

Devotion: Listen

Imagine a father who tells his son, "Don't touch the hot stove; you'll burn yourself." The son hears his father's words but, curious and distracted, he reaches out and touches the stove anyway. Predictably, he burns his hand and runs back to his father in tears. The father gently asks, "Why didn't you listen to me?"

We often find ourselves in the son's shoes. We hear advice, guidance, or warnings, but sometimes we don't truly *listen*—we don't let those words influence our actions.

Sometimes, we do the same with God's wisdom from Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament, we read "Hear" or "Listen" and we think, "cool I get it", but never put into practice the wisdom behind the words we've heard. In Hebrew, the word that is most often translated as "listen" or "hear" **shema** doesn't just mean to hear sound; it means to listen attentively and respond accordingly. There's no separate word for "obey" in Hebrew because *listening* inherently includes acting on what you've heard.

When we read or hear God's Word, it's an invitation to more than just absorb information—it's a call to action. Jesus emphasized this when He taught about being doers of the Word, not just hearers. It's like when we give a friend heartfelt advice, and they later say, "I should have listened to you."

For thousands of years, Christians have described their faith as a journey. It's an image Jesus returned to again and again, calling his disciples to follow him, describing the wide and the narrow ways. That image of traveling a path so captured early Christians that the first believers called themselves people of the way.

They saw themselves as a community of followers on a journey together. While our lives and our worship may seem so distant from those first believers, We are still traveling that same path, and two thousand years ago, Jesus first followers found their way by gathering together, opening their hearts in prayer, and listening as the Holy Spirit called them forward into the world.

It was the same Holy Spirit who calls us today. Just after Jesus resurrection, He came across two of his followers walking along an ancient road toward a small town called Emmaus. Something prevented them from recognizing who he was, even as they were discussing the devastating news of his death just a few days before in Jerusalem.

It's a moving scene, but what Jesus does is even more moving. He walks with them, and he begins to explain to them from all of the scriptures, from the beginning of Genesis and on through the prophets, How this death and resurrection had all been predicted. Could you imagine a small group discussion with the resurrected Jesus?

Their path eventually led them into a home for the night, and around the table for the evening's meal. As Jesus took the bread, blessing it and breaking it, they suddenly realized who he was. Scripture tells us that their eyes were open, recognizing they were Jesus. Jesus had been teaching them scripture, but following Jesus didn't come to an end.

End that night around that table, their journey was really just beginning. Jesus had opened their eyes to the truth, to a new reality. They were now on an entirely new path. The Christian faith is not a card we carry. It's not just some status we achieve or a box we check on a form. The Christian faith is always a journey.

We are still people of the way. And like those disciples traveling that day with Jesus, we are never on that road alone. As our eyes are opened, we, too, discover a new way, community, the words of God calling us forward. And like those disciples on the road that day with Jesus, our most primary task is to We are always listening.

And as we listen, this story, the biblical story, comes alive. God has been walking with his people from the very beginning. From that first morning in the garden with Adam and Eve, the decades of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, to Jesus days with his disciples on rocky Galilean shores, it's still as the Holy Spirit is poured out into our hearts.

As the psalmist would express it, Your word is a lamp to guide my feet, a light for my path. The Bible illuminates our way and guides us on this journey, but listening is hard. Listening requires patience, requires attention, requires humility. But if we are willing to listen, if we are willing to humble ourselves and enter into this journey, all eternity lay before us.

Jesus Christ goes before us. His kingdom is breaking in all around us. Narrow is His path, but those who are willing to follow find on it a journey of faith. Peace, hope, and joy, community. We find a new community of brothers and sisters with us on this way. But it all begins with a simple question. Will you listen?

As we've been reading and meditating on the Psalms, let's also focus on *listening* in the "shema" sense. What is God inviting us to do? How can His wisdom shape our actions today?

Let's encourage one another to not only hear God's Word but to let it move us into action. Let's be like the wise person who builds their house on the rock, putting into practice Jesus' teaching.

The Hebrew word shema means to listen and respond accordingly. How does this understanding influence the way you engage with Scripture or spiritual guidance?

Can you recall a time when you heard advice but didn't act on it? What did that experience teach you about the importance of not just hearing but also doing?

The early Christians referred to themselves as "people of the way," viewing faith as a journey. How does thinking of faith as a journey impact your relationship with God and others?

In what ways can we cultivate patience, attention, and humility to become better listeners, both to God and those around us?

How do you think we can encourage each other to move beyond merely hearing God's Word to actively living it out in our daily lives?

The disciples recognized Jesus when He broke bread with them. How might ordinary moments in our lives become opportunities to recognize and experience God's presence?

What do you feel God is inviting you to do today, and how might His wisdom shape your actions moving forward?

How does being part of a faith community help you stay on the "narrow path" and support you in your spiritual journey?

The video ends with the question, "Will you listen?" What does truly listening to God look like for you personally?