



## Identity Lesson 2

As we continue our study on identity, we'll keep our focus on our relationship with God using three passages from Deuteronomy, Matthew and Mark. Last week we discussed the Hebrew word 'lev' or as its most commonly translated, *heart*. This week we'll move on to the word 'nephesh' or *soul*.

**Opening Question:** *Who are the three people in this world that you love the most?*

Read through these three passages paying particular attention to the difference you'll see between them. In Mark and in Deuteronomy, the word 'strength' is used. From the New Testament the Greek word 'ischys' is used here, meaning ability, force, strength, and might. What can be plainly said of this passage in the New Testament is that Jesus is telling us to "Love the Lord" our God, our neighbor and ourselves with the entirety of our being. With all of our abilities and with all the force, strength and might that we can muster with all our heart, soul and mind.

### Bible Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your **soul** and with all your strength.

Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your **soul** and with all your mind.' <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Mark 12:29-31

<sup>29</sup> "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your **soul** and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

**Discuss:** *In the three possibilities of love relationships – with God, neighbors and self – where are you the strongest? Which is the weakest?*

**Watch:** The Bible Project video - The Shema Series - [Nephesh-Soul](#)

## **The Soul**

Let's take a closer look at the "soul". The soul is that part of every person that interrelates every other part to form one life. The soul is that part of us, reflected in the Bible, that makes up not only our physical body, but can and is also related to our thoughts, desires, affections, will, mind and habits. When we make an attempt to define the word soul either from the Hebrew 'nephesh' or the Greek 'psyche' it can be a little confusing, so let's break the soul down into parts:

**Volitional/Will:** We are, as created beings of a loving God, given the right and the ability to choose by our own free will. As volitional beings we create strategies and set goals, we take actions and interact with others and the world around us and we are creative in setting forth purposes and pathways for ourselves to follow.

- 1. Consider how applying these verses to your volitional/will would affect your life. How would that affect the decisions you make when interacting with God?*
- 2. How would that affect the decisions you make when interacting with others?*
- 3. How would that affect the decisions you make when interacting with yourself?*

**Physical/body/habits:** We have and act with our physical bodies, we take actions to fulfill both needs and desires and over time we develop habits. Some very good habits and sometimes some habits that can be hurtful to our own souls and too the souls of those around us.

- 1. Consider how applying these verses to your physical body and habits would affect your life.*
- 2. How would that affect the habits you form when interacting with God?*
- 3. How would that affect the habits you form when interacting with others?*
- 4. How would that affect the habits you form when interacting with yourself?*

**Emotional:** We are emotional beings capable of powerful positive emotions such as joy, peace and love. We are also capable of overwhelming negative emotions such as sadness, anger and fear. As image bearers of God we also have internal and external responses to our emotions which cause us to sing with gladness or cry in grief.

- 1. Consider how applying these verses to your emotional being would affect your life. How would that affect the positive and negative feelings you have interacting with God?*

2. *How would that affect the positive and negative feelings you have interacting with others?*
3. *How would that affect the positive and negative feelings you have interacting with yourself?*

**Rational/mind:** As rational beings we each have unique characteristics in the ways in which we think, in the patterns of belief that we establish and in the core images we hold onto. We also develop certain patterns of thinking in our routines that can become ingrained in our minds

**Thoughts:** A central part of the rational mind involves our ability to think. Dallas Willard, a respected Christian philosopher and theologian, says that our thoughts are “all of the ways in which we are conscious of the things around us”. I would add that those things can be seen and unseen by the human eye.

**Ideas:** “Ideas are general models of our assumptions about reality. They are patterns of interpretation, historically developed and socially shared. They sometimes are involved with beliefs, but are much more than belief and do not depend upon it. They are ways of thinking about and interpreting things.”

Dallas Willard. “Renovation of the Heart.”

**Images:** Images often occupy the mind and are closely related to ideas. They are concrete and specific and often are accompanied by emotions. The images that we’ve created or that have been created for us strongly influence our thinking and our beliefs.

**Knowledge/Information:** The knowledge and information that we’ve gathered throughout our lives greatly influences our thoughts. Just as right knowledge and information can rightly influence us, wrong thinking, knowledge and information can be a stumbling block to the soul.

1. Consider how applying these verses to your rational mind would affect your life. How would that affect the images and ideas that fill your mind when interacting with God?
2. How would that affect the images and ideas that fill your mind when interacting with others?
3. How would that affect the images and ideas that fill your mind when interacting with yourself?

**Relational:** We are as we have been created by God social beings meant to live in community with others. We are by design social beings that long for connection. Additionally we are meant to be relationally both self-aware and aware of those around us.

\*Consider how applying these verses to your relationships would affect your life.

1. *How would the depth of connection you have with God grow?*
2. *How would the depth of connection you have with others grow?*
3. *How would the depth of connection with who you are grow?*

**Spiritual:** We are spiritual beings surrounded by a spiritual world. Our world is physical yes, but it is also largely spiritual. (Colossians 1:16) As an example of something that takes place spiritually, consider sanctification which is plainly defined as being a progressive work of God and man in which man becomes more like Christ. In 1 Thess. 5:23 the Apostle Paul writes, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly". What we begin to realize in our souls as a result of sanctification is that we experience renewal through the power of the Holy Spirit being active in our lives. (Titus 3:5) Furthermore, as we experience spiritual renewal we begin to enjoy more peace and joy, more of the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. (Gal. 5:22)

\*Consider how applying these verses to your spiritual being would affect your life.

1. *How would that affect the way you are changing on the inside as you interact with God?*
2. *How would that affect the way you are changing on the inside as you interact with others?*
3. *How would that affect the way you are changing on the inside as you interact with yourself?*

Close in prayer thanking God for your soul and asking Him to revive, strength and grow that part of you to love Him.