

Simplify – Family Matters

1/23/22

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

Sunday AM

When I pastored in TN, we had an interesting family who lived across the street from the church. They were the *Clampetts* of White House, TN – a country family w/ means. In fact, the property the church occupied was purchased from this family. Shortly after I arrived at the church, the mother passed away, and the family asked me to perform the funeral. As custom, I went to their home to plan the service – and what a surprise I had in-store.

Have you seen the show hoarders? They could've filmed an episode w/ this family. The moment I stepped foot into the house, it was like being in a maze. From room to room, access was only possible thru 3 ft wide pathways that cut thru floor to ceiling stacks of newspapers, mags, and mail. Everywhere you looked, the house was filled w/ stacks. And wasn't just inside their home – it also was in their cars. In fact, sitting in their driveway were 4-5 abandoned cars filled up past the windows w/ mail.

Needless to say, something wasn't right w/in the home and this family was drowning in their clutter. I think the same can be said for far too many families, only the clutter is a overfilled calendar occupied by misplaced values/activities that are filling our lives w/ twinkies, ding dongs, and the next big event – and as a result, our families are lost in the minutia of life.

If you're just joining us, we're in week-4 of a New Year's series entitled – *Simplify*. *To simplify is to make something less complicated and more forthright by reducing it to the basic essentials*. Our hope in this series is to offer sound spiritual guidance to extricate ourselves from the unnecessary/complicated by reducing it back to the basic essentials of living in alignment, under the influence of God and His will.

In week 1, we looked at what's needed to declutter our souls. In week 2, we talked about the principle of the tithe – which is giving to God the first/best 10th of our time, talents, treasures, tongue, temple, and testimony. Then last week, we discussed the **Come, Take, Learn Principle** to help us to simplify our spiritual lives.

This AM, I want to turn our attention to how we can simplify our *family lives* so that we can have happy, healthy homes that honor God and one another. Look w/ me at an essential passage in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, w/ all your soul, and w/ all your strength. These teachings I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This passage is **known** as the **SHEMA** – and is easily one of the most significant statements of the O.T. Soon after Moses shared these words w/ the Israelites, the Shema became an essential hymn of praise and a sort of Jewish pledge of allegiance to be recited 2x a day.

Now, the reason this text is called the **Shema** is b/c the first word – **HEAR** – is the Hebrew word – shema – which means *to open your ears to truly hear so you can obey what God has said and put it into practice*.

There are (2) major items to note in the **Shema**. (1) it was strategically aligned w/ the 1st (4) commandments to ensure Jehovah was always the object of a person's affections and the only true God they worshipped. And (2) this truth was to be passed from one generation to the next thru parental instruction/modeling.

WTM – I believe there’s much to learn about how to *simplify* our family lives from this verse – and while we’re each responsible for our action, it’s clear in this text that onus for our families begins w/ dad/mom.

Meaning – for a family to thrive, dad/mom must be more than committed to loving/living for the **ONE** true God – they must be actively pursuing His heart.

I **RESOLVE** Christ as Lord of Your Heart

Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, w/ all your soul, and w/ all your strength.

Now if this sounds a bit familiar, it is b/c this was at the heart of Jesus’ yoke/teaching that aligns w/ the 1st commandment of having no other gods before Him.

It’s an encouragement that speaks to our affection and devotion to God. Literally, **w/ all that’s w/in you, live committed to God and the things of God**. Make His person/will the object of your affections – who from sun up to sun down, is the single ambition of your life.

This is why Scripture says – *You shall have no other gods, choose this day, seek first, set your minds/hearts on things above, and fix your eyes on Jesus – b/c for life to work under heaven – GOD MUST BE FIRST!*

Meaning – we’re to have no other gods, no other idols, no competing loyalties to distract us from seeking, knowing, trusting, and enjoying God’s heart/will...

It means knowing God and following Jesus must be the ambition of our soul and the very reason we get up in the AM and live the way we live thru-out our day.

It’s to live as Paul implores in Colossians 1:9-10:

We continually ask God to fill you w/ the knowledge of his will thru all the wisdom/understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way. Colossians 1:9-10

IOW – give God the first/best of every area of life.

Yet here’s what I’ve come to realize– we make time, talk about, and give effort to the things we love. No matter how pressing life becomes, we find the time to be w/ the people we love, doing the things we enjoy. As such, these things testify to what is most important to us b/c they speak to what we value/priorities.

Which raises a tough question? In your heart of hearts, is loving, knowing, serving, and honoring God really the most important ambition of your heart? Is there anything more important to you than your intimacy w/ God? If so – you’re primed for clutter.

I think of Joshua’s parting words to Israel in Josh. 24:

Fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully. Throw away the gods your ancestor worshiped beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt – and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you’re living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:14-15

Listen closely. If we value the Lord and the things of God – and if we seek first His Kingdom/righteousness – it’ll have a profound impact on our lives and the lives of our children and the generations that’ll follow. But if our ambition/affection is focused on ourselves and the things of this world, well... you do the math!

BTW – Loving God is more than going to church and reading a verse-a-day to keep the devil away. It's more than being religious and talking Christianese. It's having a personal, abandoned fellowship w/ God where His purposes/priorities are your purposes and priorities and His mission/will and your mission/will.

Yet this isn't easy. B/c while the world is trying to stuff us in its mold, our own human ambitions are driving us to crave more – and let's not forget that we have a spiritual enemy out there who's constantly trying to lure us deeper into our flesh or deeper into our religion – so that we miss having true intimacy w/ God.

To live in such intimacy requires a vigilant pursuit of God and a moment-by-moment surrender. And while no one will be perfect in such a pursuit, it is the driving desire of our hearts to know, serve, and honor God.

But the Shema doesn't stop there – notice what it says next that's crucial to our families.

II **ESTABLISH** God's Word as Your Standard

These teachings (instructions) I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress (teach) them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

teachings – specifically, Moses was speaking of the instruction God gave him to give to the Israelites – but for us, we can extrapolate this to refer to the centering our lives on the teachings of the Bible.

WHY? B/c **God's Word is God's will** – and in the Bible we discover everything we need to make life work. We learn about who God is and how to have a relationship w/ Him. We learn how to live life, engage people, and handle the challenges of life.

Listen – *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Tm. 3:16

Doctrine	– Truth to <u>GUIDE</u>
Reproof	– Truth to <u>CONFRONT</u>
Correction	– Truth to <u>RESTORE</u>
Instruction	– Truth to <u>EMPOWER</u>

Notice what we're to do w/ God's Word in our homes.

A We're to **OWN** His Word in Our Hearts

These teachings (instructions) I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Let me make this simple. Dad/Mom – if your faith is unimportant/nominal then it'll likely be unimportant to your kids.

But listen – I'm not talking about being a Pharisaical legalist who lays down the law pumping religion into our kids – I'm talking of walking in the grace of God.

Yet the problem in many Christian homes today is that the commitment/maturity of far too many parents is quite shallow/misled. Whether it is a compromised church culture or a personal decision to follow Jesus from a distance – the result is our kids have no concept of what it means to truly know/walk w/ the Lord. They don't see the joy of the Lord, but only experience the contradiction of religion.

In fact, just yesterday, I received an email invite to an FCA event that said that 9 of 10 jr. high/high school students no longer attend church on a regular basis and 7 of 10 no longer darken a church door.

WHY? The primary reason for this is b/c their parents are disinterested/disengaged spiritually.

The shema helps us to understand that as parents, first and foremost, we must own a genuine faith not built on the entertainment/consumerism of the modern church – but based on a sincere/growing intimacy w/ God. And this doesn't occur by osmosis but thru a passionate pursuit to know/walk w/ God above all else.

DYK – in Ephesians 5 Paul explains that the key to a successful marriage/family is when mom/dad are both pursuing/walking w/ the Lord.

I've taught this before, but it's worth teaching again as both the husband/wife are given impossible commands. Husbands are to agape love their wives and wives are to come into alignment, under their husband as they would the Lord. Here's the problem, the only way either is possible is if they are walking in the Spirit – bearing the fruit of the Spirit. This requires taking to heart God's Word and following His leading.

Once we settle this issue, we can then invest the Jesus in us into our family.

B We're to **TEACH** His Word to Our Children

Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.

Once you begin to experience true faith, begin to pass it on to your children. Invest Jesus in you into them. But don't just tell them– SHOW them. Wherever you go, and in whatever you're doing, help them to see and understand what it means to live under the influence of God and in alignment w/ His will/Word. Perfectly? NO! But certainly honestly/redemptively.

C We're to **APPLY** His Word to our lives

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads...

In Jewish culture, b/c one's hands represented one's effort/work, tying the Shema to one's wrist was equivalent to letting God's Word order your actions and direct your steps.

It's tantamount to publicly telling people I'm a follower of God – but don't just take my word for it – watch my actions, b/c they should align w/ my words.

Yet this is where we must be careful. The key to our faith is the belief in our hearts and not the outward actions people see – that's RELIGION. And this is what had happened to the Pharisees. They looked good on the outside, but were dead on the inside.

We must understand that our words and action go together – or as the old saying goes – ***Your walk talks, but your talk don't walk.***

Consider again the words of James. *Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.* James 1:22-24

There's (1) last thing we're to do to simplify family...

D We're to **TAKE** His Word Wherever We Go

Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates...

This too is a symbolic gesture to remind us that our faith is to be as genuine outside of the home as it is inside of the home (and vice versa).

By posting the Shema at the entrance of our homes, we're being reminded of our responsibility to live on mission for God everywhere we go, and in every detail/activity in our lives.

So, there you have it. It's not a concise list, but it is a starting point to simplifying your family life. Make enthroning Jesus your priority and then build your life on His Word allowing your values and schedule to be influenced His truth and mission.

TAKEAWAYS

Our highest calling and most essential faith endeavor is to love God w/ all that we are and in every detail of our lives.

How dad and mom's faith goes – so goes the faith of the children.

The key element to simplifying our homes is to allow every detail of home to be filtered thru and under the influence of God's Word which is God's will.

NEXT STEPS

1 Spend time this week in your quiet time or with another person discussing these GROW questions.

G – What are the (5) most important keys to a happy, healthy, God-following family?

R – Read Colossians 3:18-21. What does God expect of husbands/wives and parent/children?

O – Rewrite the Shema in your own words.

W – Take time this week to share your testimony and daily walk w/ spouse and kids.

2 Take time this week to sit down w/ your family to discuss the GROW questions/sermon and to pray.