



SHEMA JOURNEY

A Journey of Opportunity to Follow Jesus

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WELCOME

“I HAVE SET YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU.” JOHN 13:15 (NIV)

FROM THE LEARNING DESIGNER:

Welcome to your *Shema Journey* learning experience!

This is not a journey about arriving at a designated location. It is a journey of important conversations leading to different insights connected to listening carefully and following Jesus well.

Your journey begins at a table with Jesus' close first followers - twelve disciples - with whom He is sharing His last meal. John chapters 13-17 are our source for the conversations of that night.

Only Jesus knows it would be the last supper He would share with these twelve men. Only Jesus knows that later that night He would be arrested by a temple guard. Only Jesus knows that His death on the cross is imminent. And, only Jesus knows His Resurrection is just a few days away. This is Jesus' last extended conversation with His twelve followers before those events.

Last thoughts and last words are important. Two things typically attend these conversations. The thoughts and words are true and tender.

Think about that as you begin your *Shema Journey*. As you begin this journey of important conversations, Jesus' words to you are absolutely true and absolutely tender. You will listen to His words and know their truth is shared in order to help you listen, learn, and live as Jesus instructs. You will listen to His words and know they come from a heart of tender and eternal love so that, like Him, you will love, serve, and shine as you share that love consistently with God and others.

Your *Shema Journey* is beginning. You have a seat at Jesus' table. Listen carefully to words that are true and tender. Follow Him to His cross and empty grave. Love, serve, and shine - like Jesus - in a world that needs to journey with Jesus and you.

Steve Wagner
Learning Designer, *Shema Journey*

CONVERSATION #1

THE HEART OF A SERVANT IS ESSENTIAL... IT IS THE HEART OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. Opening Question: "Why are you here?"
2. Group Purpose/key definition. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** - *shema*: undivided attention; listen with action bias - life journey/life style; organic/fluid; no expiration date ... "normalize."
3. Important distinctions ... from "checking boxes" to following; from a map to a compass; from perfection to direction.

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF "THE TABLE"... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 13:1-17**. Narrative question: "Do you understand?" > intentional act of love = thinking of you. Replication.
2. **Mark 12:29-31**. Jesus - "greatest commandment." Priority. Intentional. Multi-directional ... simultaneously vertical, horizontal = the cross. See also **Leviticus 19:18**.
3. How does the **Mark 12** conversation connect to the **John 13** demonstration?

CONVERSATION #1 (CONT.)

THE HEART OF A SERVANT IS ESSENTIAL... IT IS THE HEART OF JESUS

SHEMA JOURNEY | JESUS DAILY ... SERVANT - PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Attitude/Mind: "I am thinking of you ... I am listening to you." For a Jesus follower, this is the essential heart of a servant and a reciprocal proposition: God's breakthrough, unconditional love (*agape*) reaches me and empowers me to love (*agape*) Him, neighbor, and self. Look, listen, and learn in order to love, serve, and shine each day.

1. *Love* - my connection to Jesus (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening)
2. *Serve* - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model)
3. *Shine* - my connection to work and witness of Jesus in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations)

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. Who are examples you have seen who love, serve, and shine? What impression did that example make on you?
2. Listen and understand: To love, serve, or shine, what important initial step(s) on your *Shema Journey* will you take this week?
3. I feel _____ about launching the *Shema Journey* because _____.
4. Reread Conversation #1 Biblical references: **Deuteronomy 6:4-9; John 13:1-17; Mark 1 2:29-31; Leviticus 19:9-18; Philippians 2:5-11**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God? (**Read "Listen With Your Soul" on page 6**).

CONVERSATION #1 (CONT.)

THE HEART OF A SERVANT IS ESSENTIAL... IT IS THE HEART OF JESUS

NOTES:

LISTEN WITH YOUR SOUL

“HEAR, O ISRAEL ... LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.” | **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5 (NIV)**

Listening well is a learned skill. Listening deeply is an intentional choice. Listening with your soul invites God to speak into the deepest part of your life calling for your response.

Think of listening like this: “interpreting a message with action” ... “actionable.”

Shema is an Old Testament Hebrew word that describes an attentive process leading to an intentional response. It begins by receiving a message, moves to understanding that message, and properly concludes with responding favorably to that message.

Shema is an Old Testament Hebrew word that implies being very intentional about listening deeply with an action bias. Three essential things to listen deeply to God’s Word:

1. Eliminate distractions.
2. Eliminate rushing the listening moments. God is never in a hurry.
3. Eliminate the predisposition to dismiss things too simple or too radical. Make your predisposition YES to the instruction and impulse of God.

John 10:27 (NIV), Jesus speaks about listening well and listening deeply. “My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.” Jesus Himself connects listening and following.

To listen with your soul - or simply soul listening - assumes an understanding of your soul. In Hebrew the word for soul is *nephesh*, which literally refers to the place of integration of the intellect, the emotion, and the will of a person. It is your identity at its deepest level. It is your place of undistracted, unhurried, unbiased response ... a sheep following the shepherd. God speaks. You listen with your soul. Soul listening is giving deep attention and favorable intention to how you relate to God and others. Soul listening is giving daily expression to love, serve, and shine as you follow Jesus.

LISTEN WITH YOUR SOUL (CONT.)

“HEAR, O ISRAEL ... LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.” | **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5 (NIV)**

How do you get to that place of soul listening? Jesus speaks, “The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News.” **Mark 1:15 (NIV)** Embedded in His words are four questions to help you listen with your soul:

1. In your life, what adjustment is Jesus asking you to make?
2. How is Jesus challenging you to change the things you think and do?
3. How is Jesus calling you to engage with the hopes or hurts of others?
4. What promises is Jesus making to you?

Shema Journey is a call to action ... as you soul listen, share what you are hearing with a trusted friend. Begin an ongoing conversation that is committed to making progress in your journey with Jesus, committed to love, serve, and shine daily like Jesus, and committed to a relentless pursuit of the intimacy of thought, affection, and determination that expresses love for God and others. Soul listening.

CONVERSATION #2

DIRECTION, NOT PERFECTION ... "FOLLOW ME"

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. Quick Review/key definitions. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** - *shema*: listen, journey, organic; from "checking boxes" to following well.
2. To love, serve, or shine, what important initial step(s) on your *Shema Journey* did you take this week and share with your committed listener ... love, serve, shine?
3. From **Deuteronomy 6:4-9; John 13:1-17; Mark 12:29-31; Leviticus 19:9-18; Philippians 2:5-11**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF "THE TABLE"... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 13:21-30, 36-38**. Narrative question: "Do you understand?" - directionally incorrect, directionally correct. (The *Shema Journey* as cross-centered and Jesus-focused).
2. **Matthew 19:16-22**. Two prevailing questions: rich young man; Jesus. How are the prevailing questions different? Perfection/Direction. Intentional.
3. How does the **Matthew 19** exchange connect to the **John 13** examples of direction in life?

CONVERSATION #2 (CONT.)

DIRECTION, NOT PERFECTION ... "FOLLOW ME"

**SHEMA JOURNEY | PAUL DAILY ... LIVING LIFE DIRECTIONALLY CORRECT -
I CORINTHIANS 10:31-11:1; I CORINTHIANS 15:9-10**

The necessity and power of grace for living a directionally correct life. Follow well in order to love, serve, and shine well each day. Includes a lifestyle of intentionally involving others in a *Shema Journey* ... also known as "**Third Person Learning**" (see *A Glossary of Terms*).

1. *Love* - my connection to Jesus (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening)
2. *Serve* - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model)
3. *Shine* - my connection to work and witness of Jesus in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations)

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. How would you explain to a friend the difference between perfection and direction?
2. How does that distinction empower you to focus/center on Jesus?
3. Directionally correct: To love, serve, and shine, what important steps on your *Shema Journey* will you take this week?
4. Reread Conversation #2 Biblical references: **John 13:18-30; Matthew 19:16-22; I Corinthians 10:31-11:1; 15:9-10**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God?

CONVERSATION #2 (CONT.)

DIRECTION, NOT PERFECTION ... "FOLLOW ME"

NOTES:

LOVE.SERVE.SHINE QUESTIONS

A RESOURCE OF QUESTIONS TO FOCUS YOUR SHEMA JOURNEY FOR A LIFETIME

Texts | **Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Mark 1:15; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 28:18-20**

LOVE: PRAISE, PRAYER, DEVOTION, LISTEN

- Do I make enough time in my day for prayer and devotions?
- Do I pursue a sense of closeness and intimacy with Jesus?
- Do I keep a Christian perspective on issues confronting me?
- Do I have a passion for Christ?
- Do I have a sense of God's purpose for my life?
- Do I have a consistent plan to study the Bible?
- Do I find joy in worshiping Christ?
- Do I anticipate answers to my prayers?
- Do I periodically take extended time for my prayers?
- Do I live with a state of peace that all will be well?
- Do I experience more of the characteristics of Christ in my life (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control)?
- Do I experience more of the presence and power of God in my everyday life?
- Do I seek to please God by surrendering every area of my life (health, decisions, relationships, finances, future, etc.) to Him?
- Do I accept the things I cannot change and become increasingly grateful for the life I've been given?

SERVE: UNSOLICITED ACTS OF CARE, INSTRUCTION, ENCOURAGEMENT, ROLE MODELING

- Do I model to other Christians what I teach?
- Am I teachable and accountable?
- Am I available and approachable for ministry needs in the church?
- Do I listen well to others?
- Do I make myself transparent and available to others?
- Do I demonstrate a servant's heart?
- Do I keep my promises to God, my family, and my Christian friends?
- Is my family happy?
- Am I a joyful and cheerful giver?
- Is the quality of my spiritual life growing?
- Am I consistent in giving grace and attention to other Christians, especially those in my church?
- In exchanges with people, do they experience grace?
- Am I willing to share my real needs for prayer and receive support from others?
- Am I resolving conflict constructively and willing to forgive others?
- Am I spending time with a Christian friend who keeps me accountable for my spiritual growth?
- Am I regularly praying to God to show me opportunities to serve Him and others?
- Am I avoiding addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs, food, television, "busyness", etc.)?

LOVE.SERVE.SHINE QUESTIONS (CONT.)

A RESOURCE OF QUESTIONS TO FOCUS YOUR SHEMA JOURNEY FOR A LIFETIME

Texts | **Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Mark 1:15; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 28:18-20**

SHINE: UNSOLICITED ACTS OF KINDNESS, INVITATION AND WELCOME, CONVERSATIONS

- Do I live my life with integrity outside the church?
- Do I have close relationships with others who are unchurched?
- Am I intentionally making new relationships with the unchurched?
- Am I willing to take risks in demonstrating or sharing my faith with others?
- Am I willing to make sacrifices for the unchurched?
- Do I practice hospitality with unchurched friends and acquaintances?
- Is my church/class/small group growing in numbers?
- Do I pray regularly for unchurched family and friends?
- Do I have a clear sense of mission to make impact for Christ among the unchurched?
- Do I have a heart for the lost?
- Am I regularly inviting unchurched family and friends to my church/class/small group?
- Do I regularly introduce myself to others and welcome them when I am attending a church function?
- Am I praying and learning about where God can use me cross-culturally for missions?

CONVERSATION #3

CHOOSING SACRIFICIAL LOVE ... NO EXCEPTIONS

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. How would you explain to a friend the difference between perfection and direction?
2. How does that distinction empower you to focus/center on Jesus?
3. Directionally correct: To love, serve, and shine, what important steps on your *Shema Journey* did you take this week and share with your Committed Listener?
4. From **John 13:18-30; Matthew 19:16-22; I Corinthians 10:31-11:1; 15:9-10** share two new/important insights or question(s) for your Shema Journey. What are you "hearing" from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF "THE TABLE"... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23, 31.** Narrative question: "Do you understand?" Language is performative - love is something that you do. Sacrificial love is a distinguishing mark of Jesus and Jesus' followers. Note the sequence "as" precedes "so."
2. **Matthew 5:43-48.** Sacrificial love always distinguishes the one who gives it. Intentional.
3. How does the **Matthew 5** instruction connect to the **John 13, 14** instruction?

CONVERSATION #3 (CONT.)

CHOOSING SACRIFICIAL LOVE ... NO EXCEPTIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY | PAUL DAILY ... LIVING LIFE EMPOWERED BY SACRIFICIAL LOVE
I CORINTHIANS 13:4-13

Sacrificial love is both vertical and horizontal in its expressions. Consistent expressions of sacrificial love disrupt patterns of self-defense, anger, retaliation. Choosing sacrificial love requires humility as well as being highly intentional in difficult circumstances. It is essential in order to love, serve, and shine well each day. And, sacrificial love is something you do - "actionable." **II Corinthians 5:14-16**

1. *Love* - my connection to Jesus (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening)
2. *Serve* - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model)
3. *Shine* - my connection to work and witness of Jesus in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations)

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. How would you explain sacrificial love to a friend?
2. How would you connect sacrificial love to the life of Jesus?
3. Expressing sacrificial love to others: To love, serve, and shine, what important steps on your *Shema Journey* will you take this week?
4. Reread Conversation #3 Biblical references: **John 13:34-35; John 14:15, 21, 23, 31; I Corinthians 13:4-13; II Corinthians 5:14-16**. Be prepared to share two new/important insights or questions for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God?

CONVERSATION #3 (CONT.)

CHOOSING SACRIFICIAL LOVE ... NO EXCEPTIONS

NOTES:

IN THE MIDDLE

BY NORB OESCH

It is never easy in the middle!
Oh, the early part!
How fun!
The thrill of venture makes the blood run!
Energy shoots.
Sounds, sight, imagination sweep through the landscape surging,
 pushing back consternation.
For all is new and that will take away the concern over the middle.

The end thrills, too, for it has its rush.
Soon the reunion comes with loved ones
The warm embrace. Laughter.
Stories to tell. Pictures to share.
A new venture is just beyond the edge.
A possibility, yet unreached is at your fingertip, while doors are again
 swinging wide.
And you can take one moment more!
At the end.

But the middle!
Ah the middle!
Is where you have to dog it out!
One step, one day, one month.
And so often it remains the same, it feels.
Few thrills are in the middle.
But, for those who know!
Who believe,
It is in the middle that the grit shows,
The meddle, the character, the stuff of the strong
Is what shows!
In the middle!

(Used with permission)

CONVERSATION #4

AN INSIDE OUT EXPERIENCE ... WHAT I RECEIVE I SHARE

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. To love, serve, or shine, what important step(s) on your *Shema Journey* did you share with your Committed Listener and take this week?
2. From **John 13:34-35; John 14:15, 21, 23, 31; I Corinthians 13:4-13; II Corinthians 5:14-16**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF "THE TABLE"... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 14:4-12a**. Narrative question: "Do you understand?" - language is actionable/performative - language is also very precise and specific. "Do what I have been doing." Inside out experience. What happens to me, now happens through me. Not about checking boxes. It is about following well. Jesus:
 - a. "The Way" - He leads, I follow - pilgrim: Listen - Learn - Live.
 - b. "The Truth" - He is the plumb line for life: Listen - Learn - Live.
 - c. "The Life" - His narrative becomes my narrative: Listen - Learn - Live.
2. **Luke 9:23-25**...Intentional. Priority. New identity: Jesus follower.
3. How do Jesus' words in **Luke 9** connect with His words in **John 14**? How do these words explain our *Shema Journey*?

CONVERSATION #4 (CONT.)

AN INSIDE OUT EXPERIENCE ... WHAT I RECEIVE I SHARE

SHEMA JOURNEY | "CHRIST LIVES IN ME"

GALATIANS 2:17-21

This is the inside transformation that becomes the external expressions of who I am. Impression without expression results in repression. Daily.

1. *Love* - my connection to Jesus (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening)
2. *Serve* - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model)
3. *Shine* - my connection to work and witness of Jesus in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations)

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. Share a time in your life when your faith was particularly important to you. What did you learn from that experience that continues to focus your attention, affections, and actions on Jesus? **(Be prepared to share with the group next meeting.)**

2. I feel _____ about my *Shema Journey* experience because _____.

3. From **John 14:4-12a; Luke 9:23-25; Galatians 2:17-21** share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God?

CONVERSATION #4 (CONT.)

AN INSIDE OUT EXPERIENCE ... WHAT I RECEIVE I SHARE

NOTES:

CONVERSATION #5

A HARVEST OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FRUIT ... MATURITY AND MULTIPLICATION

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. Share a time in your life when your faith was particularly important to you. What did you learn from that experience that continues to focus your attention, affections, and actions on Jesus? (Include feedback from your Committed Listener conversation).
2. Who needs to hear your story?
3. From **John 14:4-12a; Luke 9:23-25; Galatians 2:17-21**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF "THE TABLE" ... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 15:1-8**. Narrative question: "Do you understand?" Image is organic (a garden) - designed to multiply life. "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you ..."
2. Internal fruit - **Mark 1:14-15; Galatians 5:22-23**. How would you describe your personal growth of internal fruit?
3. External fruit - **Matthew 9:35-38; Acts 1:8**. How would you describe your harvest of external fruit?
4. How do the words of Jesus in **Mark 1** and **Matthew 9** enlarge your understanding of His words in **John 15**?
5. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Jesus is the "True Vine." While external fruit may indicate an orientation of listening, learning, and living for God and others, the essence of spiritual fruitfulness is not determined by outward appearances, but solely by the God's gracious connection of the "branch" to the "vine" ... and the vine is Jesus.

CONVERSATION #5 (CONT.)

A HARVEST OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FRUIT ... MATURITY AND MULTIPLICATION

SHEMA JOURNEY | THE ISSUE OF "FRUIT"

JOHN 15:81

The Father's glory - "showing" yourselves to be Jesus' disciples. **(Read "Moments of Kindness" on page 23)**

1. *Love* - my connection to Jesus (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening)
2. *Serve* - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model)
3. *Shine* - my connection to work and witness of Jesus in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations)

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. When you think about "fruit" as an internal and external reality, what is your "Aha!" insight?
2. To love, serve, and shine, what important steps on your *Shema Journey* will you take in the next 90 days? BE SPECIFIC.
3. Who outside your group should be invited to share in a *Shema Journey*? Suggest steps to multiply the *Shema Journey* experience with those being named.
4. Reread Conversation #5 Biblical references: **John 15:1-8; Mark 1:14-15; Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 9:35-38; Acts 1:8**. Be prepared to share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God?

CONVERSATION #5 (CONT.)

A HARVEST OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FRUIT ... MATURITY AND MULTIPLICATION

NOTES:

MOMENTS OF KINDNESS

LOVE IS KIND. | 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 (NIV)

“HEAR, O ISRAEL ... LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.” | **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5 (NIV)**

There is a strong horizontal dimension to the *Shema Journey* experience. Jesus talked about loving your neighbor as you love yourself. (**Mark 12:29-31**). The gateway to these horizontal experiences is captured by the words: “Serve” and “Shine.” An empowerment to engage these experiences is captured in **1 Corinthians 13:4** and **Galatians 5:22**. A description of Jesus and a specific empowerment of the Holy Spirit (“fruit”) is kindness.

Kindness is an operative dynamic for ministry and mission and a key to “reframing” how Jesus followers become His presence to others. It is an outward orientation for life situations, going far beyond civility or politeness. In this sense, kindness is God’s grace in action! Kindness, in the world of Jesus, brings together concepts like hospitality, generosity, earnestness, and devoted care - with “no strings attached.” The Old Testament word is *chesed* which is kindness in abundance toward another, who may or may not deserve it.

Jesus was kind to others every day, including those you might describe as the least, the last, and the lost. In **Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)**, Jesus’ kindness includes His presence at a meal in the home of a tax collector. His kindness includes the declaration, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Absolutely unconditional ... infinitely generous ... God’s kindness.

How important are unsolicited acts of kindness to ministry and mission? How meaningful are they for expressing God’s love for others? Very important! “God’s kindness leads you toward repentance.” **Romans 2:4 (NIV)**.

The list below is a way of helping you think about kindness as an intentional engagement with others. When you think about and plan for being kind to others, you see opportunities to be kind. The following list simply helps jump start and learn about the opportunities for you to be kind to others every day ... like Jesus!

- Each Sunday when you worship, look for people you have not met yet. Introduce yourself. Intentionally begin a process of building a friendship.
- When you walk through a parking lot, pay attention to the circumstances around you. You are looking for opportunities (coming and going) to be of assistance to others.

MOMENTS OF KINDNESS (CONT.)

LOVE IS KIND. | 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 (NIV)

“HEAR, O ISRAEL ... LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.” | **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5 (NIV)**

- When you are in a restaurant, learn the name of your waitstaff person. Let that person know your guests and you pray before meals. Ask if there is something you can pray for her/him.
- When you walk in your neighborhood, include prayers for your neighbors. Between walks, ask how you can pray for your neighbors as you walk past their homes.
- When you encounter first responders, thank the person(s) for their service. Ask how you can serve and/or pray for them.

These are some simple examples of opportunities to be kind to someone. You will think of many others from the context of your life. So, get started ... kindness is the tangible love of ministry and mission.

Shema Journey is a call to action ...Take others with you. The Shema (**Deuteronomy 6:4-10**) includes normalizing conversations with your family and friends. If you have children, talk with them about being kind. Take your children and involve them when you engage possible opportunities for kindness. Notice and appreciate when your children are especially kind to others. Together, families can make impact if everyone knows the importance and impact that Jesus' kindness has on others.

Kindness: Table Conversations is a resource for you and your family to use during meal times. Like the disciples sitting with Jesus at a table during a meal, you can use table conversations to think and talk about kindness with your children/grandchildren. And, you can use table conversations to talk about the kindness each has given and received during the day.

“Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly,
and most underrated agent of human change.”
(Anonymous)

Unsolicited acts of kindness connect to ministry and mission. “Normalize” kindness. Be intentional. Get started. Seize the moments and develop the habit of expressing kindness every day. Unsolicited kindness is the way of Jesus and a mark of a Jesus follower.

CONVERSATION #6

SEEKING AND SENDING ... SEEING OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE, SERVE, AND SHINE

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. When you think about “fruit” as an internal and external reality, what is your “Aha!” insight?
2. To love, serve, and shine, what important specific steps on your *Shema Journey* will you take in the next 90 days? BE SPECIFIC. (Feedback from your Committed Listener conversation).
3. I feel _____ about my *Shema Journey* experience because _____.
4. From: **John 15:1-8; Mark 1:14-15; Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 9:35-38; Acts 1:8**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your Shema Journey. What are you “hearing” from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF “THE TABLE” ... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 15:26-27**. Narrative question: “Do you understand?” - testify, witness, tell what I observed. How has your faith in Jesus Christ affected your life?
2. **John 16:33**. How does Jesus contrast the “world” from those who have faith and follow Him?

CONVERSATION #6 (CONT.)

SEEKING AND SENDING ... SEEING OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE, SERVE, AND SHINE

HEMA JOURNEY | CONNECT SEEKING AND SENDING.

LUKE 5:1-11; ACTS 2:42-47

1. What need do you see?
2. What hurt do you feel?
3. If you could do one thing to make the world a better place, what would that one thing be?
4. Why are you waiting?

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. Why would a person want to follow Jesus into mission?
2. To love, serve, and shine, what important steps on your *Shema Journey* will you take in the next 90 days? BE SPECIFIC.
 - a. Love - my connection to Jesus. (Praise, prayer, devotion, listening).
 - b. Serve - my connection to Jesus' followers in the church. (Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model).
 - c. Shine - my connection to Jesus' work and witness in the world. (Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations).
3. Who outside your group should be invited to share in a *Shema Journey*? Suggest steps to multiply the *Shema Journey* experience with those being named.
4. Reread Conversation #6 Biblical references: **John 15:26-27, 16:33; Luke 5:1-11; Acts 2:42-47**. Be prepared to share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you "hearing" from God?

CONVERSATION #6 (CONT.)

SEEKING AND SENDING ... SEEING OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE, SERVE, AND SHINE

NOTES:

CONVERSATION #7

THE SENDING: “IN THE SAME WAY” ... LIVING AS AN ANSWER TO JESUS’ PRAYER

INTRODUCTION | TALKING POINTS TO INTRODUCE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1. To love, serve, and shine, update the important specific steps on your *Shema Journey* you will take in the next 90 days? BE SPECIFIC.
2. How has your *Shema Journey* helped you listen, learn, and live in order to love, serve, and shine?
3. From **John 15:26-27, 16:33; Luke 5:1-11; Acts 2:42-47**. Share two new/important insights or question(s) for your *Shema Journey*. What are you “hearing” from God? **NOTES:**

BIBLE CONVERSATIONS | INTIMACY OF “THE TABLE” ... PROXIMITY OF CROSS. CONVERSATIONS THAT ARE BOTH TRUTHFUL AND TENDER.

1. **John 17:1, 13-21**. Narrative question: “Do you understand?” The implications of the present tense verbs in Jesus’ prayer (the Rabbi praying for His Talmid):
 - a. Promise (vs. 13): Full measure of joy.
 - b. Protection (vs. 15): From the evil one.
 - c. Purpose (vs. 18): Jesus’ followers are sent.
 - d. Passion (vs. 20-21): Those who believe are unified in identity, clarity, and purpose.

CONVERSATION #7 (CONT.)

THE SENDING: "IN THE SAME WAY" ... LIVING AS AN ANSWER TO JESUS' PRAYER

SHEMA JOURNEY | LIVING MY LIFE FOR JESUS

JOHN 17:18

Each day, how is my life lived as an answer to Jesus' prayer petition? Understanding the purposes for which Jesus is sent:

1. Love - Prayer, praise, devotion, listen.
2. Serve - Unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role model.
3. Shine - Unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations.
4. "As" =

CONTINUING DAILY CONVERSATIONS | SHARE WITH A COMMITTED LISTENER

1. What are the implications you understand concerning the idea of being sent?
2. To love, serve, and shine, clarify what important steps on your *Shema Journey* you will take in the next 90 days? BE SPECIFIC. (**Read "Continue the Journey" on page 32**)
3. How will you replicate this learning experience with others?

CONVERSATION #7 (CONT.)

THE SENDING: "IN THE SAME WAY" ... LIVING AS AN ANSWER TO JESUS' PRAYER

NOTES:

CONTINUE THE JOURNEY ...

“BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DO NOT FORGET ...” DEUTERONOMY 6:12 (NIV)
“CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED ...” II TIMOTHY 3:14 (NIV)

So here is the big question: **NOW WHAT?**

Rabbinical learning always continues. There is no graduation. There is no arrival. There is no completion. In this sense, with the exception of Jesus, a rabbi (teacher) is always a talmid (follower or disciple), and a talmid is always learning in order to instruct as a rabbi.

Moses describes ongoing rabbinical learning:

“These are the commands, decrees, and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you... so that you, your children, and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live.” Deuteronomy 6:1-2 (NIV).

The apostle Paul describes ongoing rabbinical learning:

“Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it...” II Timothy 3:14 (NIV).

There are no exceptions to this simple, significant truth - continue ... “keep on keeping on.” And remember: Rabbi Jesus is your teacher: listen, learn, and live. Rabbi Jesus is your example: love, serve, and shine. Keep on keeping on.

Here are some SUGGESTIONS:

- With your committed listener or another family member or friend as your partner(s), choose a daily devotion that you can do together. You don't need to be at the same place, at the same time, but you do need to establish common ground for continuing conversations. You do need to have regular conversations about what you are learning and doing.
- With your committed listener or another family member or friend as your partner(s), use the Shema Journey Love.Share.Shine Questions to focus your devotional discussions. Focus on what you are hearing, learning, and doing as you continue your journey. Three other helpful questions:
 - a. What new thoughts concerning Love, Serve, and Shine, come to mind as you listen to God's Word and continue your journey?
 - b. What steps are you taking to make your new thought an actionable experience?
 - c. How do you feel about continuing your journey?

SHINE!

YOUR PLACE IN THE MISSION OF CONCORDIA

“... YOU SHINE LIKE STARS IN THE UNIVERSE AS YOU HOLD OUT THE WORD OF LIFE.” PHILIPPIANS 2:15-16 (NIV)

SHINE...my connection to Jesus' work and witness in the world...unsolicited acts of love, kindness, invitation and welcome, conversations. The mission engagement of a Jesus follower and a Jesus Church, like Concordia.

Shema Journey is a focus on the life of Jesus addressing the needs, the brokenness, and the spiritual confusion of people. Jesus declared, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10 (NIV). In the New Testament language, "lost" means to be utterly and completely in need, broken, or confused.

At Jesus' table with His disciples, Jesus says that exactly as He is sent into the world, His followers are also sent...to the needs, the brokenness, and the spiritual confusion of people. I go into my world to be the kindness of Jesus for lost people. I go to share the truth of His love in word and tangible action.

An unspoken question that is helpful in guiding my conversations and care for others: "In light of this person's hurt or hope, how is Jesus good news to her or him?" The answer to that unspoken question is the gateway to a person's heart...for a Jesus follower...for a Jesus Church.

In addition to daily opportunities to connect to Jesus' work and witness in the world, Concordia also provides congregational opportunities to Shine. As you join with other Concordia family members you enlarge the capacity and resource to directly engage Jesus' work and witness locally and globally. Examples of these opportunities at Concordia fall into three categories.

ENTRY...minimal training; location - Concordia. Examples include: Sunday greeters, worship ushers, children's ministry, music, special mission emphases like *Christmas from the Heart* gifts of food, clothing and shoes, toys, and Bibles.

MID-LEVEL...training; location - greater San Antonio area. Examples include: preparing and serving meals for homeless families, working with adoption and foster care agencies, building and distributing beds for children in need, assistance to victims of natural disasters.

ADVANCED...advanced training; location - national/international. Examples include: simple/supervised construction work, mission trips for youth and adults, partnerships and service with mission agencies, assistance to victims of natural disasters.

To receive specific information about current opportunities to **Shine** with others at Concordia, you are invited to contact the church office: (210) 479-1477; www.Concordia.cc (see Get Involved).

GLOSSARY

Ahava (ah-ha-va):

Old Testament Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 6:5 translated as love. The literal meaning is “sacrificial love, to devote completely to another.” When Jesus quoted this verse, the New Testament writers used the Greek term agape, a term for unconditional love, love extended as the essence of the one who gives, not dependent on the qualifications of the one who receives. A word that describes the very essence of God. See Mark 12:28-31.

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”
Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV)*

Chesed (ches-ed):

Old Testament Hebrew word translated literally as ‘kindness.’ When referring to God it is often translated as “loving kindness.” It is more than simple politeness or civility. It is extravagant, generous beyond ordinary courtesies. It is extended to others with no expectation of it being returned to the giver. It is the root of Jesus’ teaching concerning attitude and behavior, even toward an enemy. I Corinthians 13:4 defines kindness as an essential characteristic of love. Kindness opens doors and brings credibility to Christian care and Christian conversations.

*“The Lord is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and great in loving kindness.”
Psalm 145:8 (NIV)*

Committed Listener:

Shema Journey participants are asked to invite a trusted friend or family member to join them for the learning experience. The invitation to be a Committed Listener is a request for compassion and encouragement as well as attentiveness to a process of spiritual engagement and depth built around listening, learning, and living as a Jesus follower. A “Yes” to this request is a promise of daily prayer for the process, making inquiry concerning your friend’s or family member’s progress and growth, and sharing in regular conversations about new insight and motivation to follow Jesus well.

“We walk in the light, as He is in the light.” I John 1:7 (NIV)

Grace:

Commonly understood as an undeserved but empowering gift received from an unobligated but generous giver. Grace empowers a Shema Journey participant to love God “with all your heart with all your soul and with all your strength.” Deuteronomy 6:5. Grace empowers the YES response to Jesus’ invitation to listen, learn, and live as His follower.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am.” I Corinthians 15:10 (NIV)

Intrinsic Motivation:

The basic assumption that human beings are motivated by activities and experiences that connect with their internal values, desires, and sense of meaning. While external motivations of reward or punishment can be effective for the short-term, these are difficult to maintain at a high-level for the long term (think carrot and stick motivation ... think “burnout”). Following Jesus is the journey of a lifetime. Intrinsic motivation is a key.

*“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so, we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)*

Jesus Followers:

In the Old Testament, followers or adherents of a particular rabbi/teacher were called talmid (tal-mid). In the New Testament, followers or adherents of a particular rabbi/teacher were called disciples. In the ancient world these followers actively imitated both the life and the teaching of the master instructor. Jesus’ followers, then and now, are defined as informed, enlightened, thoroughly dedicated to listen, learn, and live by the intelligence and example of the rabbi/teacher.

“Follow Me.” John 1:43 (NIV)

Kindness:

Kindness is an operative dynamic for ministry and mission and a key to “reframing” how Jesus’ followers become His presence to others. It is an outward orientation for life situations, going far beyond civility or politeness. Kindness is selfless and compassionate. In reference to Jesus, or Jesus’ followers, it is God’s grace in action. Absolutely unconditional ... infinitely generous. Kindness brings credibility to Christian care and Christian conversation. See also: Glossary; Chesed.

“Be kind to one another and compassionate ...” Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

Kindness Opportunities:

Kindness is an intentional engagement with others. When you think about and plan for being kind to others, you see opportunities to be kind ... like Jesus ... kind to children, kind to the physically infirmed, kind to the troubled, kind in seeing and meeting human need. In other words, see the opportunity to be kind ... seize the opportunity to be kind. Seeing kindness opportunities follows the Shema Journey pattern of listen to God, learn from Him, live daily with the intention to love, serve, and shine. See also: Glossary; “Love, Serve, Shine.”

*“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.”
Matthew 25:40 (NIV)*

Learn/Learner:

In both Old and New Testaments, the idea of following a rabbi in order to learn the Jewish laws involved a growing competency and commitment to both the information and the consistent behavior aligned to that specific information. You listen to the rabbi. For clarity, you dialog with the rabbi. You choose to give the rabbi’s teaching expression in your life. To learn - to be a learner - is a lifetime process that follows the pattern listen, learn, and live.

“Come to Me ... learn from Me.” Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV)

Love, Serve, Shine:

Words that describe the daily example of Jesus’ life. Following the teaching example of a rabbi, Jesus taught with words and examples for daily living. “Love, serve, shine” describe the way Jesus expressed in daily life the eternal truths of His teaching words. Love = your connection to Jesus expressed in praise, prayer, devotion, and listening. Serve = your connection to Jesus’ followers in the church expressed in unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, and role modeling. Shine = your connection to the work and witness of Jesus in the world expressed as unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, and conversations.

“For to me to live is Christ.” Philippians 1:21 (NIV)

Narrative Question:

In rabbinical teaching, often questions carry greater value than data points. A question that initiates the process of listen, learn, and live is referred to as a narrative question. It is the way Jesus taught. It is the gateway to the table discussions of Jesus and His followers (John 13-17). A narrative question engages the hearers and invites their reflective thinking as well as new insights for living as Jesus’ followers.

“Do you understand what I have done for you?” John 13:12 (NIV)

Normalize:

For the Shema Journey, “normalize” is a way to capture the Deuteronomy 6:7 phrase, “talk about them.” This specific conversation deals with the commands of God, but in the larger context of conversation, it references those things of God to which you listen, learn, and live. It means to be intentional about a process that is preparing you to live daily as Jesus did (See also: Glossary; “Love, Serve, Shine”) and have regular ongoing conversations about how this is impacting your life. As you “normalize” conversations about Jesus and following Him, you are inviting others to journey with you and broaden your understanding of what it means to listen, learn, and live.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV)

Paradigm:

A paradigm is a particular set of assumptions or ideas that shape your view of reality. The Shema Journey assumes a rabbinical set of ideas and assumptions about learning. Briefly stated, learning is more than simply acquiring knowledge. For an Old Testament rabbi, learning involves both a combination of listening - the rabbi is speaking; learning - the follower acquires knowledge; living - the knowledge finds consistent expression and increasing competency. Jesus is a master teacher using the rabbinical paradigm: listen, learn, and live. Shema Journey also follows the rabbinical paradigm to multiply Jesus' followers. See also: Glossary; Shema Journey.

"As You sent Me into this world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18 (NIV)

Performative:

Describes the necessary power and particular performance embedded in Jesus' teaching. Acknowledged by both friends and foes as "Rabbi," Jesus teaching is a call to action and life expressions that are transformative and distinct. One repeating example from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:41, "You have heard that it was said ... but I tell you." Rabbi Jesus comes to change lives and change eternal destinies. Jesus' followers listen, learn, and live with Him as their example for life and hope for eternal life.

"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching." John 14:23 (NIV)

Pilgrim:

A New Testament identity based on the understanding of faithful Old Testament families who would journey to Jerusalem to worship God and bring sacrificial gifts to Him. "Pilgrim" (parepidemos) tells us we are people who spend our lives on a journey - listening, learning, and living for Him. The journey path is Jesus Christ. He is our direction, our path, and our destination. He leads. We follow. He is the Rabbi. We are the talmid.

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6 (NIV)*

Rabbi (rab-bi):

In the Old Testament and the New Testament years of Jesus, "Rabbi" was a term of respect and honor. It was a recognition of insight and behavior that was informed by and consistent with Old Testament law. And, Jesus' teaching paradigm was rabbinical. He excelled in His teaching content and life connected to the Father and the Spirit as well as people. Both His enemies and His friends addressed Him as "Rabbi". The first to see Jesus following His Easter resurrection, Mary, addresses Him as "Rabboni," the Aramaic word for Rabbi. Shema Journey is a learning experience led by Rabbi Jesus. Those who take the journey learn from Him in the same learning style as His first followers.

"She turned toward Him and cried out ... 'Rabboni!'" John 20:16 (NIV)

Shema (shem-ah):

Old Testament Hebrew word found in Deuteronomy 6:4. It means to intently hear or listen. Shema is a more encompassing word than simply being aware of a sound or simultaneous, multiple sounds. When God says, "Hear (shema), O Israel," He is declaring three things:

(1) God desires your undivided attention; (2) God is declaring a truth that empowers an action bias, your response; (3) God is teaching a proposition for which there is no expiration.

"Shema" means that what God said to His Old Testament people, and Jesus declared as the greatest commandment to His New Testament people, is what God continues to say to His followers today and for all the generations to come.

"Hear, O Israel." Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV)

Shema Journey:

"Shema" implies listening and learning. The Shema Journey includes questions and interactions, conversations and demonstrations that process the idea of following Rabbi Jesus based on listening carefully to God. It is about identity and life direction based on individual intrinsic interests and motivation; not about checking boxes that lead to a predetermined conclusion. On this journey, you discover that each day of Jesus' public life, He was engaged to love (praise, prayer, devotion, listening) the Father and the Spirit, to serve (unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, role modeling) with His followers, and to shine (unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and conversation, welcome) as His work and witness in the world. See also: Glossary; "Intrinsic Motivation," "Love, Serve, Shine."

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1:8 (NIV)*

Soul:

Old Testament Hebrew word for soul is "nephesh" (nef-esh). Nephesh literally refers to the place of integration of the intellect, the emotions, and the will of a person. It is a word that defines identity for time and eternity. It is your place of undistracted, unhurried, unbiased response ... a sheep hearing and following the shepherd. God speaks. You listen and follow.

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me." John 10:27 (NIV)

Soul Listening:

Soul listening is essential to my Shema Journey ... listen, learn, and live. It is giving deep attention and high intention to how you relate to God and others. Soul listening is giving daily expression to love, serve, and shine as you follow Jesus. As you soul listen, you share what you are hearing with your trusted partner. Soul listening is a relentless pursuit of intimacy of thought, affection, and determination that expresses love for God and others. See also: Glossary; Trusted Partner.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God." Psalm 42:1 (NIV)

Talmid (tal-mid):

Old Testament Hebrew word use to describe a follower of a rabbi. Implied in this word is the idea of an apprentice learning from a master craftsman ... listen, learn, and live. A talmid is committed to a learning process with the outcome of becoming an informed, enlightened, and dedicated follower of a master rabbi. Out of this relationship, the insight, skills, and purpose of the rabbi is replicated and multiplied for generations. It was Jesus' selected methodology to multiply the message and ministry that He began through His talmid. That same methodology continues through His Church today.

"Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all." Mark 16:15 (NIV)

Third Person Learning:

A predisposition of the follower as she/he learns from the master teacher. The learning predisposition is simple: What you learn from the master you will share with others. This simple predisposition is basic to listening well when the master teacher is speaking. This simple predisposition is high octane fuel for adult learning motivation. For a rabbi this meant teaching with stories - parables - as a primary means of communicating important truth. The Shema Journey experience is built on conversation and stories that mark each participant's life in a profound and personal way. As your story emerges and your conversations occur, these are intended to inform and encourage others. Built into your Shema Journey are the skills to listen as God speaks, live daily as Jesus patterned His life daily, and normalize and multiply conversations that clearly communicate Jesus' love for all.

"You are the light of the world ... let your light shine before men." Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

RABBINICAL LEARNING

“I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU ... PLANS TO GIVE YOU A HOPE AND A FUTURE.”
JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

It's a rabbi thing ...

“Rabbi” (rab-bi) is a Hebrew word for a master teacher. It is a term of respect and honor. Rabbi is a recognition of insight and behavior informed by and consistent with Old Testament law. Interestingly, it is the term frequently used by both friends and foes as they addressed Jesus.

“Talmid” (tal-mid) is the Hebrew word for a student or one who learns and follows. It is the Old Testament word to describe a disciple. In terms of information, a talmid does not simply seek to know what her or his rabbi knows. The goal of a talmid is to become like the rabbi and live as the rabbi lives.

The process of this transformational learning experience is called rabbinical learning. It is unique because it follows a distinct pattern of listen, learn, and live. It is rooted in what Rabbi Jesus calls the most important commandment (**Mark 12:29-33**) which is based on **Deuteronomy 6:1-25** and **Leviticus 19:9-18**.

What makes the rabbinical learning process distinct?

Journey as Classroom

The classroom for learning is not only a room, but also the world. A rabbi talks and teaches as he walks. His teaching is conversational. A talmid would follow closely being actively present with the rabbi. When Rabbi Jesus walks through grain fields, He talks about planting and harvesting. When Rabbi Jesus walks along a seashore, He talks about being fishers of men. When Rabbi Jesus is traveling in a boat and a storm rages, He talks about matters of trust in times of storms. A talmid understood that being present and attentive with his rabbi is always essential because the journey is the classroom, the curriculum is life-focused, and the learning methodology is conversational.

Unlearning to Learning Sequence

Rabbinical instruction is characterized by questions that require a talmid to think critically about what she or he was learning as well as who she or he is becoming. Rabbi Jesus understands that in adult learning situations generally a period of unlearning precedes a period of new, transformational learning. Rabbi Jesus also understands the more a person must unlearn

RABBINICAL LEARNING (CONT.)

“I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU...
PLANS TO GIVE YOU A HOPE AND A FUTURE.”

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

lengthens the learning process. And, when the unlearning process gets stuck, learning stops. This helps explain why the Pharisees and Sadducees simply refuse to embrace the transformational truths Jesus teaches concerning Himself and the Kingdom of God. They are stuck and refuse to unlearn the requirements and rewards of absolute and rigid observance of Old Testament laws. As such, they would not embrace Rabbi Jesus' teaching and life of unconditional love and unmerited grace.

Both/And: Objective Truth and Subjective Truth

For a rabbi, learning is not just a mastery of information, but a transformation of truth finding consistent expression in life. For a rabbi, learning is a combination of objective truth (primarily Old Testament laws, narratives, and traditions) that shapes the daily awareness and behaviors (primarily reproducing the examples of the rabbi) in the life of the talmid. For Rabbi Jesus, learning is always connecting objective and subjective truth and giving consistent expressions of truth in daily life. Each day Rabbi Jesus would:

1. Love (connecting to the Father and the Spirit) expressed as praise, prayer, devotion, and listening
2. Serve (connecting to His and other close followers) expressed as unsolicited acts of care, instruction, encouragement, and living as a role model.
3. Shine (connecting to His work and witness in the world) expressed as unsolicited acts of kindness, invitation and welcome, and conversations.

The Rabbi Jesus invitation to His talmid, “Follow Me,” is both informational (objective) and performative (subjective).

Both/And: Inductive and Deductive Instruction

Rabbi Jesus practices both types of instruction with His talmid. What is the difference?

RABBINICAL LEARNING (CONT.)

“I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU...
PLANS TO GIVE YOU A HOPE AND A FUTURE.”

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

Inductive instruction is “student focused.” That implies conversations with extended periods of time for questions and insights from the students. It implies instruction with dialog and supervised practice. It implies that student curiosity and continued learning is embedded in every learning experience. Inductive learning is subjective in nature.

Deductive learning is “teacher focused.” That implies extended lectures and assignments from the teacher. It gives the teacher the responsibility to establish and instruct toward a basic foundation of information. It implies that learning on the part of the student is equated with the ability to recall and share the information presented by the teacher. The teacher selects the topics, the texts, the measurements of a successful learning experience. Deductive learning is objective in nature.

Both/And: Cumulative Learning and Situational Learning

In education, cumulative learning is a growing mastery of subjects prescribed for a graduation. In other words, a student must master basic arithmetic before the student advances to higher mathematics. Like most learning, it is progressive in nature, but the progressive mastery is determined by the instructor or educational institution. Cumulative learning is passing the required course work prescribed for graduation.

Situational learning is a mastery of subjects encountered as a student engages different challenges, questions, problems, transitions in life. Situational learning might be described as an “I need to know” context. The teaching content is significantly influenced by the student context. Situational mastery is very specific, but continues from basic information and competency to more sophisticated information and competent application.

Both/And: Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation

Rabbinical learning assumes an important truth. Each talmid has within her or him a sense of spiritual understanding, values, experiences, desires, emotions that shape motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a key to long-term engagement. It is how a talmid’s “want to” is wired. Some people call this a person’s “sweet spot.”

RABBINICAL LEARNING (CONT.)

“I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU...
PLANS TO GIVE YOU A HOPE AND A FUTURE.”

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)

Extrinsic motivation is generally a short-term engagement. A talmid is informed and encouraged to be involved in activities or projects or causes that may or may not connect with the intrinsic motivation and interests. Some people refer to this as a “carrot and stick” approach to engagement.

The focus on intrinsic motivation is an important exercise in self-discovery. It helps the talmid see the opportunities to love, serve, and shine in a way that exhilarates rather than frustrates her or him.

Outcome: Identity and Information

Rabbinical learning is a discovery process built around foundational, timeless truth as well as the unique personality and circumstances of a talmid. It assumes that life best emerges from “who I am” rather than “what I do.” Rabbinical learning follows the sequence of listen, learn, and live. The example of Rabbi Jesus informs the daily expressions of love, serve, and shine.

Rabbinical learning includes objective truth, but understands that information alone is not transformation. Rabbi Jesus did not share objective truth assuming that good data alone results in a transformed life.

A talmid does not receive a to-do-list from Rabbi Jesus. There are no boxes to check off. A talmid receives an invitation from Rabbi Jesus. The invitation is “Follow Me.” The identity from which the talmid life flows is described: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” **Galatians 2:20 (NIV).**

Rabbi Jesus is my Teacher: listen, learn, and live. Rabbi Jesus is my Example: love, serve, and shine.

KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

LOVE (JESUS) IS KIND. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

Welcome to your *Shema Journey* resource that emphasizes attention to, motivation for, and follow-through concerning acts of kindness.

The design of this resource is rabbinical learning ... normalizing conversations, observations, circumstances, and actions of kindness ... just as Rabbi Jesus did with His disciples.

Kindness Conversations is a resource for you and your family to use during mealtimes. Like the disciples sitting with Jesus at a table during a meal, you can use table conversations to think and talk about kindness with your children/grandchildren. And, you can use table conversations to talk about the kindness each gives and receives each day.

“Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly,
and most underrated agent of human change.”

(Anonymous)

Kindness Conversations is a four-week rabbinical learning experience. Be conversational as you ask questions and share your stories. Select suggested action steps that accompany the *Shema Journey* article, *Moments of Kindness* (page 23), as well as the suggestions that follow each of the four conversation lessons. Practice kindness daily. Your *Love.Serve.Shine Questions* (page 11) are an additional resource to continue your thoughts and discussions about kindness (see especially the *Shine* section).

This learning experience is four weeks long with three focused conversations about kindness in each week. Rabbinical learning is both formal and informal learning. Conversations about kindness and opportunities to be kind are encouraged at any time during the four weeks and continuing beyond. Rabbinical learning empowers the person learning to replicate kindness every day and to be “Jesus kind” always.

In His way, unsolicited acts of kindness connect to ministry and mission. “Normalize” kindness. Be intentional. Get started. Seize the moments and develop the habit of expressing kindness every day. Kindness is the way of Jesus and a mark of a Jesus follower.

NOTE: **Kindness Conversations** is written to include discussions for children 10-12 years of age. If you have children/grandchildren who are younger or older, the learning experience is still very useful, but you may need to adjust the discussions, observations, and follow-up to be age appropriate. For your own personal consideration without children, through the Biblical texts for each *Kindness Conversation*, seek God’s insight for your personal kindness expressions.

Steve Wagner; Learning Designer, *Shema Journey*

KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

WEEK 1 | JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE OF KINDNESS

INTRODUCTION | KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS AT OUR TABLE...

1. **Shema Journey** ... We want to follow Jesus well. Each day we want to Love (connect to Jesus), Serve (connect to family and friends), and Shine (connect to Jesus' work and witness in the world). Jesus loves God the Father and others, and Jesus is kind. He is our Servant example.
2. **Suggested Table Prayer:** "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let Your gifts to us be blessed. Amen." (Common Table Prayer).
3. **Kindness:** Showing care, an awareness of others around you, meeting the needs of others, being kind by being helpful. Speaking with courtesy and respect. Expressing gratitude to those who have been kind to you.
4. Give examples of kindness that you have seen:

WEEK 1, DAY 1

1. Read **John 13:1, 12-17**. Conversation: What is this story about?

INSIGHT: If a servant had not washed the feet of the disciples before they ate, the disciples would have never forgotten that oversight. Like a servant, if Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, they will never forget Jesus' kindness.

2. How is Jesus being kind to His disciples?

3. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' kindness?

4. Who has been kind to you? How did that person's kindness make you feel?

5. What did you learn from that person about being kind to others?

6. **Important Question:** "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (**John 13:12**). Jesus' kindness is an intentional act of love = I am thinking of you and acting on your behalf. Jesus is my reminder and my servant example of being kind to God and others daily.

7. **Kindness Comment** (Leader to Participant): I feel _____ when you are kind to others because _____.

8. Request artwork (see Day 2, #2).

9. **Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, Your life is an amazing example of love. Your life is an amazing example of serving others. Help me to love You more and live like that. I want to be kind by loving and serving others. In Your strong name I pray. Amen.

WEEK 1, DAY 2

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.
2. Draw a picture of someone being kind to another and bring the picture to the family table. Explain how your picture illustrates kindness.
3. During your day who did you see being kind? How was that person an example of kindness for others? What did you learn from this example about being kind?
4. **Closing Prayer:** Ask one or two of those at your table to close with a brief prayer. Optional: Follow the brief prayer(s) by speaking together the Lord's Prayer.

WEEK 1, DAY 3

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.
2. How can you be an example of kindness to others? Kindness Connections include ...
 - Family Kindness Opportunities --
 - Home --
 - School --
 - Neighborhood --
3. **Closing Reading and Prayer: Philippians 2:1-7** ... "taking the very nature of a servant." Lord Jesus, Your death on the cross and rising again is the ultimate act of serving, kindness, and love. Thank You. I could never repay You, but I will love You and follow Your example to serve, be kind, and love others. In Your strong name we pray. Amen.

KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

WEEK 2 | KINDNESS RECEIVED BECOMES KINDNESS RETURNED

INTRODUCTION | KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS AT OUR TABLE...

1. **Shema Journey** ... We want to follow Jesus well. Each day we want to Love (connect to Jesus), Serve (connect to family and friends), and Shine (connect to Jesus' work and witness in the world). Jesus loves God the Father and others, and He is kind. This conversation is about Love as a kindness connection to Jesus.

2. **Suggested Table Prayer:** "Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these gifts You have given us, which we enjoy from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen." (A Table Prayer, Martin Luther).

3. **Kindness:** Showing care, an awareness of others around you, meeting the needs of others, being kind by being helpful. Speaking with courtesy and respect. Expressing gratitude to those who have been kind to you.

4. Give examples of how people express their "thanks" when they receive a gift.

WEEK 2, DAY 1

1. Read **Luke 17:11-19**. Conversation: What is this story about?

INSIGHT: Ten lepers cry out to Jesus, "Have mercy (pity, kindness) on us." Jesus sends them to the temple for a priest to declare they are healed. When they are declared clean (healed), only one returns directly to Jesus. He knew he received a gift that he had not earned nor deserved, but Jesus was glad to give. Only one thanked Jesus for His kindness. Thanksgiving is kindness toward God for His goodness and mercy.

2. How is Jesus being kind to the ten lepers?

3. How did the ten lepers respond to Jesus' kindness and say, "Thank you"?

4. Who has been kind to you? How was that person kind to you?

5. How did you express your gratitude to that person for being kind to you?

6. **Important Question:** "Where are the other nine?" Jesus' kindness is an intentional act of love = thinking of you, acting for you. The Samaritan leper is my reminder and example of being kind to God by giving Him thanks and praise. The other lepers are an example of how easy it is to overlook or forget the kindness of expressing thanks, especially to Jesus.

7. **Kindness Comment** (Leader to Participant): I feel _____ when you thank others for their kindness because _____.

8. **Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are kind and good. Your Word makes this abundantly clear. Your kindness is a huge blessing to me and others. I am grateful for the kindness I have received and the privilege of sharing it with others. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

WEEK 2, DAY 2

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers.
2. List three things Jesus does for you because He loves you. Explain what each of them is. Before you leave the dinner table, offer a prayer thanking Jesus for each.
3. During your day who did you see that was being kind? What was that person doing?
4. **Closing Prayer:** Ask one or two of those at your table to close with a brief prayer. Optional: Follow the brief prayer(s) by speaking together the Lord's Prayer.

WEEK 2, DAY 3

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers.
2. How can you be an example of kindness to others? Any new ideas? Kindness Connections include ...
 - Family Kindness Opportunities --
 - Home --
 - School --
 - Neighborhood --
3. **Closing Reading and Prayer: Psalm 136:1** ... "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good." Lord Jesus, thank You for your goodness and kindness. Help me to be as good and kind to others as You have been to me. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

WEEK 3 | OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINDNESS ARE NOT INTERRUPTIONS

INTRODUCTION | KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS AT OUR TABLE...

1. **Shema Journey** ... We want to follow Jesus well. Each day we want to Love (connect to Jesus), Serve (connect to family and friends), and Shine (connect to Jesus' work and witness in the world). Jesus loves God the Father and others, and He is kind. This conversation is about Serve as a kindness connection to Jesus.
2. **Suggested Table Prayer:** "We thank You, Lord God our Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for all the favor You show us, You Who live and reign forever. Amen." (A Table Prayer, Martin Luther.)
3. **Kindness:** Showing care, an awareness of others around you, meeting the needs of others, being kind by being helpful. Speaking with courtesy and respect. Expressing gratitude to those who have been kind to you.
4. Give examples of why a family member or friend would express extraordinary attention and kindness toward someone they know and love.

WEEK 3, DAY 1

1. Read **Mark 2:1-12**. Conversation: What is this story about?

INSIGHT: No doubt ... the kindness of a paralyzed man's friends intersected with the kindness of Jesus. The friends strongly trusted in Jesus' kindness and capacity to help. They were desperate to get their paralyzed friend to Him. To their surprise, Jesus would do more than they imagined. The kindness of Jesus is expressed with forgiveness of sins and physical healing. To connect family and friends to Jesus' kindness does not disappoint.

2. How are the friends of the paralyzed man being kind to him?

3. How is Jesus being kind to the paralyzed man?

4. Who has been kind to you when you were in need? How was that person kind to you?

5. What did you learn about being kind from that experience?

6. **Important Question:** "How will we get our friend to Jesus?" How is Jesus' kindness to the paralyzed man an intentional act of love = thinking of you? How are the paralyzed man's friends an example of seeing a need and responding gladly and generously?

7. **Kindness Comment** (Leader to Participant): I feel _____ when you are kind to someone in need because _____.

8. **Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when friends brought their paralyzed friend to You, You received him, blessed him, and healed him. Help me understand that opportunities of kindness to others are not interruptions, but moments to share Your love. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

WEEK 3, DAY 2

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus healing the paralyzed man.
2. Do you believe that kindness can change the world? Why do you believe that?
3. How can you encourage others to be kind?
4. **Closing Prayer:** Ask one or two of those at your table to close with a brief prayer. Optional: Follow the brief prayer(s) by speaking together the Lord's Prayer.

WEEK 3, DAY 3

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of Jesus healing the paralyzed man.
2. How can you be an example of kindness to others? Any new ideas? Kindness Connections include...
 - Family Kindness Opportunities --
 - Home --
 - School --
 - Neighborhood --
3. **Closing Reading and Prayer: I Corinthians 13:4** ... "Love (Jesus) is kind." Lord Jesus, Your eternal love never fails to bless those who receive it. I am blessed by Your love to be a blessing to others. Thank You for this privilege of being kind and sharing Your love. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS

SHEMA JOURNEY FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

WEEK 4 | HOW TO BE A VERY BEST, KIND FRIEND

INTRODUCTION | KINDNESS CONVERSATIONS AT OUR TABLE...

1. **Shema Journey** ... We want to follow Jesus well. Each day we want to Love (connect to Jesus), Serve (connect to family and friends), and Shine (connect to Jesus' work and witness in the world). Jesus loves God the Father and others, and He is kind. This conversation is about Shine as a kindness connection to Jesus' work and witness in the world.
2. **Suggested Table Prayer:** Thank You, Lord Jesus. The people at this table are a blessing. The food and drink prepared for this meal is a blessing. Your promise to be with us is a blessing Your kindness, so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.
3. **Kindness:** Showing care, an awareness of others around you, meeting the needs of others, being kind by being helpful. Speaking with courtesy and respect. Expressing gratitude to those who have been kind to you.
4. Give examples of how kindness can be the work and witness of Jesus that changes the world.

WEEK 4, DAY 1

1. Read **Luke 10:25-37**. Conversation: What is this story about?

INSIGHT: God's kindness to me empowers me to be a kind friend to others. Kindness describes the idea of love that is rooted in Jesus and does not retreat from need in the face of sacrifice. The good Samaritan is sacrificing attention, time, and money in order to care for another ... just as Jesus sacrificed for me when He died on the cross. Kindness changes the world.

2. Why do you think people passed by the man who needed help and failed to be kind?

3. Why do you think the Samaritan would stop and help the man in need?

4. Who has been especially kind to you? How was that person especially kind?

5. How did you express your gratitude to that person for being kind to you?

6. **Important Question:** "Which of the three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" Jesus' kindness is an intentional act of love = thinking of you. The Good Samaritan is my reminder and example of intentionally being kind and available to help another who is in need. Kindness changes the world.

7. **Kindness Comment** (Leader to Participant): I feel _____ when you are a kind friend to others in need because _____.

8. **Closing Prayer:** Lord, it is not always easy or most convenient to be kind and helpful to others, but I know You have been kind and helpful to me. Help me to be kind and helpful, offering to others what I have received from You. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.

WEEK 4, DAY 2

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of the good Samaritan.
2. During your day, did you see someone being kind to another in need? What was that person doing? What did you learn about being kind to others in need?
3. In our conversations about kindness, what is the most important thing that you have learned?
4. **Closing Prayer:** Ask one or two of those at your table to close with a brief prayer. Optional: Follow the brief prayer(s) by speaking together the Lord's Prayer.

WEEK 4, DAY 3

1. Ask your family members or friends to tell the story of the Good Samaritan.
2. How can you be an example of kindness to others? How are you doing with your Kindness Connections? Any new ideas? Kindness Connections include ...
 - Family Kindness Opportunities --
 - Home --
 - School --
 - Neighborhood --
3. **Closing Reading and Prayer: Ephesians 4:32** ... "Be kind and compassionate." With or without words I can share Your kindness. As I see the opportunity to do so, may I be as quick to share as a Good Samaritan once did. In Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen.



