



Loving God with All of You_(Part 3)

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Imagine if we could see one another for who we really are. What if we couldn't hide our lying or our lust or our laziness? What if our souls were literally thin, pasty, small, and diseased? What if other people could judge us by what's on the inside, instead of merely what's on the outside? No, God is courteous enough to offer us a veil of flesh in which to conceal our souls. We need to have the freedom to choose to build our soul into what is whole, healthy, and strong without all the pressure of perpetual outside judgments.

Jesus tells us to "love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength," not out of coercion, but out of choice. But what does Jesus mean when he's referring to "soul"?

While the words in Mark 12:30 can be translated in many different ways, the word "soul" often carries the idea of the unifying element of the individual person. It is the part that holds the mind and the

emotions and the will together. It is the center of the person. It is the personal "I," the self, the essential you.

Scientists cannot locate "you" in your brain (though much popular science tells us that we and our beliefs are nothing more than little carbon firings in the skull). But, if you were to string out all the atoms in your brain into a long chain and analyze each one, would you even find that atom which is "you"? Where would "you" be located? This thought-experiment sounds odd, because, in actuality, the idea that "you" are identical to some atoms in your brain is even odder.

So where are you located? You are located in your soul. In fact, you ARE your soul. This body is important, but this body is not the essential you. The body is something God has given, for many designs, one of which is a covering. It is our choice to "get real," bond with others, make confession, or not.

How does this relate to loving God? Our souls need to be surrendered to God. We are then able to develop God-like character in our minds, wills, and bodies. This is difficult! Where is our help?

I am convinced that at the center of our souls are God-given desires. And God gave us these desires in order to fulfill them. I am reminded of King Tirian, the last king of Narnia in C. S. Lewis' children books. After he passes from the Old Narnia into the New Narnia, the air grows sweet. But suddenly the air grows sweeter than anything he had ever experienced. When he turns to see what is creating such richness in the air, Tirian "saw all his heart's desire." Before him stood Aslan, the King Above All High Kings. Tirian's soul, finding its proper object, overflowed.

May I suggest that God gives us a desire for joy at the center of our being to help assist us in surrendering ourselves to God. Whole joy is only found in complete surrender. It is then that our whole being can be conformed and made into the likeness of Him. One day all accounts will be laid bare and we will be revealed for what we really are. There is nothing so liberating as knowing that we, when laid naked before God, meet His approval.

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