



AT THE CENTER

Doug McNett // April 19, 2026

Text: Deuteronomy 6:1-15 (ESV)

Big Idea: God must move from life's margins to its loving, governing center.

Well, good morning; how are we? Good, good. I want to give a quick shout-out to those joining us in our online community. We're grateful you're part of the Foothills family, worshiping with us wherever you are. If we haven't met, my name is Doug. I'm one of the pastors here, and I'd love to connect with you on the patio after service.

This morning we're continuing our series through Deuteronomy. So, if you would, go ahead and grab your Bibles and turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 6.

One of the things I've been thinking about lately is how easy it is to live a life that feels full, but still somehow divided. Not divided in an obvious way, not like you've walked away from anything. In fact, from the outside, everything can look pretty solid. You've got your responsibilities, your rhythms, your commitments. You're doing what you're supposed to do, you're showing up where you need to show up, and somewhere in all of that, God is there too. He's not absent, He's not rejected, He's just one part of the whole of who we are.

Let me use myself as an example. I work full-time at the church and I oversee all of the adult ministries, the students ministries and the missions ministries. I also coach high school and middle school sports, nearly year round. Then, I also throw little things in every so often, for instance this last month I've been teaching high school students at John Adams how to ballroom dance for their upcoming prom. At the same time, I serve on a committee at the district office of our denomination in our missions department. And I am a father and a husband and do all that comes with that. I also like to work around my yard and to keep my Greek language skills up I often study with the help of my wife the Greek

language and then I like to take long walks and eat lots of meat! So, I would say, that I have a pretty full life.

And if we're honest, it can feel normal, because life is busy, there's a lot to manage, a lot to think about, a lot pulling for our attention, so we learn over time how to organize it all. Work goes here, family goes here, responsibilities go here, and then somewhere in there, our relationship with God finds its place too. Not intentionally pushed aside, we don't say, "well He doesn't matter as much," but He's just placed alongside everything else. And again, nothing feels obviously wrong, but every once in a while, there's this quiet sense that something isn't quite aligned the way it should be, we begin to feel not as connected to God as we think we should be or how we see others connected to Him, not because God has moved, but because He's no longer at the center of everything else.

And so the question isn't, "Is God in your life?" The question is, "Where?" This morning, we're stepping into a moment where God speaks directly into that kind of life, not with pressure, but with clarity, not just about what to do, but about what it actually looks like for Him to be at the center of it all.

It helps for us to remember where this moment in Deuteronomy 6 is actually happening in the overall storyline of Scripture, because this isn't God speaking into a calm, settled season of life. This is God speaking to His people right on the edge of everything He's promised them. They've come out of Egypt, they've been formed in the wilderness, an entire generation has passed, and now they're standing on the brink of the land. What comes next will really shape everything. And Moses knows that.

He knows that they're about to step into cities that they didn't build, into homes that they didn't earn, to vineyards that they didn't plant, a life that will feel full very quickly. And here's the tension: prosperity has a way of creating the exact kind of divided life I was just talking about. Not

because it's evil, but because it's distracting. Because when life fills up, it becomes very easy for God to slowly move from the center to just being one part among the many aspects of our lives.

So, before the Israelites go into the land that God had promised for His chosen people, Moses gathers them all, and he doesn't give them a strategy for success in this new land. He doesn't hand them a blueprint for how to manage all the blessings that are coming that God had promised to Abraham and his descendant's. He brings the people back to something much more fundamental than that. He focuses them on to their hearts.

Join me at verse 4. The Scripture reads, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

He starts by saying, "hear." Now, this word, "hear," is stronger than just listening. It's not just, "hey, listen up." It carries the idea of receiving something in a way that shapes how you live. For example, there's a difference between hearing your doctor say, "You need to change your diet," and actually hearing it. One person nods, says "yeah, I know," and nothing changes. Another person hears it, and suddenly their grocery list changes, their habits change, their schedule shifts, because they've received it in a way that leads to action. Are you with me on this?

Or it's the difference between a parent calling their child's name and the child saying, "I hear you," while continuing to do whatever they want, versus a child who hears and responds. In Scripture, to hear God is to respond to Him. It's to let what He says actually take authority in our lives. That's the kind of hearing that this word is talking about. It's not information you agree with, it's truth that moves into your life and starts to direct it.

So it's not just about information, it's about response. And what we see next is one of the most central declarations in all of Scripture, it's something every faithful Israelite would have known by heart, something

they would have recited daily, morning and evening. This is what's called the Shema. "The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

In a world filled with competing voices, competing gods, competing allegiances, this is a call to clarity. There is one God. Not one among many, not one option on the table, but the only true and living God. And because He is one, your life cannot be divided between Him and everything else.

So, to help make this clear for us, Moses presses it even further. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

These are big statements. Notice he's not saying, "Make sure God has an important place in your life." He's not saying, "Be committed to God alongside your other commitments." No, he goes after totality. He goes, "all your heart. All your soul. All your might." In other words, every part of who you are, your inner life, your desires, your will, your strength, your capacity, all of it needs to be oriented toward Him.

This isn't about adding God into an already full life. This is about a life reordered around Him entirely.

And that's where this starts to press on us a bit, because if we're honest, most of us don't struggle with whether God is present in our lives. We struggle with whether He's central in our lives. We're comfortable giving Him space sure, but what God is giving us in Deuteronomy 6 is calling for something deeper than that. He's calling for a kind of love of Him that doesn't compartmentalize, a kind of devotion that doesn't divide.

And I want you to notice, how this is framed as love. Not obligation first, not duty first, not pressure first. But, Love. Because what God is after here is not just external compliance, He's after a heart that is fully His. And that's important, because you can build a life that looks very obedient on the outside, while still being internally divided. You can do all the right

things, show up in all the right places, and still have a heart that's been quietly pulled in a dozen different directions.

But, friends, God isn't interested in being one of many priorities. He's telling His people that He's to be their defining reality.

And Moses, he keeps going. Look at verse 6. "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart."

Not just in your mind, not just something you know, but something that lives in you, something that shapes you from the inside out. And from there, it begins to overflow into every part of life. So he explains, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

Can you hear what he's describing? This isn't scheduled, it's not a check list, or a compartmentalized spirituality. This is a life where the reality of God is woven into everything. It's woven into your sitting, into your walking, your lying down, your rising up, in other words, in the ordinary rhythms of everyday life.

When God is at the center, He doesn't stay contained to one part of your week. He begins to shape the whole of your life. And I think this is where this passage really meets us, because most of us don't wake up in the morning and decide to push God to the margins. That's not how it works. It's so much more subtle than that. Life just fills up. Responsibilities grow. Pressures increase. Distractions multiply. And over time, without even realizing it, God can move from being the lens through which we see everything to just one more thing we're trying to fit in.

And what Moses is doing here is he's calling God's people to something intentional. Not reactive, not accidental, but deliberate. A life where the love of God is not assumed, but it's, hear this, it's cultivated. A life where His Word is not occasional, but it's constant. A life where faith is not an

event, but a way of living. It's discipleship. And that raises a question we can't really avoid.

If someone looked at the rhythms of our lives, not just what you say you believe, but how you actually live, what would it reveal about what sits at our center? Because whatever is at the center will inevitably shape everything else. Your decisions, your priorities, your relationships, your sense of identity, all of it flows from that place.

And here's the invitation in this text. It's not just to acknowledge God, it's to reorder our lives around Him.

So the natural question becomes, "Okay...what does that actually look like?" Because it's one thing to say, "God needs to be at the center," but how does that move from an idea into something real in your everyday life? And this is where Deuteronomy 6 actually helps us, because Moses doesn't leave it in the abstract, he starts to show us what this kind of life looks like in practice. And what's interesting is, it's not complicated, but it is intentional.

So, let me give you a few ways that this can begin to take shape in our lives.

First, it means that God's Word begins to shape our decisions, not just our beliefs. When God is at the center, His Word isn't something you agree with on Sunday, it becomes the lens through which you evaluate your life. So when you're making decisions about your time, your money, your relationships, your priorities, you're not just asking, "What do I want?" or "What makes the most sense?" You begin to ask, "What has God said about this?" and then you actually submit to it. Now, that can be a huge shift, because now God isn't just present, He's authoritative.

It also looks we begin to bring God into the ordinary moments of our lives, not just the spiritual ones. So, if you look at the rhythm Moses describes, sitting, walking, lying down, rising up. That's not church activity, that's daily life. So practically, this looks like talking about the things of

God with your kids in the car, praying with our spouse when something comes up instead of just saying we will later, turning our attention to Him in the middle of our day, not because we have to, but because He's actually central to our life. It's not adding more events, it's just changing our awareness throughout the day to Him.

When we intentionally build rhythms that keep our hearts anchored, not as a checklist, but as a way of guarding what matters most in our lives, that's when we have place Him at the center. Because here's the reality, if we don't intentionally center our lives on God, everything else will naturally pull it off center. So yes, this can include time in the Word, time in prayer, but not in a mechanical way. It's creating space to actually be with God, to let His Word sit on our hearts, to let it shape us before our day shapes us.

It's less about checking a box and more about recalibrating our life daily. I'm big on this one. In fact, I wrote and put together a couple tools that may help you. If you want to grow in prayer, I put together a prayer guide that you can grab at the welcome booth. I also put together a quiet time guide to help you get grounded in daily quiet times. You can grab that there too. And if you have any questions on it, let me know. I'd love to help.

So, Moses is explaining to us that we must we refuse to compartmentalize our faith. When God is at the center, He doesn't just influence our "spiritual life," He influences how we work, how we lead, how we parent, how we coach, how we respond when we're frustrated, how we handle conflict, how we think about success. There isn't a "God part" of our of lives and a "real life" part. It's all His. So it should be influencing every aspect of our lives. If you run a business it should be very evident. If you're an employee, it should be very evident, if you're a teacher, it should be very evident.

And notice what all of this has in common, none of it's flashy. None of it's dramatic. This is the kind of life that's built in the quiet, ordinary, daily

decisions that nobody sees. But over time, it forms something in us. It forms a heart that is actually oriented toward God.

And I think that's important, because sometimes we're waiting for the right moment, or something big in our lives to get serious about God, but Deuteronomy 6 is showing us that this kind of life isn't built in big moments, it's built in small, consistent daily ones.

So the question isn't just, "Do I want God at the center?" The question becomes, "What am I actually doing that keeps Him there?" Because without intentionality, drifting is inevitable. But with intentionality, over time, our life begins to take on a different shape. Not perfectly, but progressively, where God is no longer just present, He's truly, truly central.

Now, before we close up our time, I want you to see how Moses finishes this section, because he doesn't just give a command, he gives us warning. Look at what he says with me starting in verse 10. He begins to describe the life they're about to step into, houses full of good things that they didn't fill, cisterns they didn't dig, vineyards and olive trees they didn't plant. In other words, life is about to get good, really good. It's gonna be comfortable. Full. And then he says this in verse 12, "Then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

You hear that? The danger isn't that they'll outright reject God. The danger is that they'll forget Him. That in the middle of a full life, surrounded by blessing, their hearts will slowly drift from the One who gave it all to them. And then he says in verse 13, "It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by His name you shall swear." And then verse 14, "You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you," and verse 15, "for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God."

That word jealous can sound harsh to us, but this isn't insecurity, this is covenant love. This is a God who knows that when His people give their

hearts to anything else, it will not lead to life, it will lead to loss. So this isn't really just a command, it's a warning. Not because God is trying to take something from them, but because He knows what happens when He's no longer at the center.

And if we're honest, this is where this passage really meets us again. Because we don't live in the wilderness. We live in the land of full lives. Full schedules. Full homes. Full calendars. And the warning is the same. "Take care...lest you forget." Not reject, not walk away, Take care so you don't just slowly forget.

And here's the truth we have to sit with. When God is no longer at the center, it doesn't just leave us neutral. It reshapes us. It redirects us. It affects our decisions, and our priorities, our relationships, and over time it leads us somewhere we never intended to go. There are consequences, not just because God judges, but because life doesn't work when it's built around anything other than Him.

So this morning, this isn't just a call to do more. It's a call to remember. To come back. To realign our lives around the One who brought us out, who saved us, who has been faithful to us even when we haven't been fully faithful to Him.

And everything else in this passage, teaching your children, talking about Him throughout the day, building these rhythms into your life, all of it flows out of this one command: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might.

So the question is simple. Where is He in your life right now? Not in theory, but in reality. And whatever the answer is, the invitation is still open. To come back, to reorder, to love Him fully. Not because you have to earn anything, but because He alone is worthy of all of you.

Let's pray.