

Summer 2026

Dear friends,

I hope this letter finds you well!

If you missed my spring announcement, we switched to a quarterly newsletter because my weekly Friday videos have allowed for regular connection with you and the opportunity to share so many more timely things! (If you haven't yet signed up for those, I'll tell you how at the end of this letter.)

It is summer in the Northern Hemisphere, which has allowed me a bit more breathing room to get out into the beauty of creation. And I'm really surprised by what God has chosen to do there.

We've had a fabulous but *very* busy roster—maybe intense is the right word—starting last fall right through our wonderful Replenish Homecoming event in June. (We will be sharing those sessions with you all on our podcast starting in August!) Anyhow, I thought that what God would do as soon as I had a little bit of breathing room is bless me with wonderful fly fishing. That seemed appropriate to me.

It's not exactly what he's been doing.

Oh, to be sure, Papa has been very kind to me. But what I've been surprised by is how quickly he's been moving to address issues of my soul, which get (conveniently) set aside during busy seasons. You all know what that's like—life gets demanding and soul care goes by the wayside. Busyness gives us a counterfeit sense of importance, and it feels like permission to simply let all sorts of things go overlooked in our inner world. *Sometime later, perhaps*, we tell ourselves.

But the soul does not like being neglected, and it will get your attention one way or another—through anxiety, perhaps, or anger. Through a new obsession, or perhaps the energy begins to drain from your life.

So what I wanted to bring before us all in this letter is the reminder of how important it is to *shepherd your inner life*, no matter what season you are in. For many years now, in various books and podcasts, we have been holding up this beautiful verse:

Above all else, guard your heart,
for it is the wellspring of life within you. (Proverbs 4:23)

I think if we substitute the word “shepherd” for “guard,” as in, “shepherd your heart,” we might find this a little more practical.

Your heart is the great treasure of the kingdom, the very thing Jesus Christ came to ransom. And it must be shepherded with great wisdom and kindness through this very broken world.

This is your great task, your primary assignment (did you know that?). We are somewhere between the loss of Eden and the return of Eden, making our way through the wilderness of this world. The heart is vulnerable; it needs attentive oversight. Shepherding.

We shepherd our hearts when we pay attention to them, beginning with our emotions. Emotions aren't the totality of the heart, but they do often act like the warning lights on your dashboard. Sadly, when you ask most people, “How are you doing?” they don't even know. If you find it hard to name your emotions, try using an “emotions wheel” (Google it).

We shepherd our hearts when we give them a voice, allowing them to draw our attention to how we are truly getting on. When busyness causes us to ignore the life of the heart for long stretches, important things go underground. We lose our awareness of unattended grief. We live rather numbly to our heart's deep longings. And a constant life of distraction keeps us from paying attention to what our hearts actually *believe*.

And so I find that God will often use any quiet moment, whether an evening that suddenly opened up for you or the days of your vacation you've been looking forward to. He will use the opportunity of a less-distracted version of you to bring to the surface unattended things of the heart.

Our job is to pay attention, allow those things to surface, and invite Jesus in.

I just got back from the river where I had wanted to spend a morning of wildly successful fly fishing. Instead, God used the rare moment of quiet and solitude to bring up from my heart unattended grief. Thankfully—after years of stumbling through the process—I was aware of what he was doing. It wasn't on my agenda, but I knew this was his immense kindness.

I slowed down and paid attention, allowing my heart to come to the surface. As each emotion or thought, longing or unmet desire surfaced, I invited Jesus to come and meet me there. To be honest, it wasn't how I wanted to spend the morning. But God knew that further neglect would lead to ruin over time.

Thank you, Papa. Thank you, Jesus.

So I am making the case again that shepherding your heart is your great task, your primary assignment in life. I am putting this back on your radar.

To help you, we have added to the beautiful Pause app three wonderful "evening reflections" or examens, as the Ignatian practices call them. A simple way at the end of your day to pay attention to the movements of your heart and the movements of God in your life. They are *lovely*. I strongly encourage you to give them a try! You don't want to wait for your heart to collapse or for God to have to use your precious vacation time to tend to the much-needed care of your heart. Far better to stay current with your inner world.

Open the Pause app if it's been some time since you've used it, and try the evening review.

Also pay attention to those quiet moments where God will step in to raise something he wants to tend to. For he really is so kind.

Offered in love,



John

P.S. To sign up for my Friday videos, go to any page on our website (WildAtHeart.org), scroll to the bottom, and enter your information!

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