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**The Shema  
Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

**Introduction**

As adults there are probably many things that we would consider important for our kids to know before they grow up, (Wait until your married, don't drink and drive, education is important, treat others with respect, ect.). What has been interesting to me over the years as I have been watching patterns in the church, trying to figure out N. American Christianity, what it means to have an evangelistic heart, and how to connect teenagers with God, is that there seems to be this ever growing gap between students and adults regarding spiritual matters. I am sure that there are a lot of reasons that this may be happening, good reasons, but I wonder if we don't begin to teach our younger generations about loving God how long will it be before this world completely forgets about God. I mean thankfully we live in a country where we don't have to worry about the government coming through our doors and keeping us from worshiping God, but it is also from that same freedom that we find ourselves living in a place where relativism rules us, where materialism consumes us, where 89% of the people who live here say they believe in God but live like there are no eternal consequences. And so while it may be impossible for the world to actually forget about God, I fear we may live in a way that is driving us dangerously close.

So we come to our text this morning, a text that began to weigh heavy on my heart back in early October, before John even asked me to preach this weekend. It's a text that has had me thinking about my approach to bridging this gap between students and their families. It's a text that has had me wondering about the way that I live my life. It's a text that I think we may need to be reminded of more often. Its found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and is called, by Jews, scholars and Bible students, the Shema. Shema is a Hebrew word that simply means "Hear" or "Listen or Pay attention." It is today a prayer that every good Jew recites up to three times a day in remembrance of God, so without further a due will you "Hear, listen or pay attention" as I read these few verses?

**1. Hear O Israel: the lord our God, the Lord is one.**

This passage was a revelation that brought security to the people in that day and it should bring the same kind of security to us today. In the ancient near east monotheistic thoughts weren't incredibly popular. Not as popular as it currently is today. People dealt with a thought that, at first glance seems foreign because People worshiped many gods. One of the problems with this was that the "gods" of the ancient Near East were rarely thought of as acting in harmony. Each god was unpredictable and morally impulsive. So a pagan worshiper could never be sure that his loyalty to one god would serve to protect him from the impulsive wrath of another. But I wonder if this is really all that foreign to us today. I wonder if we have just stopped calling the things that we pledge our allegiance to as god because that seems to give up the kind of independent control that we long for or are told that we have a right to have in America,

When I was studying for this message my mind kept wandering to a TV show that I repent of on a pretty regular basis. Its called "Cribs." It's a show that is on MTV and they

showcase famous celebrity houses. Just the other day I came home from work to sit on my new couch in my new home to watch tv on my new 50inch plasma TV that hangs above the fireplace. My beautiful wife, Heather, was putting up Christmas decorations on the tree that we had just bought, my 1 year old English Bulldog was barking at it because she didn't know what it was, I was full from the chipotle dinner that we had just had and World Extreme Cage Fighting was on so it truly was the beginning to be a good night. I cant understand why but heather isn't able to watch two people beat each other up for long periods of time on TV so I started flipping through the channels until I got to MTV Cribs. It was a special show that night, 50 Cent a famous rapper today was their celebrity and MTV was going to take us through the 56000 sq ft mansion that he had bought from Mike Tyson. I was hooked! There is something about big houses, nice cars and polished jewelry that draws us in. There is this lure of worldly success that hangs in the air that many of us cant seem keep from being drawn to. Whether you are watching Bill Gates, one of the wealthiest people on the planet, or 50 cent, a rapper who has many 50,000 dollar diamond studded watches and a mansion that takes weeks to vacuum, there is something about a life of financial wealth that can too easily grab hold of our life, mind and time.

I said that I repent of this show quite frequently because the truth is that I struggle with these issues as much as anyone else might. Maybe its because in the scheme of things I'm still a pretty young guy who aspires to be something great in light of what God has called him to do and to be, but I have a feeling that this maturity has less to do with age than we think. When you read the statistics that the average adult is in more than \$\_\_\_\_\_ worth of debt, that as a result of this, and other things, most families are less than 3 paychecks from being on the street, and that despite our understanding of how deep in a hole we are, we are still spending more and more money; I wonder whether the polytheistic gods of yesterday are today called money, sex and more stuff.

We invest so much energy and so much time in order to have more than enough from the gods of today, trying to ensure some kind of security, when the reality is that we are only one Katrina and Vernonia disaster away from losing it all. Maybe we are years or days away from meeting our creator and the gods we served on Earth won't have a voice anymore.

What I think that this verse, this statement of faith, had the capability of doing all those years ago in the middle of the desert, spoken originally to Gods people who had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt, still has the capability of freeing us today. There is security in knowing tat God is one. There is hope in knowing that if all else fails God will still be. There is hope and security found because this God who will still be calls us His children and has a place for us in eternity with Him. So it doesn't matter when the gods of today fail, as long as we haven't put our hope and faith in them. It not as hard when things go wrong because you know there is an end where you are left w/God and He stands unwavering. We only have to be reminded. I think that we have in many ways forgotten that the Lord our God is one. I think that we have forgotten that there is security in that. And so as Moses continues to instruct Gods people in the desert that day they are reminded, like we are reminded today, that the Lord our God is supreme above all creation.

## 2. Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength

It is so appropriate that with a statement like one that we just discussed there is a call to action. Moses in verse 6 continues and says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all soul and with all your strength.” Does this sound familiar? These are also found in the first three Gospels and it is what Jesus calls in the New Testament “**the greatest commandment.**” As a matter of fact He tells us that all of the laws of the prophets hang on this and the second greatest command which is to love your neighbor as yourself. The biblical idea of the *heart* covers our ideas of the will and the mind, so when Jesus recalled this passage in slightly different words he is still giving its essential meaning. True godliness means that all our abilities, as well as all we possess, are given to God.

The idea that was understood to the Israelites here is that this was a love that was supposed to consume them, ALL THEIR HEART SOUL AND STRENGTH WAS everything about them, every aspect, every compartmentalized area. Have you ever been around someone who is truly in love with something or someone? Isn't it what they are talking about all of the time? It doesn't matter what you are talking about everything can be related to or comes back to that thing that they are in love with. The world looks different to these people, there not normal.

I remember when I was still in high school my love at the time was skateboarding. I also remember this freedom that I experienced when my mom made my sister give me her car. I would pick up my friends to go skateboarding and we would just drive around looking for spots. Every staircase, handrail, ledge, planter or parking lot was a playground if we didn't get kicked out. It wouldn't even matter if I was with my skateboarding friends or not, if I drove by something that looked like a good place to skateboard I would point it out. My whole world looked different. I didn't see stair cases for getting to the next level I saw them for jumping off of, I didn't see hand rails as a means to help me get up stairs I saw them as something to slide down on, I didn't see candles as something nice to light in your home during the holiday or for decoration, I saw them as an opportunity to rub on curbs and ledges so that I could do tricks with my skateboard and everybody knew it. I looked like a skateboarder, I talked like a skateboarder, I wore the right shoes, I had a board in my trunk, I actually skateboarded (which is important to point out because there are a lot of posers in this world), I was totally consumed with this thing that I loved. It sure doesn't take long for people to know what we are in love with. As we grow older the things that consume us may change. For you it may be your car, your boat, your spouse, your pet, your job, your house or money. Maybe its something that I haven't mentioned here but chances are the people that you are closest to know about it, so if you don't know what it is it might be a fun exercise to ask them. This could bring some real clarity to our lives because sometimes we become consumed with things without even realizing it.

For the Israelites in the desert, and for us today the exhortation here is to be consumed with God. In everything you do love God. When you're holding your child in your arms, when your washing your car, when your paying your bills, when your cleaning your house, when your playing sports... LOVE GOD. If you do this these things will always be put in their proper place, second to Him who allowed you to have it,

which in its most simple form is what it means to Love Him with all your heart, soul and strength.

**3. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and 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 you houses and gates.**

Moses goes on to tell us something here that I think is probably one of the most significant things that we can do as followers of Christ today. At this point it can be argued that we have many different thoughts that could make up many different points in a pastors sermon but I want to keep them together because of how closely they point to one another. He seems to reiterate last thing that he just told his people as if they may have missed it the first time. “These commands are to be on your heart.” (Period, end of the sentence, beginning of a new one) Now, “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and 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 you houses and gates.” The reason that I wanted to keep these many thoughts together is because it is much more difficult, if not impossible to impress things onto our younger generations if we are not doing them ourselves.

You may be able to impress ideas onto your children or loved ones even if you don't act on it yourself, but what God is saying here goes beyond that. And for good reason. This is to FIRST be on YOUR heart, THEN you need to IMPRESS it on your children. Have you guys ever heard someone say “Do as I say not as I do?” I hate that! I don't think that there is anything else that draws more a line of separation between the world and authentic faith then this! I really don't know if there is ever a good time to tell someone to do something that you yourself aren't trying to live out. I may upset someone in here by saying this but there is no real authority in that and I think that we look at the younger generation and assume that it doesn't matter whether we “walk the talk” because I have more power than they do and they have to do what I say whether I do it myself or not. Look I am a pastor here at Village Baptist Church that specializes in students and one of the things that I have heard over and over again in the 5 years that I have been leading students in ministry that makes me cry inside is that Christianity isn't for them because Christians are hypocrites and why would I put my trust in a God that hasn't seemed to transform the lives of the people who are the closest to me who call themselves Christians? It's a good, hard question. It's a question that we as parents, mentors, adults and followers of Christ need to ask if we take seriously the statistics that say more that 8 out of every 10 high school students who graduate leave the faith based community

The Jews who were diligently seeking God thought about something that we don't think about today. They believed that they were only one generation away from forgetting about God. I think we live in a time and world where this is especially true. We are one generation away from forgetting about the creator who died so that we can have life. They took so seriously this call to tie and bind these words on their hand and foreheads that they literally constructed boxes called phylacteries, which held passages of scripture from exodus and Deuteronomy to their right arms and foreheads. It was a statement as if to say, “Do not mistake who I am and what I believe in. Do not mistake

the way that I live my life because of this truth and do not mistake the way that I will raise my children because of it.”

Now I don't think that our first step should necessarily be to tie boxes to our foreheads and right arms but I do believe we need to live lives that are unmistakably committed to Jesus. In Ephesians the apostle Paul reiterates this way of life, in regard to the family as he exhorts fathers in chapter 6:4. He tells them not to drive their children to anger but rather to bring them up in the training of the Lord.”

### **CONCLUSION???**

Now for some of you what I have just said may not really apply because you eat, drink, breathe, and live Jesus Christ in your homes. Your family, whether you have young ones or not, do not mistake your love for God. To you I hope this morning is one big encouraging hug from the youth pastor. Others may be thinking that you are doing pretty well because at least you come to church and you send your student to youth group stuff, whether that is here or somewhere else, so they will be OK. I hope that you are right! This is a good place to start, but I strongly encourage you to be asking questions, engaging them in what you are learning, and showing them what it looks like to rely on and be carried by Christ. Finally, some of you may be thinking, “Matt I don't have any kids,” or “I'm not even married yet,” or “My kids are grown and they are doing good”... This doesn't apply to me! To those of you who are thinking this I want to challenge you with something. There are plenty of people who may be sitting in this very room with you who are younger than you are, who have never been led by anyone who knew what it looked like to Love God; either because they are the only one in their family who is on the verge or has made a decision for Christ, or the people who have been in their lives just haven't shown them. As a community of believers you have the opportunity to come along side of one another, others, people younger and help them to know what it is like to be loved by and love our God.

So parents, adults, mentors, followers of Christ, as we approach this new year, as we make our resolutions or think of new ways to bring joy to our lives let us not forget about our God who is one God, supreme over all creation. Let us not forget to seek every possible way to walk with Him and let us not forget our role in leading and training the next generation by the way that we live our lives.