

Thought for the Day 14th July - John Thew

Many of you will know 'The Bible Project'. In these days of CV19 isolation and lockdowns, the Bible Project team has been producing some weekly offerings called 'Church at Home'. Each one includes a short study – sometimes based on a bible passage, sometimes following a theme or word – with an introduction, a video, a short talk and some thinking/discussion questions.

This week's topic – 'Shema: Listen'

The Hebrew word 'shema' means 'to listen'. But it's more than that. Shema is an urgent call to hear the Lord God with our ears and to respond to him with our whole lives.

In the pages of the Bible, we see how God is the one who hears and responds to the cries of the oppressed. As we take time to truly listen to him, and observe his regard for the world and his empathy and justice towards the afflicted, we see this changing the way we think and feel and act. In short, we let God's response to people and the world become our own.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 includes 'the Shema'.

This 'Shema', verses 4 – 5, became the prayer that Jewish people prayed every morning and evening for thousands of years, and it is still relevant to us today. It gets at the heart of all the commands given to the people of Israel.

It is a call to listen and respond to the truth that Yahweh is the one true God, and the only appropriate response is to love Him with all of our being. Knowing and loving God is how we can experience fullness of life. And when we align our hearts with God's heart, we will naturally care about the things He cares about and fulfill our roles as his partners in bringing about human flourishing on the earth.

James 1:19-27 follows the same theme. This famous passage is about being a doer of the word, and not just a hearer. The author compares these 'hearers' to those who look in the mirror but do nothing about what they see – like, no tidying of the hair, no fixing of the makeup.

The point is that we are not truly listening if the message doesn't change us. We were made to reflect the image of God, but we forget who we are made to be, when we do not let God's character shape our thought patterns, our attitudes, our affections, and our actions.

We are not truly listening to God's life-changing words if our lives are not being changed.

To access the series, you can Google "The Bible Project Church at Home". Happy listening ... and doing.

<https://bibleproject.com/church-at-home/>