

Guide for Prayer Sunday 2nd January 2022

Theme for the day: Deepening our relationship with God.

- What does it mean to love God?
- How do we invest in this most important of all relationships to make this relationship personal and real?
- How do we put this central relationship foremost in our lives?
- How do we revive lukewarm hearts? How do we overcome pain, disappointment, overwhelming circumstances around us to ensure that we constantly draw close to Him regardless of our circumstances?
- How do we walk with an unwavering trust, love and faith as an outworking of this central relationship on a daily basis for the rest of 2022 (and our lives)?

We are encouraged in Deuteronomy 6:5 to 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength,' but how do we practically outwork this on a daily basis? In preparation for this guide, I had an unusual picture of a spa day. I was wondering what this would have to do with deepening our relationship with God, and this phrase came to mind: 'Come spend time with Me.' God always invites us to spend time with Him.

So, just as you would use different spa facilities to relax, to receive reviving and uncomfortable (the sauna!) treatment or to spend time with friends, take time to carefully and reflectively work through the songs and scriptures below. May these 'facilities' help you reflect on the questions above. Please feel free to use any combination of facilities below or to adapt any suggested activities for your time of prayer.

Main pool: 'Praise is rising, hearts are turning to You':

Praise is rising, eyes are turning to You, we turn to You,
Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for You, we long for You.
'Cause when we see You, we find strength to face the day,
In Your Presence all our fears are washed away, washed away!

Hosanna, hosanna!
You are the God Who saves us, worthy of all our praises!
Hosanna, hosanna!
Come have Your way among us,
We welcome You here, Lord Jesus.



Hear the sound of hearts returning to You, we turn to You,
In Your Kingdom broken lives are made new, You make us new.
'Cause when we see You, we find strength to face the day,
In Your Presence all our fears are washed away, washed away.

- Possible points of departure of prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - Start off by singing 'Praise is rising'
 - What struck you anew about God's character from this praise and worship song?
 - Spend time praying that God washes fears away and that He gives you strength to face any challenges that you may be facing.

Pool of reflection: Philippians 4:4-7:

‘Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’



- Possible points of departure for prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - What practical advice is given in this scripture that could help make your relationship with God more personable and real?
 - Spend time praying using this advice.

Spa treatment: Psalm 23: 1-4:

‘The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul,
He guides me in paths of righteousness
For His name’s sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.’



- Possible points of departure for prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - Psalm 23 is a well-known scripture that brings deep comfort and reassurance. Are there other scriptures that help you in your relationship with God?
 - Perhaps write out one of these scriptures or draw something that communicates what your relationship to God means to you.

The ‘sweat it out’ sauna: Job 11:13-18:

‘Yet if you devote your heart to Him, and stretch out your hands to Him. If you put away the sin that is in your hand, and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning. You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.’



- Possible points of departure for prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - Physically act out opening your arms wide to God as if you were about to embrace Him. Imagine your heart being fully open to Him. If you feel uncomfortable, is it because part of you is closed off to Him?

- Perhaps have an honest, open conversation with Him and let your feelings and thoughts be poured out before Him. Ask Him to help you cast aside anything that you are holding onto very tightly in your hand e.g. anger, disappointment.
- From this scripture, what does God promise will happen if you, in your heart of hearts, do the things above?

The fellowship restaurant: Romans 12:10-13:

‘Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.’



- Possible points of departure for prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - Spend some time praying for others.
 - Is there any one you feel led to call, with whom to spend time?

Outdoor pool: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and ‘O, for a thousand tongues to sing!’:

‘Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.’

‘O for a thousand tongues to sing,
Our great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of our God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for us!

To God all glory, praise, and love
Be now and ever giv’n
By saints below and saints above
The Church in earth and heaven!’

- Possible points of departure for prayer for about 10 minutes:
 - Spend time in thanksgiving to God.



I hope this unusual picture of a spa day has helped you to engage with God. May you constantly hear Him say to you throughout 2022; “Come spend time with Me.” All the best of blessings as you take part in the rest of this week’s theme to ‘Return to Your First Love.’

