

How You Can Love God 'With All Your Heart'

I once heard a message in church on "the balanced life." Using a diagram of three overlapping circles, the speaker made the point that we need to give equal time to each of the most significant areas of our lives so we don't get out of balance.

I had a small computer Bible with me and felt prompted to do a search on the word "balance" to see if I could find scriptural backing for the message. The only reference given that contained the word was a verse in Proverbs, and that had to do with a scale—in other words, with weights and measures, not with way we use our time.

What I found did not convince me that the preacher was right. I asked the Holy Spirit to show me the truth, and He replied, "The truth is that being wholehearted for God is the key to balance."

I looked up all the verses with the concept "whole heart" and found references throughout the Scriptures. The most significant was Matthew 22:37, which records what Jesus called the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." According to the Word, God demands that we put Him first, not that we prioritize our time so He gets equal time.

But loving God wholeheartedly is more than a command. It is our destiny! Ignatius, one of the early church fathers, said, "I come from God, I belong to God, I am destined for God." God created us for the purpose of knowing and loving Him.

Developing intense love for Him is a process of turning away from the things of the world. We cannot fully embrace Him while holding onto other things—even good things. The goal is to be able to declare with the psalmist, "there is nothing on

earth that I desire besides You” (Ps. 73:25).

It's not always easy to be wholehearted for God. The other demands of our lives—family, friends, work, ministry—press in on us and try to distract us. But I have found that if I purpose in my heart to put Him first, He will help me keep my focus. And He will tell me when my choices don't indicate He is my top priority.

During a season when I desired to spend more time in prayer, I asked Him to help me find opportunities. Afterward, whenever I sat down to read the newspaper or watch television, He would say, “You could be spending time with Me.” It was amazing to see how much time I had for my spiritual life when I gave up unnecessary pursuits!

When we commit to putting God first, the other priorities in our lives will fall into their proper places. God will direct us by His Spirit as we learn and apply the principles in His Word. He is the one who gives us the priorities, and He will help us balance them correctly.

The important thing is to love God first and foremost. Then we will be motivated by our love to do what He desires us to do. We can't follow His commands or otherwise serve Him out of ourselves; we must be led by His Spirit so that, like Jesus, we will do only what we see the Father doing (see John 5:19).

Prayer Power for the Week of May 19, 2019

This week, increase your resolve to be wholehearted to what the Lord called the greatest commandment. Surrender anew to the Holy Spirit and as you do enjoy His presence, cleansing and empowering to fulfill His perfect will for you. Continue to pray for our nation, our allies and all those charged with leadership in these crucial times. Read Matthew 22:37, John 5:19.