Rock Valley Bible Church (www.rvbc.cc)

2009-036

September 13, 2009 by Steve Brandon

A Summons to a God-Filled Life

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

1. Whole-hearted Loving (verse 5).
2. Committed Meditating (verse 6).
3. Diligent Teaching (verse 7).
4. Frequent Reading (verses 8-9).

There are some passages in the Bible that are so often read and so important that we have given names to them. For instance, one of them is Matthew 6:9-13, which we call "The Lord's Prayer." The Roman Catholics identify the passage as the "Our Father." Another passage is 1 Corinthians 13, which is commonly called, "The Love Chapter." Hebrews 11 is often called, "The Hall of Faith." Luke 2 is called, "The Christmas Story."

Our text this morning has a name as well. It's called, "The Shema." It comes from the first word in our passage. Deuteronomy 6:4 reads this way in the Hebrew text, "Shema Israel, Adonai Elohenu Adonai Ehad." Or, translated, we read, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" This was a summons to the nation of Israel. It was a summons to listen to God.

The word, "Shema" means "to hear." It means "to listen." But, it means far more that "O Israel, listen! Let the sound waves hit your eardrum!" Rather, it means, "Hearken unto these words. Pay attention to these words so that you might be careful to obey them." It's more like when a father tells his disobedient child, "Listen up young man!" The young man would do well to obey his father at this moment.

This is the sense of the "Shema" here. It may be translated here "hear," but the sense is really "obey." In fact, this word, "hear" is translated, "obey" almost 100 times in the Bible (For example, see Deut. 30:2, 8, 10).

We have in our text this morning a summons. We have in our text a call. It's a call to love. It's a call to obedience. But, more than that, it's a call to a God-filled life. It's a call for God to have all of our affections. It's a call for God to have all of our thoughts. It's a call for God to have all of our words. My message this morning is entitled, "A Summons to a God-Filled Life."

These were the words that Moses spoke to the people of Israel shortly before they would enter the land that God had promised to Moses. Please notice that these words were not words of burden. No, they were words of promise. Consider the first three verses, ...

> Deuteronomy 6:1-3
> Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Theses are words of promise. As Moses spoke these words to the people of Israel, he was seeking their good. In preaching this message this morning, please know that my heart for these things are for your good as well. I want nothing more for your life than for you to know the blessing of God. And this is God's heart to the people of Israel. His heart was for their good.

Moses wanted them to have a long life. At the end of verse 2, we see Moses saying, "keep [these words] ... that your days may be prolonged." Moses wanted them to know and experience the blessing of God.
In verse 3, Moses says, "keep [these words] ... that it may be well with you." And the things that were true of those in the Old Testament are true for us today. If you fill your life with God, He will fill your life with Him. Your days will be prolonged. It will go well with you.

In Ephesians 6:1-3, we see Paul making the same application. He quoted from the 5th commandment, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you" (Ex. 20:12).

However, in the dispensation of the New Covenant, he changed the wording to make the application more pertinent. He wrote, Honor your father and mother ... so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

This is the same application that I am making today. If you heed to the words of this summons, you may expect a blessing from God. May we know this blessing in our lives!

Our text this morning has a four-fold summons. First of all, we have a call to ...

1. Whole-hearted Loving (verse 5).

This comes in verse 5, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." This is God's call upon our lives. He calls us to a whole-hearted love to God! He demands that our love to Him be undistracted. He demands that our love to Him be undivided.

We are commanded to love God with all of our heart. That is, with all of our thinking and decisions and desires. We are commanded to love God with all of our soul. That is, with all of our person and being. We are commanded to love God with all of our might. That is, with all of our physical effort that we can exert.

In other words, God wants all of us. He wants all your heart. He wants all your soul. He wants all your might. He doesn't want your worship to be merely with your mouth. He wants our worship to be with our hearts. When Jesus encountered those who were merely giving lip-service to God, He quoted Isaiah, who prophesied, ...

> This people honors Me with their lips,
> But their heart is far away from Me.
> But in vain do they worship Me,
> Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:8-9).

God wants all of us. He doesn't want us to be church attenders, who merely hear the word of God and go away unaffected. He wants us to be church attenders, who hear and obey the word of God. When James encountered those in the church who were great at attending church services, but lacking in obedience, he wrote, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22).

God wants all of us. And the way that God said these things calls us to a mindset of loving God. Too often people ask these sorts of questions, "Can take drugs and still be go to heaven? Can I divorce my wife and still go to heaven? Can I look at pornography and still go to heaven? Can I watch R-rated movies and still go to heaven? Can I sleep with my girl-friend and still go to heaven?"

I hop that you see that these questions have it all backwards. Each of them push to the brink of how far can I sin and yet still be OK with God. I trust that you see that God's call for our lives is to ask different questions. Instead of asking how far can we go in sin and still squeeze into heaven, we ought to ask a totally different question. We ought to ask, "Is my life heading in a God-ward direction?" Is God the love of my life?"

If you love your wife, your life will reflect it. You will make time for her. You will care for her. You will encourage her. You will comfort her. You will provide for her. So it is with God. When He has all your heart, all your soul, and all your might, your behavior will follow. Furthermore, your questions won't be focused on how far you can go in your sin. Rather, your questions will be focused on how to show Him your love.

Your questions might be more like this, "Are taking drugs consistent with a life that loves God whole-heartedly? If I love God with all my heart, soul, and strength, will a divorce be pleasing to him? Will pornography help me to love God more? It is helpful to my relationship with the LORD to watch these sorts of movies? If I love God with all my heart, soul, and strength, how can my relationship with my girl-friend reflect it?

That's the way that God summons us to live. He calls us here to love Him completely. Jesus called this "the foremost commandment." When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus said, ...

> Matthew 22:37-38
> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mine. This is the great and foremost commandment.

Such a command is sprinkled throughout the Bible. Here are only a few examples. "What does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD's commandments and

His statutes" (Deut. 10:12). "Take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God" (Joshua 23:11). Such is the call of God upon your life. And so, I ask you, "Is this your life?" God doesn't want robotic followers. He doesn't want to intimidate people into submission. Rather, he wants us to love Him.

At this point, some may object and say, "But Steve, is that really how we are to live? It all sounds to me like that's radical Christianity and not normal Christianity." I heard someone say this week that "radical Christianity is normal Christianity." Consider the sayings of Christ, ...

> Matthew 16:24-26
> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
>
> Matthew 10:37-39
> He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.
>
> Matthew 19:23-24
> Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

To be sure, these are calls to live a radical life of undivided devotion to Jesus? But, are they abnormal? No. This is normal Christianity. Abraham left His father's house to follow the LORD (Heb. 11:8). Abraham was willing to offer Isaac to follow the LORD (Heb. 11:18). Moses forsake the treasures of Egypt for the sake of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). Prophets gave their life for God. Today, in persecuted lands, people give their lives for Christ. When Paul spoke about His life, he said, "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Leaving all behind and pursuing God is normal Christianity. Why would we do this? Why would we love God this way? The simple answer is because, He first loved us. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The incredible love of God, that would see us in our sin, enter this world as a baby and die in our place to solve our sin problem is a demonstration of overwhelming love to us. Our response is overwhelming love to Him and others. And all of life must flow from this. The apostle Paul said it this way, "and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:15).

And so, I call you this morning, church family to a whole-hearted love for Jesus Christ.

But, there is more here in Deuteronomy 6. We see in verse 6, that we are called to an internalization of God's word into our hearts. Look at verse 6, "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart." In other words, God's words should penetrate and abide in our hearts. We should think about His word. We should meditate upon His word. This is my second point. I'm calling this point, ...

2. Committed Meditating (verse 6).

That is, a diligence in thinking. Meditation is the process of thinking on a passage over and over and over again, until it's truths become a part of us. When Joshua was soon to take over for Moses, God told him, "this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8).

God's commandment to Joshua was to meditate on God's word constantly, so that obedience would flow and blessings would come. "How blessed is the man who meditates on God's law day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Do you know the blessing?

Regarding God's word, we ought to be like a cow. As many of you know, a cow has four stomachs. When a cows goes out into the field to graze, it eats the grass and the grass lands in the rumen, where it will begin its digestion. And then, the cow will go over and sit in the shade.

As the food in its stomach is digested a bit, it transfers over to the reticulum, which will regurgitate the food back again into the mouth of the cow, where the cow will chew the cud. After chewing, the bolus is re-swallowed and it travels to the third stomach, the omasum. Finally, the grass, which has been broken down arrives in the abomasum, where it is properly digested.

In dealing with the Scripture, we ought to be like cows. We should think over passages again and again and again. Not only does God tell us to do so, it is also good for your soul to do so. You will see new things. Your heart will rejoice in the wonderful things that you see in God's word (Ps. 119:18). Your obedience to God will flow from this. God will sanctify you through these things.

For instance, recently, our family has been working on memorizing Philippians. Right now, we are nearing the end of Philippians, chapter 3. This past Thursday, we are out as a family in the car. Redeeming our time, we were using it to work on our memorization. When we reached Philippians 3, verse 17, it became clear as we talked about it. It came about through a question, "What exactly does Paul mean when he says, 'follow my example'"? Does he merely mean that we should do the things that Paul does? Does it mean that we should act like Paul does? Does it mean that we should believe the same things that Paul does?

Well, upon meditating upon this passage, it became clear to us that Paul not only wants us to live the way that he lived, but also that he wants us to have the same sort of attitude that he has. When the passage is upon your mind, as it is upon mine, you can think in broad, general terms of the outline of the passage. He begins by talking about how he, himself, has no righteousness before God. Though, he might have reason to boast in the flesh. After all, he was a Jew, a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was religious. He was a zealous Pharisee, who walked perfectly according to the law. And yet, when it came to faith in Christ, he considered all of his righteous deeds as manure when it came to gaining righteousness before God. Instead, Paul knew that his righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ (verse 9).

And yet, Paul then continues on by talking about the tremendous effort that he made in following Christ. The great longing of his heart is found in verse 10, "that I may know Him." He longed to know Jesus. He worked to know Jesus. He "forgets what lies behind ... and reaches forward for the goal of the prize" (verse 14). Verse 15 speaks about the attitude that he has and that we all ought to have.

What sort of attitude is this? It's the attitude that totally finds our righteousness in Jesus Christ. So that by faith in Him, there is no lack in standing before God. Yet, it doesn't produce a laziness. Rather, it produces a zeal to press on to know God.

Such should be our heart in following Paul's example. On the one hand, there is absolutely no confidence placed upon the flesh. But, on the other hand, there is a zeal for pursuing after God.

This is the sort of thing that our family talked about in the car as we were riding down the road. The text was in our minds (because it was memorized). It was on our hearts. So, we were able to think about it. I believe that this process. is what Moses was talking about in Deuteronomy 6. 6:6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart."

Do you know anything about this? Are you constantly meditating upon the Scripture? If not, I believe that the issue is your affections. Psalm 119:97 says, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." If you love God's word, it will be a meditation for you. If you are finding joy in the cross of Christ, then you will love to meditate upon verses that tell of the forgiveness that is your sin the cross.

Think about the greatness of these verses: "God made Him, who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "And He, Himself, bore our sins in His body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24). "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of you flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Colossians 2:13). If you love the gospel, you will think on these sorts of things.

You think much about the things that you love. This past week was a great illustration of this. Our family has been looking to obtain a 7-foot spiral tube slide for our play set in our back yard. We found one on craigslist for a great price. Unfortunately, the entire play set went with the slide. So, we obtained for ourselves a complete play set. For those of you who have seen ours, you know that we don't need any more in our yard.

Anyway, SR had been particularly excited about the slide. He kept asking all day Friday, "Dad, can you take a break and start working on the slide?" It was all day long! Why was he asking about it so much? The slide was upon his heart. He was thinking much about it. Finally, I was able to put it up Friday evening after work. SR was looking forward to Saturday, when he could go down the slide "and get dizzy all day."

What is on your mind will be on your lips. This leads us to our next point, which comes in verse 7, "You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up." This verse is talking about constantly discussion taking place in your home. It's describing a diligent use of your time to teach your children in the ways of God.

God calls us to ...
3. Diligent Teaching (verse 7).

Moses gives 4 instances of when you should be teaching your children about the ways of God.

1. When you sit down.

> When do you sit down in your family? Dinner? Are these times filled with teaching and talking of God and His word?
>
> Several months ago, I noticed how trivial our dinner conversations were becoming. And so, we have begun to force the issue at dinner. We have brought a laptop computer over to a counter near our table. As soon as all of us are seated and served (in that moment of relative peace as all are beginning to eat), we have been listening to Chuck Colson's daily commentary. [1] It's usually about 5 minutes long. Afterwards, we discuss what was talked about. It has been very helpful to us in the training of our children, as the conversations at dinner speak about the application of God's word to our lives.

Moses also identifies another time when you ought to be instructing your children, ...

2. When you walk by the way.

> In ancient times, the people used to walk everywhere. The call here is to strategically use your travel time to teach your children. Now, today, we don't walk too many places. Instead, we drive. The call is the same: redeem your travel time. (I have good news for you: it's probably easier to teach your children as you drive than it is when you walk.) When I spoke to earlier of my family and our working to memorize Philippians, this took place in the car.

You can do this too. I know of families that review ways that they are thankful on their way to church.

Moses' third and fourth description of when you should teach comes in the next phrase, ...

3,4. When you lie down and when you rise up.

This is talking about in the evening. This is talking about in the morning. When you put your children to bed is an excellent time to talk with them about God. You can review with them the ways that God has been faithful to them that day. You can pray with them to be refreshed to serve Him in the morning.

When your children arise is an excellent time to talk with them about God. Teach them to give the first-fruits of their day to God.

Now, I don't think that God's heart is that there are no other times in which it would be good to instruct your children, except these four instances (sit in your house, walk by the way, lie down and rise up). No, the flavor here is that this is the sort of thing that ought to be going on all the time and at any opportunity possible. This is the heart of what we see in verses 8 and 9 (with my last point), ...

We are called to ...
4. Frequent Reading (verses 8-9).

Deuteronomy 6:8-9
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Here, Moses is talking about the priority of the word of God in all of your training. It's not merely what comes out of your mouth that's important. It's the environment in the home that you create.

Now, the Jews have taken these verses very literally. They have made for themselves something called "phylacteries" which are little capsules. Inside these little capsules they place little pieces of parchment on which Scripture is written. These phylacteries are then fastened by black leather straps to their foreheads. Still today, if you go to Israel, you can see these men with these funny black boxes

attached to their foreheads. They look ridiculous. They have also done the same with their hands. They have wrapped elaborate straps around their wrists, leading up to their hands, where they have attached some phylacteries as well.

You cannot fault these Jewish people for trying to keep this verse. The problem, however, is that they have missed the point. When Jesus condemned the Pharisees of His day, He said, "They do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments" (Matt. 23:5). They wanted everyone to know how righteous they were. The larger their phylacteries, the more verses of Scripture could be fit inside of their capsules. And the more Scripture that is inside denotes the way that they have kept the law of God more than others.

But, the point isn't that they should physically be on your foreheads. Rather, the point is that God's word should be first and foremost in your minds! God's Word ought to be the first thing you think about. God's Word ought to be the filter through which all the matters of life pass. God's Word ought to be your intimate friend. Instead, the Jews have relegated this to a mere matter of external obedience.

That's not the only thing that the Jews have continued to keep until this day. They have also kept verse 9, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." In many Jewish homes today, they have a little box called a "Mesusah," which they attach to the doorposts of their homes. Inside the little box are some folded parchment on which this passage of Scripture is written. Often, the Jews that go in and out of the home will touch the box with their finger and then kiss their finger. In essence, these little boxes have become phylacteries for the home. Mere decoration to let the world know that they are being faithful to God.

Now, it's not that such a practice is inherently wrong. It's OK to place such little boxes in your home, filled with Scripture. But, such a deed only begins to fulfill the spirit of verse 9. The idea is that God's word would saturate and penetrate your home. When people (even non-Christians) walk in your home, they ought to sense that God is worshiped in this home.

Perhaps there are plaques in your home, which have Scripture written on them. Perhaps there are pictures of missionaries on your refrigerator for whom you are praying. Perhaps there are Bibles lying around that are worn because of use.

Perhaps there are Christian magazines near the fireplace. Perhaps there is Christian music playing softly in the background. I don't know what your home is like. But, there ought to be a definite feel that God is worshiped in this place.

And so, I ask you this morning, "Were we to enter your home and apply the Shema to your home, how would we come out?" Verses 5 and 6 describe a love of God that is on the heart, loving God with all your heart (verse 5), taking God's word into your heart (verse 6). Verses 7 through 9 describe a love of God that is in the home, children are being taught (verse 7), and the aroma of the house proclaiming the gospel (verse 8-9). Are these things evident in your home.

At this point, I would like to recommend to you the practice of family worship. I'm talking about a time in which your family would gather in the home for a time of worship. Perhaps a song or two, reading God's word, and prayer. It doesn't need to be long. You don't have to be prepared to preach a sermon. Parents, simply a few words to make the Scriptures more easily understood will suffice.

If the children are out of the home, you can still have a time of family worship between husband and wife. You simply need to read the Scriptures together, discuss it a bit, and pray. If you are single and living with others, you can still do this as well with your roommates. Gather the home together for a time of reading and prayer in your home. Such a practice will change the whole atmosphere of the home.

I know that this takes place in many of your homes. And in this I rejoice. But, I know that this doesn't take place in many of your homes as well. Is family worship practiced in your home? In our home, there have been seasons of great consistency. As the children have gotten older (and more busy), it has been more difficult to do. This has especially been true this past month, as my oldest daughter has been out three times each week, with our need to transport her. And yet, it's important. We have had some consistency in family worship through these days (but not as much as we would like).

Times of family worship will only help to foster your diligent teaching of your children. I guarantee you that having a time of Family Worship will help you to speak more of God during other occasions. Parents, realize, that it is your responsibility to train your children in the ways of the Lord. "**You** shall teach them diligently to **your** sons and [**you**] 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 up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Don't expect someone else to do it. Sending your kids to Children's Church is helpful, but it doesn't fulfill your duty in these words. There is nothing wrong with Children's church. But, if you are trusting the teachers there to teach and educate your children in the ways of God, while not talking of the Lord constantly in your home, you are not fulfilling the spirit of this command.

Don't expect your Christian School to do it either. There is nothing wrong with Christian School. But, if you are trusting the teachers there to teach your children about God, while not taking the opportunities given to you, you are not fulfilling this command. The same is true for AWANA (or any other Christian education you supply for your children). Parents, you are responsible.

It's at this point that I want to make a huge application. It has to do with our Sunday evenings at Rock Valley Bible Church. Historically at Rock Valley Bible Church, we have broken up into small groups during the week into the homes. But, with the growing numbers of young families attending Rock Valley Bible Church, my burden pastorally has been growing to help you all in these matters with some practical teaching.

And so, beginning in two weeks, we will begin gathering right back here at Rockford Christian High School for "Family Night." During this time, we are going to show some parenting videos, in which Paul and Tedd Tripp give some very practical help in raising our children. The video series is entitled, "The Case for Kids."

Personally, I have never found any material more helpful to me in the raising of my children than the material that these men provide. They have written several books on the subject. Perhaps the most famous and most influential in my life is the book, "Shepherding a Child's Heart," by Tedd Tripp. The premise of the book is that is the heart of a child that we are after, not mere external obedience. And so, in matters of training and discipline, we ought to be aiming toward the heart. Following that, Tedd and his wife, Margy, have written a book entitled, "Instructing a Child's Heart." It's filled with practical instruction regarding how to get to the hearts of your children. Isn't it interesting that Deuteronomy 6 addresses the matters of the heart as priority.

The thing that I have found so helpful in these books is that the cross of Christ is front and center in their teaching of how to raise children. It's not merely do's and

don'ts, so as to create children who are intimidated into obeying, but who rebel when the authority is gone. Rather, they are cultivating a heart of love to God, which knows the forgiveness at the cross of Christ in failures.

Paul Tripp has written a practical book for raising teenagers entitled, "Age of Opportunity," which has been a help to me as well. One of Paul Tripp's close friends, John Younts has written a book entitled, "Everyday Talk," which is getting at the same thing. I recommend all of these books to you. It's amazing that through video, we will have the opportunity to bring these men to Rock Valley Bible Church.

I bring theses books up, because they have been a help to me and to Yvonne in the raising of our children. We aren't perfect by any means. We struggle with how we raise our children. In working through Deuteronomy 6 this past week, I have seen many areas in which I am lacking, and in which I need help. I need to hear the teaching on these videos.

Now, it's not that the families at Rock Valley Bible Church are falling apart. On the contrary, we are a church filled with many biblically-minded, God-focused, Christ-centered homes. But, we all should desire to excel still more. We all should realize the great need that we have for more instruction in this area. There are many of you who have a hunger for being and raising a godly family. But, such families don't merely happen passively. We need to be actively working at it. We need always to be encouraged. We always need reminders, because we sin and are forgetful and are always facing new challenges.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 13, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

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[1] Here's the link to Chuck Colson's daily commentaries: http://www.breakpoint.org/commentaries.