

## Follow With All Your Heart

By Mary Kane

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For nineteen years, my husband and I did the best we could to teach our two sons about God and to prepare them to follow Him through a world that is often hostile towards Christians. Both our sons graduated from Christian schools and went to college. Despite almost twenty years of preparation, in the weeks immediately preceding their first semesters, we found ourselves trying to cram in dozens of last minute bits of advice. After we dropped our boys off at college, in the days that followed, we'd often say to each other, "Did you remember to tell Erik..." or "The next time we talk to Scottie remind me to tell him..."

During Jesus final week on earth I believe that He also spent His time focusing on teaching His Apostles important truths. The most important truth that Jesus told his followers and his enemies is recorded in Matthew 22:37-40.

Please read these verses.

The Pharisees, hoping to trap Jesus, posed a question, "What is the greatest commandment in the law?" I wonder if the Pharisees were expecting Jesus to quote one of the Ten Commandments. Instead, Jesus shocked the rule-oriented Pharisees by identifying the Shema as the greatest commandment of all the law. The greatest commandment, "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind..." had nothing to do with behavior, but with the heart. The second greatest commandment Jesus cited again had nothing to do with rule keeping, but loving others as yourself. With these two remarks, Jesus went right to the heart of the matter: it's all about the heart. Jesus then further astounds the Pharisees by saying that all of the Law and the Prophets hang upon on the two commandments concerning love.

The Pharisees were all about the outward, the flesh, works; the keeping of many rules and picky regulations. Jesus was all about the inward, the heart,

grace; loving God first and others second. When we seek to love God first, and others second there is no room for loving self and that will keep us from committing many sins. And it is through love and grace, not rule keeping and condemnation that the world will come to Christ.

**Bridge:**

**How can you love God with all your heart (passions, emotions, will character)?**

**What changes do you need to make so you can love Him with all your soul (desires, personality, feelings)?**

**How can you love Him with all your mind (understanding, thinking feeling, thoughts)?**

Notice that God wants us to love Him with *all* of our heart soul and mind. He did not come to be part of our life, or our first priority—He came to *be* our life and our every priority. In the final week of His life Jesus taught that in order to follow Him we must love God first and others second. When we obey this greatest commandment of all loving God then will be able to do what Jesus: did lay down our lives to follow God and love others. Remember this command is not our first priority, but our very life.

**Prayer:**

Dearest Holy Father,

You have given us a very great and important command—to love You with all our heart, soul and mind. Father, we confess to You that we are unable to

fulfill this command in our own power. We may not even want to fulfill this command. But your Word promises that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Where we are unable, please make us able. Where we are unwilling, please make us willing. Change our hearts so we will live for You and You only. May our every decision and all our acts be based upon You will and Your glory.

In Jesus Holy Name,

Amen

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