

# “In a Nut Shell”

## Sermon Reflection Questions July 26, 2009

### Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Unlocking the Old Testament

If you took a poll of Christians and asked what was the most popular or at least the most well known scripture you would probably see that John 3:16 would come to the top of the list. John 3:16 is the whole of the New Testament in a nut shell. If you asked Jewish people what was their favorite passage or their most well known passage, they would answer Deuteronomy 6:4-5, or as they will call it “the *Shema*”. It is also in a nutshell the core of the faith as understood prior to Jesus Christ. It gives a quick and general statement about who God is and what we are supposed to do as a response.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

1. The context of this passage is that the Israelites are preparing to go from the wilderness, in which they have been traveling for years, into the Promised Land. How does God set the stage (in Deut 6:1-3) for why His instruction (in Deut 6:4-5) will be beneficial to the people?

2. Compare Deuteronomy 6:4 in the following translations:

NRSV: Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone

NIV: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

a. What differences are there in the two translations and how does it affect the meaning?

b. From the message on Sunday or your own understanding what is the meaning of the text?

3. We are told in verse 5 that because of whom God is we are called to love God with all of our heart, soul and strength. I said in the message that the Jewish understanding of these things was not our understanding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century western culture. I said their understanding of heart was more in line with what we would associate with the mind; it is our thinking and our thought process. Soul is more in line with what we would understand as heart, it is our passions, our longings, our desires. And strength is easier to understand, it is our time and energy. Given this understanding:

a. What is God’s desire for us when He says we are to love God with our heart? What would it look like for you to take that more seriously?

b. What is God’s desire for us when He says we are to love God with our soul? What would it look like for you to take that more seriously?

c. What is God’s desire for us when He says we are to love God with our strength? What would it look like for you to take that more seriously?

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4. In Deuteronomy 5 Moses is reminding the people of the 10 commandments that had given back in Exodus 20. Many people will see Deuteronomy 6:4-5 as the distillation of all of the commandments. Look over the 10 commandments and try to articulate how each commandment is, at its fundamental level, loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

5. When Jesus talks about the greatest commandment (in Matthew 22:34-40) He adds the second commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. Why did Jesus have to add that, is it not included in the commandment to love God?

6. The final instruction that God gives in the passage is to keep these commandments close to us and teach these things to our children (which may not only mean our actual children, but the children who are in the community of faith).

a. What strategies could you employ to keep this passage (or the corresponding New Testament passage Matthew 22-34-40) in the forefront of your mind and action.

b. How can you take a greater role in teaching these to our children in the church (or younger believers in the faith)?