

Series: Dwell	Reference: Deuteronomy 6:4-9	Title: Shema	Date: 10.17.2021
Website Writeup: How important is the Word of God in life? The Shema gives us a glimpse.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

We're doing three four week series surrounding the ongoing prayer request to grow in three areas; Worship, Word & Witness. We finished Worship, now we move onto Word to learn how to dwell in the Word of God with which we've been gifted.

Christian leadership has been thrust into reiterating the importance of Scripture given a great deviance from it. The Church has been cleaved in two. One side, orthodox historical Christianity. The other being what Voddie Baucham, a black pastor, calls a cult born out of a growing Ethnic Gnosticism surrounded by & beginning with the issue of race. I would add, overflowing into issues of sexuality & economics. A cult stays close enough to the Bible to avoid immediate detection, hiding the fact it has a new theology & a new glossary of terms diverging ever-so-slightly from Christian Orthodoxy. It borrows from the familiar & accepted, infusing it with new meaning, allowing it to draw the faithful away from orthodoxy.¹

He states in his book, *Fault Lines* this new cult has created a new lexicon which includes...

1. **Its own cosmology, or World View, looking at reality through the lens of Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory & Intersectionality.**
2. Original sin is redefined as racism.
3. **The Law is redefined as antiracism.**
4. The gospel is redefined as racial reconciliation.
5. **The new martyrs are Saints Trayvon, Mike, George, Breonna, etc.**
6. The new priests are oppressed minorities.
7. **The new means of atonement are reparations.**
8. The new birth is redefined as woke-ness.
9. **The new liturgy is lament.**
10. The new canon are the principles of Critical Social Justice social science.
11. **The new theologians are people such as DiAngelo, Kendi, Brown, Crenshaw, MacIntosh, etc.**
12. And the new catechism, or confession of faith, is 'say their names'.
13. **There is no soteriology, or doctrine of salvation. There's only perpetual penance in an effort to battle an incurable disease.²**

Voddie's been warning us for about 20yrs of Ethnic Gnosticism. Ethnic, since it's rooted in the real or perceived experience of certain minorities/ethnicities. Gnostic, meaning 'a

¹ Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines* (Washington D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 67

² Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines* (Washington D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 67

new special knowledge'. Gnosticism, in whatever form it takes, has always been one of the subtle dangers to orthodox historical Christianity. It claims the Word of God isn't sufficient for life, that we need some special extra-biblical knowledge to truly interpret God's message to humanity. It typically redefines terms & infuses new meaning into words & concepts in order to undermine truth in a subtle & almost imperceptible way. So, in this new cult the Gospel can only be understood through the lens of Critical Race Theory & Intersectionality.

In other words, progressive christianity will say you can't really understand the Scriptures because you're not 'woke', you've not 'done the work' ingesting all the new information needed for proper interpretation. *But we hold fast to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which states...All Scripture is God-breathed & is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting & training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

This tells us 3 things...Firstly, The Bible is the God-breathed communication of Himself to humanity. It's not just peoples speculation, nor is it dependent on the words or ideas of humanity for authority - its authority is from God. *Secondly, it's profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting & training in righteousness - in other words, the Bible is useful in guiding, correcting & training in any issue we face. If we had only the Bible, it would be more than sufficient to guide a society into right thinking & practice (orthodoxy & orthopraxy) on any issue.* Which would be the third thing..the Bible is sufficient to bring us into completeness & to equip us for every good work. It's the Bible, not sociology, psychology, or political science, which offers sufficient instruction & answers on every ethical issue we'll ever face.³

I say all that, not to get into all the issues, but to set the stage as to the importance of Gods Word & its guidance in life in this cultural moment. To remind us that gnosticism in all forms is insidious, subtle & damaging. *The truth is, we are being influenced..by what is the question. Do we counteract that with a deep abiding love & honor for God's Word as the directive for our lives. Not that we shouldn't be broadly read & informed, but that everything get's measured against the Word of God, and when it's incongruent with Godly direction, it's not adopted.*

God's given us his Word for a purpose. As N. T. Wright notes, "The Bible isn't there simply to be an accurate reference point for people who want to look things up & be sure they've got them right. It's there to equip God's people to carry forward His purposes of new covenant & new creation. *To enable people to work for justice, to sustain their spirituality as they do so, to create & enhance relationships at every level, and to produce that new creation which will have about it something of the beauty of God Himself.* The Bible isn't like an accurate description of how a car's made. It's more like the mechanic who helps you fix it, the garage attendant who refuels it, and the guide who tells you how to get where you're going. And where you're going is *to make God's*

³ Voddie Baucham, Fault Lines (Washington D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 126-127

new creation happen in His world, not simply to find your own way unscathed through the old creation"⁴

Today we're going to look more intently at the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 on p125 of your pew Bibles. However, I want to read vv1-3 as a preface where Moses says to the Israelites... *These are the commands, decrees & laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ²so that you, your children & their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees & commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you & that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk & honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.*

In an age of calls to defund police & politicians who pass sweeping mandates, any passage beginning with, *'commands, decrees & laws...to observe'*, is typically not the language one wants to hear. We equate those words with control & abuse of power, not of love & care. But notice the language of love, blessing & care this opening shares, with phrases like *'that you may enjoy a long life'*, *'that it may go well with you'*, *'that you may increase greatly'*, and the allusion to wonderful promises & blessings fulfilled! In other words, these commands, decrees & laws are redemptive protective loving directives. We can't understand the Old Testament, or its Law, without seeing it in love's perspective, as a way of working out our relationships with God & with other human beings.⁵ We need only to go back to chapter 5 to see Moses is alluding to the Decalogue/Ten Commandments.

In our last series we saw how a scribe came to Jesus & asked, *"What is the greatest commandment?"* Jesus replied, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There are no other commandments greater than these"* (Mark 12:30-31). With that statement, Jesus sums up the Ten Commandments, since the first four relate to our vertical love relationship with God & the second six relate to our horizontal love relationship with others.

Augustine put it this way, "Love God & do as you please." Since, when you really love the Lord with all of your heart, mind & strength, you naturally want to do right. If I love God, I'll not have other gods before Him, make graven images, or take His name in vain. If I love my neighbor as myself, I'll not steal from, or lie to them, covet what's theirs, or kill them. God gave the Ten Commandments as a standard by which we should live. We can't accomplish this through our own strength, but we can do all things through Christ (Php 4:13). He wants to give us new desires & eliminate old ones. Obeying His law not because we have to, but because it's become our desire. Once that happens, we'll no

⁴ (N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian* [New York: Harper Collins, 2006], 182-83)

⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 145.

longer see God's commands as restrictions, but as healthy barriers designed to guard & guide life.⁶

Which brings us to The Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which says...⁴*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.* ⁵*Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your strength.* ⁶*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.* ⁷*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home & when you walk along the road, when you lie down & when you get up.* ⁸*Tie them as symbols on your hands & bind them on your foreheads.* ⁹*Write them on the doorframes of your houses & on your gates.*

Not leaving the concept of Worship in the dust, we realize the concepts of Worship, Word & Witness are interdependent. Although definable alone, one doesn't happen without the others. A love for the Word leads to a lifestyle of public worship glorifying & proclaiming Jesus. We recognize & accept God's love in communicating what is good, healthy & right for us, and to be honorific in our posture before Him. It's an act of loving sacrifice to delve deep into God's Word, assimilating & practicing it in all areas of life.

God's Word reveals who He is & for the lover of God, it becomes something we interact with regularly, not just on Sundays, or in Bible study. By prioritizing consistent time in God's Word, we're transformed by His love, becoming active agents of it to others.

This passage is called the *Shema* due to the first Hebrew word of verse 4, 'Hear'. A core text of Judaism conveying what God commanded Moses to teach God's people. He declares *the LORD is one*, affirming what He already told them in Dt 4:35: "*the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.*" Because of this truth, we're commanded to love Him wholeheartedly - He alone is God, there is no other. The pridefully arrogant refuse to admit this. Oswald Chambers in a devotional adeptly points out sin isn't something we can remedy ourselves, therefore Jesus died for the sin of the *whole* world. Which isn't to preach Universalism. People relegate themselves to eternal separation from God in refusing to acknowledge Jesus as God revealed, the only way to salvation & Lord of all things. Sin doesn't send us to hell necessarily, that's been paid for, ones refusal to bend their need to the true King of kings does.

God's not found through any other religion or spirituality. He may use something in them to lead a person to Himself, but that person will always end up in orthodox historical christianity as a result. Since God reveals Himself in only the way He's able - by the Scriptures & in the person of Jesus Christ. All other spiritual thought is drastically different to the Biblical message - The Bible's unique in its message of grace (God pursuing & doing for us what we could not) & what it reveals about God.

If you painted a masterpiece hanging in the National Museum of Art & people attributed it to someone else, that would irk you! You want onlookers to acknowledge & appreciate your work & you as the artist, that's natural & right. If you were asked to write a

⁶ <https://harvest.org/know-god-article/loving-god-the-first-four-commandments/>

description of yourself for a class. Your likes, dislikes, dreams, desires & physical traits - but your teacher corrected it, changing all your personal details, you'd be upset! It wouldn't be you. You only communicate yourself in the way you are, likewise God as sentient being only communicates His heart & character consistent with who He is.

There is only one God, the Great I AM, who speaks to the world through the Bible & in the person of Jesus Christ! Not the Seven Valleys & the Four Valleys of Baha'i. Not the Al Quran & Hadith of Islam. Not the Tripitaka, the Three Baskets of Buddha. Not the Vedas & Upanishads of Hinduism. Not the Wiccan Book of Shadows. Not the Guru Granth Sahib of Sikhism. There's only one God who's communicated Himself through the Hebrew & Christian Scriptures; a faith standing alone among all others, expressing the oneness, love, holiness, glory & sacrificial grace of the only true God, Jesus Christ.

The heart was equivalent to the mind or rational part of humankind including all its passions & desires. "The 'soul' [nephesh] refers to the invisible part of the individual, the person *qua* person including the will & sensibilities. The strength (*me'od*) is, of course, the physical side with all its functions & capacities."⁷ The words Moses spoke were to *be on your heart* - central for the people of God.

Historically Jews took the words in vv8-9 literally. Today you may see a *mezuzah* adorning the doorpost of a Jewish home. A piece of parchment (a *klaf*) contained in a decorative case & inscribed with specific Hebrew verses (Dt. 6:4-9 & 11:13-21). They're affixed to the doorpost to fulfill the Biblical commandment (mitzvah) of v9. They also use *tefillin* or *phylacteries*, a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment also inscribed with verses from the Torah. One on the forehead, and one on the upper arm to satisfy v8. They contain four hand-written texts (Ex 13:1-10, 13:11-16; Dt 6:4-9, 11:12-21).

These would've been a healthy reminder as you enter your home, or during prayers, of the importance of the role of God's Word in life. Christians view this command as a guide to how we live our lives holistically for God - to keep the Word before us at all times & in all things. And we'd be right in that regard.

There are practical ways of doing that. Walking into a Christian home seeing verses adorning the walls is a remembrance. Guests might be confronted with Biblical Truth for the first time! Keeping a Bible out on key tables in the home, or even in the bathroom, keep it before you. Having a Bible app on your phone which sends you a verse for the day is helpful. Or keeping notecards with verses you're in process of memorizing. Having your set corner for quiet-times with your Bible which you read, highlight, and take notes on each day is a great practice. Or using RightNow Media to do a Bible study.

⁷ (Eugene H. Merrill, quoted in Thomas Constable, *Notes on Deuteronomy* [2020], 62, <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/deuteronomy.pdf>)

But it doesn't end with study, reading, journaling, or writing. Take note of v7...*Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home & when you walk along the road, when you lie down & when you get up.* Begin & end your day with the Word, and everything in-between. A communal attitude always bringing the Word of God to light with others. Talking about it, keeping it before each other. Moms & Dads, memorize verses as a family, or pray together, or do a quick devotional with them. Share with your family & friends about your own faith joys & struggles, be confessional before your kids, allow them to watch you measure life against the Word of God & the desire to be transformed by His Word. Kristin shared that she prays over people at work, and it's become commonplace for her to do so - they expect it!

This means spending significant time in the Word for it to become the World View with which you look at life. Beyond Sunday Sermons & Bible Studies, the ingestion of God's Word should be of central importance.

In doing so we're loving God in our private lives. Imperative so that we can love God in public as we engage in politics, economics & civic life. We love God with our whole lives. In spending time in God's Word, He transforms us inwardly impacting outward life. We don't read the Bible just to become adept at spouting biblical knowledge; we read to connect & grow in relationship & purpose according to His plan.

It's hard to build relationship or grow closer to anyone if you don't spend time with them. God doesn't drift away from us. He invites us to meet with Him through His Word daily. To grow closer is to spend consistent time in Scripture. Sometimes the most practical ways to connect with God prove to be the most difficult. My wife combines her great passions with her great Love. She went to Longwood Gardens a few weeks ago for the day. Before she left she said, "Two's company, threes a crowd...I'm going to spend the day with Jesus, you can't come." And she sat in the meadow, read her Bible, journaled & prayed, and had a great time.

One study found it took from 18-254 days to form a new habit, depending on the person. So, do yourself a favor, develop Bible habits. Go to Church & Bible Study regularly. Get a Bible app on your phone with different topical, or plans to read the Bible in a year. Place Bibles around your house as a reminder (take them from here, they're FREE!). Get some framed verses for your walls. Get some scripture memory cards. Start your free RightNow Media account (It's FREE!). Talk openly about your faith with everyone around you. Impress this on your children. Allow Jesus to become the lens through which you view life.

God's Word reveals who He is & for the lover of God, therefore, it becomes something we interact with regularly, beyond Sundays & Bible studies. By prioritizing consistent time in God's Word, we're transformed by His love becoming active agents of His love to others.