



“ Jesus answered, “*The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’*”

— Mark 12:29-30

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If we are called to lead by following and loving God, then the next section of Mark 12 tells us how: “... *with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” But what do each of these phrases mean?

The Greek used for heart here in Mark 12, and in the corresponding verse in Matthew 22:37, is *kardía*. In contemporary English parlance, the “heart” emblemizes emotion and feeling. If we see someone on the street wearing a t-shirt that states “I ♥ NY,” then we know that person loves New York. While the Greek *kardía* does have an aspect of emotion, it is broader than that, also speaking to our rationality.

And just as *kardía* is broader, it is deeper than the English “heart.” *Kardía* is used figuratively in Matthew 12:40 to describe physical depth: “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.*” It means the center, our innermost self. It is the core of who we are.

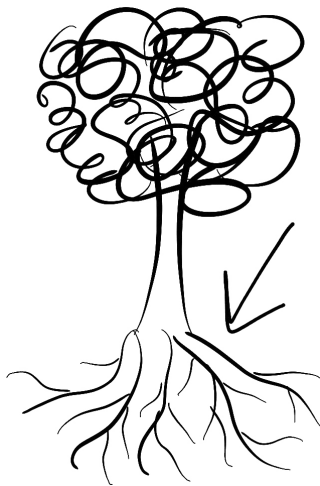
In this section of Mark 12, Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” The Hebrew word used for “heart” in this Old Testament passage is *lēbāb*, which has a similar meaning to *kardía*: heart, understanding, as well as reflecting the inner self, the central part.

If we are to “love God with all our heart,” then our leadership starts here: with who we are at our core. Our true identity. There has been a debate in recent years over whether — or to what degree — character matters in our political

and institutional leadership. But this debate is moot in terms of what God desires from leaders.

1 Samuel 16:7 tells us: *“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”*

“The Lord looks on the heart” — *lēbāb*. As leaders, our love for God must be an intrinsic, deeply-seated part of who we are. If our leadership is effective on the surface but weak in the core, the truth will out.



Just as a tree requires strong roots to remain healthy, it is only through a strong relationship with God that we can hope to lead in the full and life-transforming way God desires for us.

The roots of a tree cannot be seen, but they are busily working deep in the earth, drawing in nourishment and moisture.

QUESTION:

What does “heart” mean to you? If someone asked you to explain what is meant by heart in Mark 12:30, how would you respond?

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