**A Sticky Shift**

**Today we celebrate the decision of two of our young people to follow Christ in the ordinance of Baptism. It is an exciting time of commitment and faith. During times such as this I am often drawn back in my mind to the time that I made my commitment to God. I can remember the excitement the nervousness, and the strong desire to really follow Christ. I remember feeling like a super Christian, clinging strong to the idea that I would now live perfectly for my Lord and savior. Many people would say that today is the beginning of their spiritual walk with Christ, but I would tell you it is not. Your walks go back further than that. All the way back to when you were first introduced in this world. It started with your parents and their commitment to God. It continued with your dedication to God. It continued when the members of the church promised to help you along the way. It continued as you went to mission friends or Sunday school or GAs. Each of those teachers and leaders helped you with every new step. Now you have decided to commit to a personal relationship with God. We as your church family celebrate this milestone with you today because we love you. Today is a new beginning for your relationship with God. You will face times when this is hard and times when it is wonderful but no matter what you experience as you move forward know that these people, your church, your family, are here to support you along the way. I chose todays verse because I believe that it expresses in the simplest way what you are committing to do as a follower of Christ. I think too often as Christians we get to the point of salvation and we have a tendency to say ok I’m good. When we really should be saying ok Lord what do you want me to do now? Today I am going to talk about the answer to this question. But not just for you two. You see this question also extends to your church family and your parents. You see we are still all a part of your walk. So we must each understand our role in answering this question.**

 **In my mind, we begin to find our answers in today’s scripture. The text of Matthew 22:34-40 is referred to as the greatest commandment. It is one of a few texts that are found in Matthew, Mark And Luke. The text itself is the record of another confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. A quick look at the text shows us that Jesus has just silenced the Sadducees and is now being questioned by the Pharisees in the hope that they can trap him into saying something that would be incriminating enough to have him arrested. Instead, Jesus like he always does answers the question in a way that conveys a strong message without giving them an opportunity to catch him. Specifically, he quotes from the Shema, a part of the Torah and part of the scripture that all of these men would have known and respected. Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In fact the opening statement of the Shema’ “ Hear, Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” is even included in the text during Mark’s account of this. The Shema was something that every devoted Jew would recite daily. I have used it before when talking about sticky faith so todays verse may have a part that sounds familiar and its here I would like to focus:**

**Verses 37-40**

**37Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23910a)**] 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23912b)**] 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”**

**So why did Jesus do this and what does it mean?**

**In his commentary, Donald Hagner suggests the two love commandments belong together, covering your relationship with God and your relationship with others. In neither case is love understood as the emotion we assign to the word today. Love for one’s neighbor means acting toward others with their good, their well-being, their fulfillment, as the primary motivation and goal of what we do. Such love is constant and takes no regard of the perceived merit or worth of the other person. Love of God, on the other hand, is to be understood as a matter of reverence, commitment, and obedience. It is at once an acknowledgment of his identity as Creator and Redeemer and a reflection of that reality in how order our lives.**

**In simple terms God calls us to be completely devoted to him. Not just in word but in everything we do in our life. To drive this idea home Jesus replaces the Shema word “strength” with the word mind. With this simple shift Jesus called us to commit every part of our life, spirit, and thought to him. That may seem a bit overwhelming but I am here to suggest how we work toward achieving that. Why do I say WE, because as I said before it takes, as those at sticky faith would suggest, all of us for this to happen for these two young ladies. I would like to address how we do this by starting with a story.**

 **Many of you may know that for a long time I coached. The foundation of everything I coached came from a man named Dan Gable. Gable is considered to be the single greatest US wrestler of all time. From the beginning of his high school career until the last match of his senior year of college he went undefeated. In that last match he was winning 1-0 up and until right at the end. At that point his opponent hit what is known as a gazone. It is a move based off a small shift of the feet and then a quick rotation. Gable lost that national title match 2-1. It shaped his coaching career that followed. Everything he taught his wrestlers worked of that basic shift. I taught this for years and slowly I began to realize it was more than a move it was a way of changing entire programs. I took this to my years coaching Cross Country. I found success by shifting to where I wanted the program to go not trying to change everything at once. You don’t succeed by trying to make big movements all at once, you move forward in small increments. This really applies to all aspects of our lives including how we live for God.**

 **So what does mean for each of us:**

**To you ladies, it means taking small steps. Start with praying daily. Not big long prayers but small prayers. Get in the habit of talking with God. You can ask him questions, tell him about your day. Reading your bible. Shift from trying chapters at a time, to something as small as the memory verses you see each week at Sunday school. Instead of trying to go on a big mission trip try being nice to some one at school. These small steps will lead to big changes.**

**To you their church family, we are to continue our shift to being a one-table family. You must be a part of our young peoples lives. Show them how a community of love works. Remember, relationships happen one encounter at a time. Relationships keep young people connected to their church and therefore their faith. Find ways to make that happen. Find ways to spend time with them. Find ways to support them. Find ways to show them that you care about them. For Andy and me, it means finding ways to support and facilitate each of you to be in the process of discipling the young people of our church.**

**Finally to our parents, you have the hardest job of all. That is because the sticky faith studies show that you are still the number one influence in your children’s faith. Think about how we learn and this makes since. How did these young ladies learn how to talk? By hearing you. Did they start with big words? No they started with the small words that they heard often. So what are they learning about their faith from you. What do they see when it comes to the importance of being at church? What do they see from you in worship? What do they see when it comes to studying scripture? What do they see when it comes to praying? You see like Hagner said about our text today Jesus was saying that our life is what shows the love he calls for. It’s about what we do not what we say. It’s about what is most important to us. It is about how we prioritize our lives everyday. If you are not where you think you need to be then we need to start shifting. Find a small way to work in a family prayer each day. Find a way to begin a ritual of reading scripture. Work n a short devotion each day. Or if you are already doing one move to where they can see you doing it. During worship find a way to actively worship with your young people. That may mean singing together, that may mean holding hands during worship prayers. It may even mean helping our younger members to work through their worship notes. It will be these small things that continue to work our lives toward the kind of love Jesus called us to have. If you remember the second part of the Shema that he was referencing called the people to make sure that they showed their children in everything that they did. So the commandment that Jesus says is the most important of all is paired with the idea that we as adults and parents are called to disciple our young people. In his book *Shift* Brian Haynes says that God knew that our young people would need a model of what loving God looks like. God structured the generations so that these young people could learn from their families how to love God with all their hearts, all their souls, and all their minds. How awesome would it be if all children grew up in homes where the regularly witnessed passionate love for Christ in spite of the circumstances of life? Hayes says that authenticity must be the core value. You see the Shema first calls the parents to have the commands on their hearts before you can teach children. Find those small shifts in your lives to make this happen. Parents we must also have the courage to adjust our lives. Even when the shifts we make seem difficult. You must ask yourself everyday how am I intentionally leading my child’s spiritual life?**

 **Today as we celebrate the commitment of these young people let us not forget each of our callings. Let us continue to make shifts in our own relationship with God so that we can love him as Christ commanded us in Matthew 22. Help us with these shifts to show and teach our children how important it is to love their lord and savior and those around them. And by doing that help them develop a passionate love for Christ that Sticks.**