

Guide for Prayer on Day 1: Sat 1st January 2022

“Return to your First Love” Deuteronomy 6:4-11

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^[a] ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ 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. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

As we begin our week of prayer, we reflect on the overall theme of the week, Returning to our First Love. Although much of our time of prayer this week will focus outward on loving our community and the wider world, and interceding for the many needs in our world, we start with the primary call to love God himself.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3, if we don't have love, we have nothing. We are called in Deuteronomy and by Jesus himself in Mark 12:30 to love the Lord our God with all our heart, souls, mind and strength.

This is not a harsh command, but a call to do what we were created to do, and a call to respond to the One who first loved us. It's hard to resist someone who loves us dearly! In order to love God more, let's spend time today remembering how much we are loved by the Lord.

Out of this love flows everything else. We will have very little love to “impress upon our children” or to “talk about” when we are with others, unless we are filled with God's love and overflow that love back to him and to others.

Ideas for Questions and Bible passages you could reflect on today:

- *When did you first become aware of how much God loved you? Was it gradual or sudden? Recent or many years ago? Is it something you have lost sight of sometimes and rediscovered? Is it something you have never really discovered yet but long to? Bring your thoughts to God in honesty and expectation.*
- *Spend some time thanking the Lord for the love Jesus showed in being Immanuel, God with us, and going through the agony of the Cross for us. Eg Philippians 2:5-11*
- *Reflect on 1 Peter 1:3-9 as you give thanks for God's mercy and kindness to you.*
- *Reflect on 1 John 3:1 and rejoice in the love that has been lavished upon you by the Father.*

- *Respond to God's love by writing down a list of what your life would be like without him. Turn your thoughts to gratitude, writing a new list of things to give thanks for.*