



“ 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

”

The Greek word which we translate as “soul” is *psyché*. It, and its Hebrew equivalent *nephesh*, overlap significantly with *kardía/lēbāb*, with *psyché/nephesh* also referencing one’s inner life. But while the English word “soul” has overtones of the ineffable and abstract, *psyché* has a more practical nuance. It is the “living self with all its drives, not the abstract notion,”⁹ and the “earthly existence in contrast to supernatural existence; one’s life on earth.”¹⁰

With this understanding, *psyché* is how who we are at our core — *kardía* — is put into action. *Kardía* is our deepest identity, and *psyché* is how our identity is reflected in our interactions with the world.

This is consistent with the psychological understanding of the English word “psyche” as “the center of thought, feeling, and motivation, consciously and unconsciously directing the body’s reactions to its social and physical environment.”¹¹



Kardía is the root of the tree, seen by God alone. *Psyché* is the branches, the leaves, the fruit available to be observed by the world. Without the nourishment provided by the root system, the tree above ground will not be healthy.

Likewise, without the branches reaching out to the sky, without the chlorophyll in the leaves taking in sunlight and transforming it into energy, the root system will not be healthy. If a tree is cut down to the ground, the roots will eventually wither and die.

Kardía needs *psyché*, and *psyché* needs *kardía*. Just as the health of a tree's roots can be seen in the health of its trunk and branches, so the health of our love of God can be seen in our words and actions.

Scripture tells us that "*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*" (James 2:17). In his book *Incarnate*, Michael Frost puts it this way: "An inner conviction or feeling is only worthwhile to the degree that it is embodied in action."¹²

Loving God with all our *psyché* therefore means to actively seek ways to have our leadership behaviors increasingly reflect God's grace and love. This is not a sterile, bookish theology, but a lived one.

QUESTION:

Think back over this past week. How well have your words and actions demonstrated God's love in your life? Do you feel that your week has accurately reflected the health of your "heart"?

NOTES