

שְׁמָעַ (Shema)

-Ryan Parsons-

I often joke that my kids' brains produce a chemical that blocks out my voice. After studying anatomy and physiology, I know it isn't true, but it sure feels like it. It is not uncommon for me to ask them, "Do you hear me?" However, I need from them more than a quick, "Yes!" Two things are required for me to be sure: #1 Can you repeat back to me what I said? #2 Are you conforming your life to my requirements?

I wonder if God ever feels like our hearts produce a chemical that blocks out His voice? You see, hearing is even more important spiritually. Historically, God's people have struggled with hearing. Isaiah prophesied that the people's hearts would become dull, their ears would become heavy and their eyes would be blind (6:9-10). They sound like a bunch of kids! Sadly, Isaiah's audience wasn't the only group of people to struggle with their hearing.

God, by the mouth of Moses, gave what the Jews call - the *Shema*. In the book of Deuteronomy in preparation for his people to go into the promised land, God is retelling the law to his people and commanding them to listen. In addition, He sets in place a way for it to be "heard" for all subsequent generations. Faithful Jews understood it to be so important that it has been repeated twice-a-day for millennia.

Leading up to verses 4, we find the rationale. God wants us to know that, when we hear and obey him, we will be blessed.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3

1 "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, **2** that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. **3 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.

In Hebrew, the word שְׁמָעַ (hear) means more than just listening. The response requires more than a simple, "Yes, I hear you!" It is active listening and begs the questions, "Can you repeat what God said, and have you molded your life to match His will?"

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **5** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Did you **hear** it?

I want to challenge you to memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-5 this week, repeat it each day for a week, and **hear it**. Then, share your experience with at least two people. Enjoy!

Next week we will dive deeper into this wonderful passage of scripture.