains open — when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?

### GROUP DISCUSSION

1. The Conclusion distinguishes repentance from political realignment. What does corporate repentance — by a congregation, not just individuals — actually consist of? What would it look like from the pews?
2. Take each R.I.S.E. Principle in turn: Responsible Government, Individual Liberty and Fidelity, Strong Family Values, Economic Empowerment. For each, name one way your congregation currently embodies it and one way it falls short.
3. Joseph's "you meant evil, God meant it for good" is offered as the counter to grievance-based readings of Black history. What does a redemptive view of that history preserve that a grievance view destroys — and what does it refuse to minimize?
4. The book says the Principles are discipleship, not policy. What is the difference between a church that adopts them as talking points and one that forms people in them?
5. The book's last question is Jesus' own: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" After eight sessions, how do you answer for your own house?

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Which of the three failed responses to hearing God's Word — detached, disillusioned, distracted — have I recognized in myself across this study, and what is the evidence I am moving toward devotion?
2. What have I been asked to repent of that I have so far only agreed with?

3. Hand to the plow: what would “not looking back” require of me in the next ninety days?

### **ACTION STEP**

Write an action covenant: one concrete, dated commitment under each of the four R.I.S.E. Principles—one act of civic faithfulness, one act of personal fidelity, one investment in your family’s discipleship, one act of economic stewardship or generosity. Share the covenant with your group or a trusted believer, and set a date to review it together.

#### **Case Study — Excursus III: The Heart of the Matter Is the Matter of the Heart**

As the book went to press, the author and his wife watched *Black + Evangelical*, a documentary from Christianity Today and Wheaton College. The excursus reviews it as a live specimen of the book’s subject: a film that, in the author’s assessment, rehearses the social-justice script uncritically — asserting systemic racism rather than demonstrating it, treating representation as the highest good, and making one group’s contrition the precondition of fellowship. Yet the author writes with evident affection for the film’s elders — “my people” — and finds the way forward in Dr. Walter McCray’s closing word: God will break down the dividing wall when believers live out their sacred identity in Him. The Gospel calls every believer, Black and White, to lay down lesser loyalties at the foot of the Cross. That is the heart of the matter; it is a matter of the heart.

#### **FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The excursus asks who defines “racial reconciliation” and when contrition is enough. What does Biblical reconciliation require that ideological reconciliation cannot deliver?
2. The author critiques the film while honoring the people in it. What does that model teach about how to disagree within the body of Christ?

### **PRAYER**

*Lord of the harvest, we have heard. Now let us hold fast. We repent of envy dressed as justice, of grievance dressed as gospel, of allegiances that competed with Yours. Cultivate in us, in me, an honest and good heart, and let the fruit be found on the branches when You come. Amen.*



## Where This Study Leads

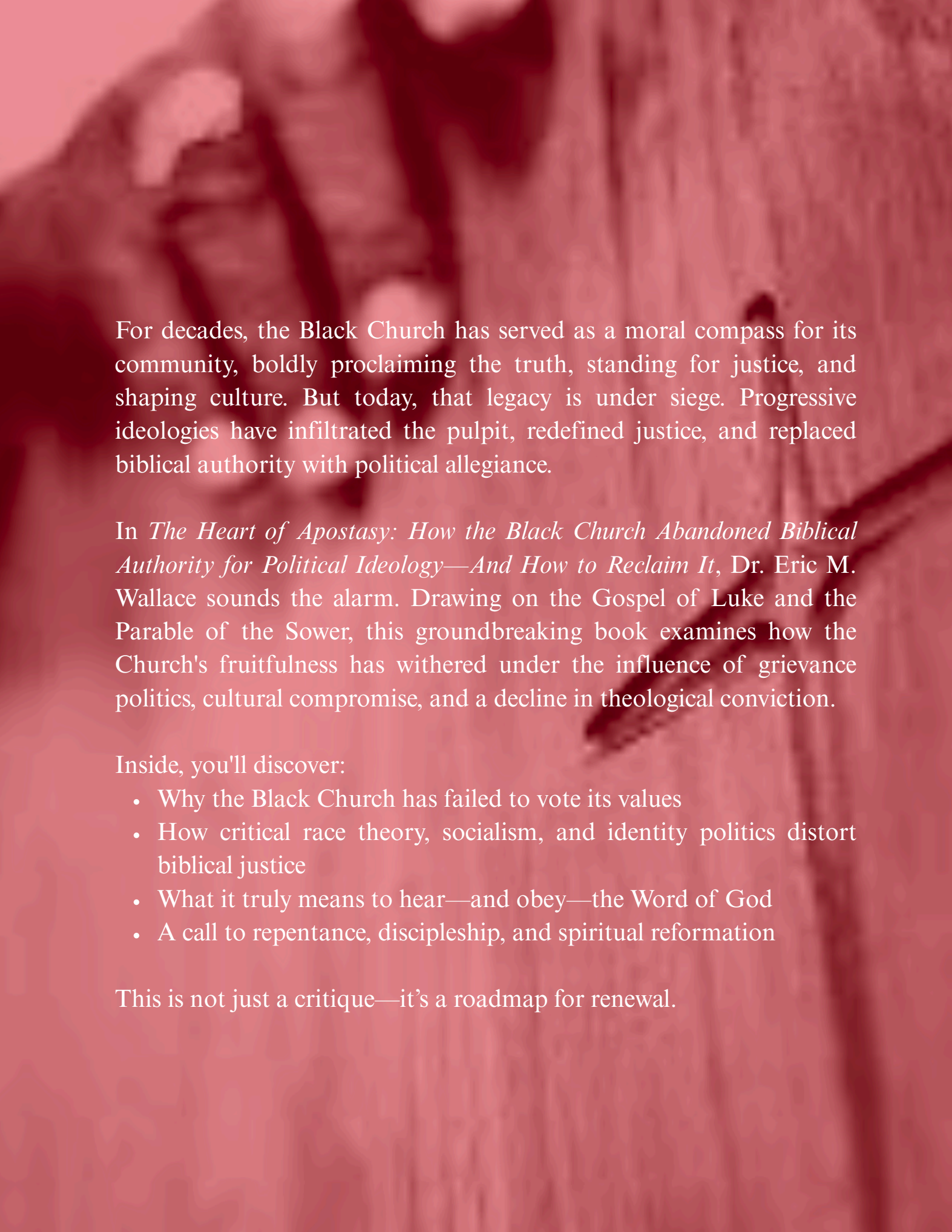
**T**his guide has been the pathway's first movement: hearing. You have examined the four conditions of the heart against the Word, chapter by chapter, and if the study has done its work, you have located yourself in the parable and begun moving toward the good soil.

The second movement is seeing. Freedoms Journal Institute's four-part documentary series, *Black Families Matter: Reclaiming a Community in Crisis*, carries the four heart conditions from the page to the screen: the story of a community's falling away and the road to its restoration, told through the same parable that governs this book. A companion guide to the series will follow its release, built on the same session pattern you have used here, so groups can move from the book to the films without changing how they study.

The third movement is doing. The R.I.S.E. Principles you met in the book's conclusion—Responsible Government, Individual Liberty and Fidelity, Strong Family Values, and Economic Empowerment receive their own full course of study, where each principle is developed from Scripture into practice: how a devoted heart governs itself, guards its liberty, builds its family, and stewards its resources in a hostile culture. The action covenant you wrote in Session 8 is the seed of that course.

Hear, see, do. The parable's promise stands over all three movements: the seed in good soil yields a hundredfold. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."





For decades, the Black Church has served as a moral compass for its community, boldly proclaiming the truth, standing for justice, and shaping culture. But today, that legacy is under siege. Progressive ideologies have infiltrated the pulpit, redefined justice, and replaced biblical authority with political allegiance.

In *The Heart of Apostasy: How the Black Church Abandoned Biblical Authority for Political Ideology—And How to Reclaim It*, Dr. Eric M. Wallace sounds the alarm. Drawing on the Gospel of Luke and the Parable of the Sower, this groundbreaking book examines how the Church's fruitfulness has withered under the influence of grievance politics, cultural compromise, and a decline in theological conviction.

Inside, you'll discover:

- Why the Black Church has failed to vote its values
- How critical race theory, socialism, and identity politics distort biblical justice
- What it truly means to hear—and obey—the Word of God
- A call to repentance, discipleship, and spiritual reformation

This is not just a critique—it's a roadmap for renewal.