

What Does That Mean?: Shema

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Introduction:

Good morning, good morning, good morning New Hope! It is so good to be with you all this morning. Thank you, Hannah, for that intro. The last time I was at New Hope you all were in a different building, so I'm grateful that Kellie sent directions, or I would be somewhere else this morning. I tend to be a little directionally challenged, I'm grateful for directions whenever I can get them.

A little bit more about me: I love, love, love my puppy Asher who is 11 months old and super cute, we both like long walks and watching *Murder She Wrote*. I've lived in Portland for a little over 10 years, and over the course of that time I'm fallen in love with the Rose City. Although I love Portland, and what about to say may offend some of you. I'm a die-hard Laker fan. I know you all probably think less of me now, but that's okay, scripture says that we are to love our enemies.



I graduated from Multnomah Seminary in 2010 and since then I've had several jobs, In 2019, God made it clear to me through prayer and scripture that I was to leave my then-job that I loved with Portland Rescue Mission, and seek His face through prayer for the next 40 days about what was next. I felt strongly that I wasn't supposed to look for job during that time, but I was just supposed to be with God listening to what He had to say to me.

That was hard to do—I hadn't realized just how busy and hard of hearing I'd become. Now, I never set out to work for church or be a pastor even though I went to seminary. However, within those 40 days, Cedar Mill reached out to me and meet me where I was; from there we entered into relationship. By the end of those 40 days, I was asked to join their staff team and God made it clear that that was the next step for me.

I share all of that because its one of the reason today's topic is so near and dear to my heart. Hearing God can be hard, or maybe I'm the only one who feels that way. Hearing God becomes a bit more challenging when we start reflecting on the deeper meaning of what it means to hear/listen, which is what we're going to do this morning.

Background & Context

We're going to focus on the meaning of the Hebrew word *Shema*. Say that with me: *Shema*...one more time, *Shema*. Very Good!

Shema means to hear/listen; to focus on or pay attention to, and respond in obedience. So, hearing becomes much more complex than just sound waves entering our ears.

Now more than ever it is important that we keep our ears and hearts attuned/responsive to God, so that as His people we can accurately reflect who He is to a city and to a world that is crying out for healing and hope. Without fixing our ears and hearts on Him we can't seek the good of our city or be Salt & Light wherever God places us.

One of the most important and difficult things God has charged us with in this season is to hear Him, and to hear one another. This is a challenge that God's people have always had to navigate, so what we're dealing with now, while new to us is not new to God's.

We see this throughout scripture, but this morning we're going to take a look at Deuteronomy 6:3-9. Specifically, verses 4 and 5 are known as *The Shema*, which is a prayer that Jewish people have prayed through the ages. The prayer gets its name because the first word of the prayer is *Hear*.

But before we read the scripture let me give you some context. In the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy, Israel was once again on the edge of the promised land. They were encamped across the Jordan River, not far from the Canaanite city of Jericho. And Here Moses reviewed the Lord's covenant and laws with the new generation.

Moses was calling the people to sit up and take notes on what he was about to say because of how important it was. In fact, Jesus would later call it "*the greatest and most important command*" (Matthew 22:37-39). Moses said, Listen, Israel: *The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). It was vital that the people get this right because if the Israelites were going to survive and thrive in the promised land, the family unit would have to become the primary place where faith in and love for the Lord was modeled and transferred. Parents are to teach God's commandments and statutes regularly to their children in the everyday events of life (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:3-9)

Sometimes when I picture Moses with the Israelites, I get the visual in my brain of the old Verizon commercials: of the guys in random places asking "*Can you hear me now?*" He does this because he needs a response to confirm that whoever is on the other end of that line has actually heard him.

In Deuteronomy the people showed that they had heard God by responding in 5 ways:

1. Love
2. Teach
3. Talk
4. Bind
5. Write

And Moses meant this literally.

But it seems there are four things that keep us from hearing/responding to God:

Busyness

Busyness does not equal fruitfulness. Whenever I think of busyness I often come back to Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42 We have heard it before: Martha is busy serving while Mary can be found listening. Jesus isn't shaming Martha for doing, after all it says in James that we are to not just be hearers of the word but doers also. So, Jesus is reminding Martha, and us, that serving comes from listening and being with Jesus first. After all, if we haven't heard from God how will we know how to serve?

Disunity

Disunity disrupts peace, and by peace, I mean *shalom* the kind of peace that leads to wholeness. The opposite of peace is anxiety and chaos. We know that when we're anxious and things are chaotic. It gets harder to hear the Lord above the noise. This is why it's so important to strive for unity as Paul says in Ephesians 4:1-3:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Because at the end of the day, it's not about whether or not you vote Democrat or Republican, or if you do or don't believe in Critical Race theory. At the end of the day, it has to be about the person of Jesus, and what He's asked His people to do: To love Him, to love one another, and our neighbor, and to walk in a manner worthy of the calling. If we continue to live in disunity, hearing God will become harder and harder

Pride

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before the fall. (Proverbs 16:18) Do you need Jesus? Yes, we all need Jesus. None of us has perfected anything, none of us knows everything. It's precisely when we start to think that we do that we stop receiving instruction and wisdom from the Lord.

Fear

Remember Peter walking on water? It was his fear that caused him to stop listening to and focusing on Jesus—and that was when he started to sink.

In some respects, overcoming these four things may seem impossible. But here's the thing we need to remember, and can be certain of: *Jesus is everything*...say that with me, JESUS IS EVERYTHING! and He has given us the power of the Holy Spirit that equips us to hear and do all for His Kingdom Glory. In those moments that will most certainly come—those moments of doubt, frustration, fatigue, fear, and conflict—Remember that the Father loves you, and that He is with you. He has fought for you and already won.

Application:

Ask yourself: **Where have busyness, disunity, pride and fear crept into your life and kept you from responding in obedience to God?** When I ask myself that question, there are many, many things that come to mind. Many things I'm wrestling with in this season.

I want to challenge you to intentionally spend time with God this week, listening to Him and what He has to say to you. And if you're brave enough, act on what He says. Remember—you don't have to do this alone. You are part of a loving community here at New Hope. Invite someone to explore these questions with you and to hold you accountable to God's message to you.