

Shema (Hear)

By Matthew Day

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV)

In Mark 12:29 we learn that hearing is the first part of the greatest commandment. It is a simple command, but not one to be neglected. Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing. We cannot trust in Him until we hear His promises. We cannot obey Him until we hear His commands.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27 ESV)

We are called to be disciples, or followers, of Yeshua. The first step in the path of discipleship is hearing our Master's voice. To hear we must listen and be aware. Yeshua commands us to remain awake in Mark 13:37 and this is repeated in 1 Thessalonians 5:6.

But what does this mean? Let's look at a few examples from real life. I'm working for the National Weather Service as a student employee. One of the things I have done is shadow the other forecasters. During severe weather there is always someone on radar looking for severe storms and tornadoes. He is a kind of watchman. It is his job to issue warnings so that the public knows to take cover. If he sleeps on the job, people get hurt.

We are also watchmen. We are to keep a watch out for sin—both in our own lives and the lives of others. When we fall asleep and become used to sin, people get hurt. There's a saying: The best way to cook a frog is to turn the heat up slowly. The best way to cause a believer to fall is to lull them to sleep.

And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:40-41 ESV)

Temptation preys on sleeping believers. I can remember many times when I would get caught up in playing and before I knew it, I would be doing something dangerous. A quick wake up call from Dad brought me back to reality. Occasionally, God has to give us a wake up call.

One mistake that we often make is we will focus on one thing and ignore the rest. I'm learning to drive. One of the most important rules of driving is that you must remain alert and aware of your surroundings (something I am still working on). Look left, look right, look ahead, look back. You cannot focus on any single object. Focusing on one area will cause you to miss things—things that could potentially be dangerous. This applies to our spiritual lives as well. If we focus all our attention on one end time prophecy, we will miss something. If we focus all our energy on one area of struggle, other temptations will creep in.

Frank Peretti wrote a fiction book called Prophet (I recommend it if you haven't read it) which deals with the distractions of the world. In this book there is a part where the main character sees a vision in a shopping mall of a vortex swallowing everything up. But to his amazement, the people didn't seem to notice. In fact, the bigger the vortex got, the more the people immersed themselves in shopping. They blinded themselves to reality. The world wants to keep us busy—to distract us from the things that really matter, so that by the time we realize that we are falling it is too late.

We miss good things too if we aren't awake. In C.S. Lewis' The Last Battle there is a scene in which a group of dwarfs are huddled together in the middle of new Narnia. But they didn't know the beauty of the land around them because they had their eyes closed. They believed that they were stuck inside a dark stable. When we dwell on the dark areas of our life we miss the blessings that God sets before us. In one of his songs, Steven Curtis Chapman used the example of

“playing game boy in the middle of the grand canyon....wake up and see the beauty.”

How do we stay awake? By walking forward. Read the Word. Pray. Learn. Grow. It is when we stop moving forward—when we stop making an effort to grow close to God—that we fall away. There is no neutral, no stopping. We move forward or backward, so the only way to keep from moving backward is to walk forward.

We have to actively seek. I met my friend Anthony because I saw an opportunity and seized it. Anthony was at the bottom of the dorms playing hymns on the piano. I can't remember why I was down there. Anyway, I saw a common interest between us (playing the piano) and decided to introduce myself to him. Most of my college friends, including my roommate next semester, I met through Anthony. I would have missed out on a lot had I not noticed that potential friend sitting at the piano playing hymns.

Be awake in little things. For example, notice when your mom cuts her hair or when your brother needs your help. Pay attention to your teachers and parents and watch how they do things. Watch how they teach or how they drive or how they cook. I didn't and I wish I had. Learn to hear.

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