

Loving God - Daily Devotionals

One of the keys to "loving God" in "The Shema" (Dt. 6.4-9) is taking steps to remember. Let us help you do that this week - here are five days of readings, prayer, and reflection for you to use as we focus together on "loving God":



Monday

- Read Revelation 2.2-5: [Rev 2.2-5 NRSV](#)
- Do a little reflection: is your relationship with God like the church at Ephesus? Is more about doing for God than being with, spending time with, and just enjoying Him?
- Take some time to pray what you find in Rev. 2.2-5 for yourself and KirkWood
- Dig into this a little more by reading this article about churches losing their first love - [Revelation 2: Has the church lost its first love?](#)

Tuesday

- Read 1st John 4.7-21: [1 john 4.7-21 NRSV](#)
- Read one or both of these devotionals from Richard Rohr about the flow of love from God to us, and then outward from us to others: [The Flow of Love](#) and [Love Is Our Deepest Identity](#)
- Pray what you've read for your own life and KirkWood
- Show someone in your life the kind of love that God Himself has given you.

Wednesday

- Read Ezekiel 16 (hint - you're not reading it right if it doesn't seem PG-13 or even R-rated at times): [Ezekiel 16 NRSV](#)
- Reflect on this stark, raw text: a) What's it tell you about how God feels when we forget or abandon Him?; b) How does it portray the spiritual forgetfulness that plagues God's people?; What are some of the ways that God has provided for you that it's all too easily to overlook or ignore?
- Use this prayer from St. Teresa of Avila for yourself and KirkWood: "Sovereign Lord, who is timeless and wise, Your kindness melts my hard, cold soul. You are a selfless giver, and Your beautiful love fills my dull, sad eyes. I am Yours, You made me. I am Yours, You called me. I am Yours, You saved me. I am Yours, You love me. I will never leave Your presence. Give me death or give me life, give me sickness or give me health, give me honor or give me shame, give me weakness or give me strength, I will accept whatever You give, amen."

Thursday

- Read Colossians 1.15-19, 2.8-10, and John 1.18: [Col 1.15-19 NRSV](#), [Col 2.8-10 NRSV](#), and [John 1.18 NRSV](#)
- Today, spend some time celebrating and appreciating who God is, specifically how His character, heart, mind, and purposes are revealed most clearly in the person of Jesus.
- Want to read a little more? Try this article: [Where have you see God most clearly in your life?](#)

Friday

- If you were to search for the most common way that "loving God" is explained or defined biblically, it would be this - to love God is to obey His commandments. Read Deuteronomy 11, and 1st John 2.3-6 and 5.1-5: [Deuteronomy 11 NRSV](#) and [1 john 2.3-6 NRSV](#) and [1 john 5.1-5 NRSV](#)
- Consider this quote from Richard Foster about the connection between joy and obedience: "Joy, not grit, is the hallmark of holy obedience. We need to be lighthearted in what we do to avoid taking ourselves too seriously. It is a cheerful revolt against self and pride. Our work is jubilant, carefree, merry. Utter abandonment to God is done freely and with celebration. And so I urge you to enjoy this ministry of self-surrender. Don't push too hard. Hold this work lightly, joyfully."
- Spend some time reflecting on where your love for God might ask you to adjust your obedience. Ask God to help you get specific.
- Pray for your own obedience, and for KirkWood's.

Loving God - The Five Elements of "The Shema" (Deut. 6.4-9)

"The Shema" is on the Mt. Rushmore of biblical texts, and may well be the single most important. Here are the five key elements of "loving God" that it mentions:

- 1) Loving God is the single most important command in scripture. The entirety of scripture depends upon it (Matt. 22.39). We're left to ask - if we don't do this, how much does it matter if we do everything else?
- 2) Loving God means that He is unrivaled in your life. Undoubtedly, this is what Deut. 6.4 means in its context: among so many other so-called deities, Israel was to be devoted to their God alone. Thousands of years later, it's not any different - many things and people compete for our chief allegiance, but God alone deserves it.
- 3) Loving God engages all of our being. In the second verse of "The Shema," the word "all" is repeated, and thus central. God wants to relate to all of who we are - how we think, how we feel, what we feel, how we react, where we invest ourselves, etc. And "all" of us means not just the things we want to show Him or tell Him about, but also the stuff about which we're embarrassed or ashamed.
- 4) Loving God is to keep His commands close to our hearts (Deut. 6.6). This begs the question - what do I hold near my heart? Whatever it is functions as a kind of spiritual osmosis: it transfers itself into our heart (our innermost self) and shapes us. The notion of keeping God's commands near to our hearts isn't a demand, as much as it is life-giving, says biblical scholar Patrick Miller. The more we do things God's way, the more we find life as He intends it.
- 5) Loving God is taking concrete steps to remember Him. Note that the most ink in "The Shema" is about this subject (Deut. 6.7-9). The history of Israel bears out that God's people - us included - are far more spiritually distractible and forgetful than we might think at first.