

## **Weird: Relationships and Values**

Biblical Text: Deuteronomy 6:1-12

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Craig Groeschel's book, "WEIRD," looks at our overcommitted, debt-ridden, divorce-prone lives and simply says, "**Normal isn't working.**"<sup>1</sup> I agree.

Problem is, most of us don't want to go overboard with this whole religion thing. We'd rather be "normal" than have others label us as "**weird.**"

Look around. Who do you see? "*Normal*" people, right? Same thing when we look at our families. Well, OK, maybe not all our family members are normal! Take my brother - he is by his own admission a "**gun-totin' redneck**" - who refuses to fix the bullet hole he accidentally shot in his own pickup door because he thinks it adds character. I'm sorry - that **is** weird!

But have you ever wondered what God sees? Are we any different from those who aren't followers of Jesus? We spend our time and our money like "normal" people. We have the same problems in our marriages, and with our kids, as the people around us. Christians just don't have a great track record regarding ethics, honesty and morality. So much for being "**normal.**"

The dictionary says weird is an adjective meaning "**strange; bizarre; eccentric.**" You are thinking, "**I knew that.**" But here's something I didn't know. Weird has another meaning. In Middle English, of Scots origin, "weird" meant, "**having the power to control or alter outcomes.**" I believe "**getting weird**" can alter the outcomes of your life.

That's probably not what Highlanders meant when they said, "**Aye, laddie. He's got the weirding way...**" But even so - being weird can be a good thing.

So, last week, I asked us to consider four critical areas of our daily lives - and imagine what it would feel like to live in such a way that:

- **Our time is our own, and spent in ways that matter.**
- **We're not drowning in debt, or failing to enjoy what we have.**
- **Our relationships are full of intimacy and harmony.**
- **Our values are not compromised every day.**

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<sup>1</sup> Groeschel, Craig. WEIRD: Because Normal Isn't Working, Copyright © 2011. Zondervan Press.

I believe incredible things can happen when we rethink our priorities! So, last week, I talked about **“getting weird” about our time and money**. The full message is available on our website or in the Church office.

**TIME:** I asked us to look at this jar of marbles and said, *“We’re all losing our marbles. How will we spend them?”*<sup>2</sup> It’s time to re-**THINK** our use of time.

I asked us to consider at least once a week “unplugging” from everything except each other. I’m doing that this year on vacation - first time ever.

I asked us to make a commitment to keep a Sabbath – dedicating one day a week to worship God and to rest our bodies.

**MONEY:** I asked us to follow a 4-step financial plan, and avoid the mistakes “normal people” make - the ones we made when we were younger:

**#1) Make a plan (aka budget.)** Spend less than you make, every month.

**#2) Save some money.** Have an emergency fund and savings in case the unexpected happens. Just as I said that at our Contemporary Service last week the lights went off. I couldn’t have planned a better illustration.

**#3) Get out of debt.** Postpone gratification. Cut up your cards. Pay cash. Pay it off. Do it over time. It’s the only way I know to get **truly free**.

**#4) (The hardest for us.) Honor God.** Give God 10% of all you receive. It is the wisest investment you’ll ever make. You can’t out-give God. I promise.

**Here’s the deal** – if you want to settle for **“normal”** life - by all means feel free to keep doing what everyone else is doing, spending your time and money like everyone else is, treating your relationships like the majority of people do, and living out of the same set of values as everyone else. You’ll achieve “normal” outcomes - ***you’ll be as messed up as everybody else!***

So today I want to talk plainly about **our Relationships and our Values**.

If Ann thought that *money and time* was a "hot topic" that made me sound “preachy” last week – then this message might be radioactive!

Marriage isn’t easy. Talking honestly about true intimacy and the topic of sex is even harder. Parenting isn’t easy either - never has been. Talking about values, ethics and morality always makes us comfortable.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Groeschel, Craig. WEIRD: Because Normal Isn't Working, (p. 46-48).

Well, I'm going to talk about all those things this morning, so **"buckle up."**

I want to start out with two verses in our text from Deuteronomy 6:4-5

***<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. <sup>5</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.***<sup>3</sup>

If you want to be a better husband or wife, or parent or grandparent, or just a better human being, start with your relationship with God!

What's that have to do with marriage? Listen to Craig Groeschel: *"Many believe that to really be fulfilled... ..you have to meet "the one" - your "eHarmony compatibility exact-match" partner - the one great love of a lifetime. Sounds good ... and it is true. Just not in the way most of us think."*<sup>4</sup> Only God is God.

There is only one perfect being – and you aren't it. Neither is your wife or husband or partner or boyfriend or girlfriend or fiancé. Pedestals aren't designed for human beings. We all fall off, or fail to live up to perfection.

At its best, **Marriage is incredibly hard.** The divorce rate for first marriages is 41%, second and third marriages fail at 60% and 73%.<sup>5</sup> The rate for Christians isn't better.<sup>6</sup> There is a 0% correlation with the recent Supreme Court decision about DOMA and federal benefits, no matter what else you hear. The issues in marriage are about how we live in our relationships.

Ann and I know something about divorce. We both once were part of the 41%. Thank God, we have defied the statistics for nearly 35 years! I give Ann a lot of the credit. But we have learned some things together.

**First**, faith in God is no guarantee, but if it is real, it gives you somewhere to turn for help and forgiveness, which we all need. Some more than others!

**Second**, we have learned to resist the temptation to judge others by their actions, and judge ourselves by our intentions. In order have a different kind of marriage, you've got to close the gap between intentions and actions, and assume positive intent, lighten up on the guilt, and learn to forgive.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-5. New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © 1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit. Groeschel, Craig. *WEIRD: Because Normal Isn't Working*, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Key Statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth." February 27, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, found that Christians have an overall divorce rate of 42%.

**Third**, love needs time. I ask couples who come to see me, *“When did you last go out, just the two of you, or have some private time away?”* If they answer in any way that begins, *“We took the kids...”* I know there’s trouble.

**Fourth**, most of us are just insecure. We crave affirmation, especially from those who are closest to us. We need to hear, whatever we see when we look in the mirror, *“You look good to me.”* A friend of mine’s wife asked him, *“Do these jeans make me look fat?”* He said, *“No baby, but you make those jeans look fat.”* Not good. Don’t do that. Build one another up!

**Fifth**, I want to talk directly about **intimacy and sex** - tough to do in Church. Some of you will be offended that I even said the word “sex” in Church. But someone better talk about it. Sex permeates our “normal” culture.

Pornography, especially for men, is a national addiction. Advertising and film portray sex in a way that has little resemblance to reality. So do steamy romance novels, so we fantasize about *“love like that.”* Cut it out. I mean it.

I want to give you some intimacy advice from Crosby, Stills, and Nash that they probably didn’t intend - *“Love the one you're with.”*<sup>7</sup> I mean it. Invest all your romantic attention in your spouse. It will pay great dividends.

If you’re married, those steps will help. If you’re not, don’t settle for less than that. Weird? Probably. Out of step? Likely. But good. Really good.

Likewise, **parenting has never been easy**. It is more difficult in the over-committed, constantly-wired, culturally-influenced world where we live. We hear a lot about “family values.” I believe in those. But listen - rhetoric about “family values” is not the same as valuing and loving your family.

The best way to love is what we learn from God. And God’s love makes a difference in families of every description. I’ve seen a variety of families and parenting styles. Traditional families with dad or mom or both as “breadwinner.” Single-parent families where the mom or the dad has to shoulder all the responsibility of raising their children. Families that combined races, through adoption or the parents’ ethnicity. Blended, like ours, that could give the Brady Bunch a run for their money.

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<sup>7</sup> “Love the One You're With” is a 1970 hit by rocker Stephen Stills. The first release was from his solo debut Stephen Stills, it peaked at No. 14 in the Billboard Hot 100, and has been covered and recorded by many.

No matter how diverse a family appears from the outside, almost every parent struggles with the same core issues about how to raise their children. If you ask most parents what they want for their kids, you'd get some variation of the following statement: *"I just want them to be happy."*

That's not a bad wish. In fact, it's a good one. If that works out, you might be pretty happy, too. That's "normal." But if our kids are successful in every normal way, they can still miss out on what really matters. Jesus said, *"What good is it to gain the whole world, and lose your soul?" (Luke 9: 25)*

**So listen closely to our text from Deuteronomy 6:**

***<sup>6</sup> Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.***

***<sup>7</sup> Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>***

This is PhD level advice about how to impart God's truth and values to our children. It should rank higher than a perfect score on the spelling test, scoring two goals in a soccer game, or playing first chair flute. But it often doesn't. You want to do something of significance for your kids? Let them see God at work in your lives. Weird? Definitely. Worth it? Eternally.

**Finally, I want to talk briefly about ethics** - another hard topic. Cheating on taxes and insurance claims is commonplace. Road rage is commonplace too. Racism and prejudice are real. Workplace ethics are not pure either. And we lie. We do. Clearly, it's time to stop settling for "normal."

The "conventional wisdom says: *"fake it 'til you make it."* "Normal" people apply this same "wisdom" to their faith, going through the motions of what passes for Christianity, without ever really surrendering their daily life, their work, their words, their relationships, their marriage, their parenting to God.

**Don't do that.** Make a decision to leave the broad path. Take the narrow road. Your journey may seem weird to others, but your destination will be infinitely better than settling-for-normal.

Don't leave here today the same as when you came. **Get weird.** Let's pray.

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<sup>8</sup> Op. Cit. Deuteronomy 6:6-7. New Revised Standard Version.