

Ducks in a Row

A Christ Centered Family [Deut 6:4-9]

In Jules Verne's (20,000 leagues under the sea) novel *The Mysterious Island*, he tells of five men who escape a Civil War prison camp by hijacking a hot air balloon. As they rise into the air, they realize the wind is carrying them over the ocean. Watching their homeland disappear on the horizon, they wonder how much longer the balloon can stay aloft.

As the hours pass and the surface of the ocean draws closer, the men decide they must cast overboard some of the weight, for they had no way to heat the air in the balloon. Shoes, overcoats, and weapons are reluctantly discarded, and the uncomfortable aviators feel their balloon rise. But only temporarily. Soon they find themselves dangerously close to the waves again, so they toss their food. Better to be high and hungry than drown on a full belly!

Unfortunately, this, too, is only a temporary solution, and the craft again threatens to lower the men into the sea. One man has an idea: they can tie the ropes that hold the passenger car and sit on those ropes. Then they can cut away the basket beneath them. As they sever the very thing they had been standing on, it drops into the ocean, and the balloon rises. Not a minute too soon, they spot land.

Eager to stand on terra firma again, the five jump into the water and swim to the island. They live, spared because they were able to discern the difference between what really was needed and what was not. The "necessities" they once thought they couldn't live without were the very weights that almost cost them their lives.

[Deut 6:4-9]

Your Faith is Personal (6:4-5)

5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

We find in Deuteronomy a familiar modern phrase, "love God" but an unfamiliar mandate in the Holy scriptures. Deuteronomy is the first book in the Torah to speak of loving God.

Interestingly, no one (not even the psalmists) ever declares that he or she loves Yahweh. This probably explains why Peter will say he loves Jesus in the sense of Phileo, but he will not claim agapao. To sing sounds about loving God without any word of obedience only leads to emptiness and vanity.

In order to love the Lord, we must first personally **receive** the love of the Father through Jesus Christ our Savior. 1 John 4:19 says, “**We love because He first loved us.**” This love is a love that knows no boundary or has not end. This love is not a love that is premediated based upon our acceptance.

Rather, while we were still sinners (enemies/ terrorists), **God proved His love for us... in that Christ Jesus died for us” Romans 5:8)**

To love God you must first receive the love of God. His love is for all and it is for you.

Not only must you receive love but you must now **demonstrate love to God. To “love” in Hebrew thought means to “act lovingly” = to demonstrate.**

You shall love, with your heart, with your soul, with your might. Notice how the scriptures direct our attention and focus. God does not command us to love him with all our Strength-soul-mind. No, the divine order matters! We are called to love Him with our heart then soul then mind.

Now the Scriptures call us to radically reorganize our live so that we Love him with all our heart –soul – and strength.

Heart

In Hebrew, “heart” usually refers to the interior of the body, conceived of as the seat of thought, intention, and feeling (JPS). The Lord does not call us to mindless worship, mediation, or obedience. Christ does not call you to empty your mind. Rather, to faithfully love Christ leads to a commitment to engage your mind for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Think deeply and love deeply!

Soul

In Hebrew, “soul” refers to the seat of the emotions, passions, and desires (JPS). Heart + Soul refers to the totality of ones thoughts, feelings, intentions, and desires.

God calls us to demonstrate our love and obedience not devoid of emotion but with our emotions. The worship of the Father should do something to your emotions. Worship should be a powerful demonstration of our emotional commitment to Jesus

We must be careful not to go beyond what is written in the Bible. God does not want to change your personality. We all bring our God given personalities into worship and into our Love of Jesus. If you are emotional and you demonstrate this at sporting events by all means do not check your emotions at the door. If you are stoic, God is not calling you to fake emotions for His sake.

Love deeply and feel greatly

Might

That is, exceedingly (JPS). = to “very very much.”

Here its meaning is best captures by a word like “resources,” which includes physical strength, but also economic or social strength, and it may extend to physical things an Israelite owned: tools, livestock, a house, and the like.

Priorities start in the heart. Love the Lord heart+ soul+ strength = the totality of my being.

Your Faith is Familial (6:6-7)

7 **Repeat** them to your **children**. **Talk** about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Not only is faith in Jesus Christ personal it is integral to our families. So how do we honor Christ in our families and how do we set priorities in a way that our families are radically transformed for the Gospel?

Parents you are the leaders of your house. You are the thermostat of the home. A thermometer gages the temperature of the room or a house, a thermostat sets the temperature of the home.

Do not let your kids dictate your agenda, schedule, purpose, or identity.

Even more important, do not let your kids dictate the spiritual climate of the home. Be the leaders that God has called and empower you to be!

Parents –Dad’s your family needs to see and hear you pray. They need to see you with the Word of God. Lead for God’s glory!

The house of worship begins at home. It begins at your home!

Covenant faith is to be a family matter, demonstrated by the indoctrination of children and the spontaneous discussion of the issue with the members of one’s household (NIV).

Build regular (repeat) patterns of worship in the home. Not necessarily “bible study” but times that are centered around Jesus.

Make/allow time for spontaneous discussion about Jesus.

The Love of Yahweh should transform your family

Your family needs to know and hear that you love them. Take time this week to let everyone that is close to you that you love them.

During one memorable at-bat the spring of my son's first baseball season, he repeatedly hit the tee instead of the ball. And it was obvious what the problem was. He wasn't keeping his eye on the ball; he was looking right at me instead. He was unable to get a base hit until finally I stepped out of sight.

We joked about that the rest of the season, but what the incident shows is the power of fatherly approval. My son wanted me to take pleasure in his accomplishment even before he accomplished it.

I observed the same desire at work the time he caught a pop fly. Before he threw the ball over to the first base to complete the double-play, he glanced over his shoulder to make sure I'd seen his

catch.

In a way, I'm touched that my son wants me to take pleasure in his success. But I'm also awestruck by my responsibility as a father. A **father's love means almost everything to a child**. It establishes his or her identity. It brings peace, security, and joy.

If a father's affection matters so much, then it had better be the kind of affection that is just as strong after a strikeout as it is after a grand slam. —Phillip Ryken (President Wheaton College)

Your family needs to know that you love Jesus. The love of Christ allows me to love others.

Priorities: Lead + Worship + Love

Your Faith is Public (6:4-5)

8 Bind them as a sign on your **hand** and let them serve as a symbol on your **forehead**; 9 inscribe them on the **doorposts** of your house and on your gates.

Clearly, if something is tied on your hand + forehead + and doorposts you can not hide it. Your faith should be evident to all. Notice what is not said: **megaphone**. If your faith is not obvious you might now love Christ like you think.

You can literally fulfill this command and miss the heart of Christ.

Jer 31 ³³ “Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the LORD’s declaration. “I will put My teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. ³⁴ No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “For I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin.”

Those who claim to be religious tend to be subject to two temptations: either to treat spirituality as primarily interior and private, or to treat it as a matter of external performance. True love for Christ is rooted in the heart, but it is demonstrated in live, specifically a passion to speak of one’s faith in the context of the family and to declare one’s allegiance publically to the world.

Here’s the truth: your family knows if your public faith display is the same faith you model in the home. Public faith is an exercise in integrity.



My Response to the Gospel

Personal

Family

Public



Notes

Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

Focus your attention and heed the following teaching (JPS)

5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Look at the order: Love – heart:soul:strength

Love

Hebrew love refers to covenant commitment demonstrated in actions that seek the well-being and pleasure of one's covenant partners (NIV)

The love of God in Deuteronomy is not only an emotional attachment to Him, but something that expresses itself in action (JPS).

This is in keeping with the fact that Hebrew verbs for feelings sometimes refer as well to the actions that result from them (JPS).

Such love means “act lovingly.”

Deuteronomy is the first book in the Torah to speak of loving God.

Interestingly, no one (not even the psalmists) ever declares that he or she loves Yahweh. This probably explains why Peter will say he loves Jesus in the sense of Phileo, but he will not claim agapao.

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6 Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day.

7 Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.

Impress: literally repeat (JPS)

The house of worship begins at home.

Covenant faith is to be a family matter, demonstrated by the indoctrination of children and the spontaneous discussion of the issue with the members of one’s household (NIV).

8 Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; 9 inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

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Application

Commitment to Christ is a personal matter- family matter- and public matter.

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