



S2.Lesson 19: Prayer – The Shema

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); at least one 11 x 17 sheet per student for Shema posters; 2 or 3 blank 3x5 index cards per student; markers; pencils; crayons (optional)

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- Last week, we started a new session.
- Do you remember what the subject for this Session is? (hint: It's on your handout!)
- Do you remember what story we talked about in last week's class? (Hint: Something burned without burning. There was conversation between...Moses and God)
- Do you remember what God was telling Moses to do? (set the Israelites free)
- Did Moses want to do this? (No, not really)
- So in that story, we saw what prayer looks like: A conversation that involves both speaking and listening.
- We're going to watch a short film clip now that illustrates one component that's helpful when listening: Silence.
- The band that's about to play in the scene is made up of mathematicians and they are playing for mathematicians.
- They call their song, "The Imaginary Number."
- A couple of things about this: 1. The imaginary number in math is the square root of -1 which can't exist in the real world but pops up from time to time in the math world. It's symbolized by a lower-case i . 2. A song used to be referred to as a number. So as you'll see, there's some geeky play on words happening in this scene.

WATCH "Proof" Movie Clip

ASK

- Did you get why they were being quiet? (Because it was an imaginary number! It doesn't really exist, it can only take place in their imaginations! Told you it was geeky...)
- In the silence, did you hear the one person laughing?
- Have you ever had that happen? When you're supposed to be quiet but then you think something's funny and you're trying not to laugh?
- Also, silence can feel uncomfortable, can't it?
- Why do you think that is? Why do we sometimes feel awkward in silence?

TELL

- If we're afraid of silence, then we'll have a hard time being quiet to listen for God.
- In the second of the two scripture passages we're going to look at today, the passage is referred to in Jewish tradition as "The Shema." Shema is a Hebrew word that means to both "Listen" and then "obey/follow-through with what you hear."
- Let's see what Jesus has to say about the Shema in our first reading and then let's see what the Shema actually is in our second reading.

READ

Matthew 22: 34 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, " "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Deut 6: 1 Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me (Moses) to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that you and your children and your children's children may fear/respect/honor/surrender/serve the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

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

6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

ASK about Matthew passage

- What do *you* think is the greatest commandment?
- Does it seem strange to you that Jesus says loving God first and foremost is the greatest command?
- Why do you think Jesus says this is the most important thing? Do you think, for instance, that God is needy and co-dependent and needs our love or else he'll sit in his room all day listening to depressing songs?
- OK, if you don't think this about God, then why is loving God so important? (what we love determines our actions. If we love money, then we'll do certain things to get more of it – things that sometimes hurt others. If we love God, then we'll listen to God. We'll seek God. We'll want to do what God is suggesting to us that we do.)
- What do you think is the difference between heart and soul? (btw, Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh*, which means "channel" or "throat." Fits well with the idea of *ruach* which means spirit/breath)
- What do you think loving with your mind looks like?

ASK about Deuteronomy passage

- In verse three, what does Moses say will happen if Israel does the shema?
- Verse 4 and 5 is Shema command. Does it look familiar (It should! It's the same thing Jesus says)
- Verse 6 – 9 then, are how to carry out the command.
- Earlier today we talked about "What does loving God with all your heart/mind look like?" And we had some good answers. What do verses 6 – 9 say it looks like?
- What do you think, does our congregation do the Shema?
- Do you follow through with the shema at all?
- Do any of you have an emblem stuck on your forehead? How do you think you COULD fix an emblem on your forehead? (think of baseball hats with team logos...)

TELL

- So it seems that for the most part, we're not living out very well what Jesus says is the greatest commandment.
- So let's take some steps to address this falling short.
- Let's make some posters of the Shema to put in our homes (on bedroom doorways) and on our gates (garage doors?) and in dining rooms. And in rooms in the church building as well (starting with our own!).
- Then when we see the reminders, bring it up with your parents. Say, "Mom, Dad, how have you today lived out the Shema?" Expect them to then ask you the same thing.
- Let's come up with a symbol that reminds us of the shema, that we can draw on our hands, or on pieces of paper – on our school folders to help remind us to pay attention to God even when we're in the midst of the hustle and bustle of school.
- Let's write the Shema out on small pieces of paper that our parents can attach to the inside of their cars.
- Questions?
- Let's get to work!

CLOSING PRAYER