

first, love



This journal belongs to _____

If found, please contact me at _____

This journal written by Pastor of Spiritual Formation, Eryn Holm



How To Use This Journal:

In this journal you will find prayer projects for each week of our series, “First, Love.” Each day's prayer prompt is about an hour long, broken up into twenty-minute increments. Feel free to do the whole hour at once or split up your prayer time in three different parts.

We encourage you to engage with this content at your own level of preference and recommend going through the prayer prompts slowly. You can do this every day of the week, a few times during the week, or all at once. May these Scriptures and prayer prompts be a helpful resource to strengthen your dependence on God and draw you closer to Jesus.

Week 1	Return to our First Love	4
Week 2	God First Loved Us	8
Week 3	We Love God First	12
Week 4	Our Second First is to Love People	16

Week 1

Return to our First LOVE

Beginning

(about 5-10 minutes)

Find a place where you can be alone for some time and be free of distractions.

Allow yourself to get comfortable. Once you are settled, take a moment to focus on your breathing. Breathe in slowly, hold it for a moment, and then slowly release. Allow your body to relax and your thoughts to settle.

Take a moment and tell God what is on your mind - any anxieties, worries, fears, your to-do list, etc. Hand these things over to God and pray this preparation prayer:

“Here I am, Lord. Allow me to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the truth of my life.”

Week 2

God First  us

Beginning

(about 5-10 minutes)

Find a place where you can be alone for some time and be free of distractions.

Allow yourself to get comfortable. Once you are settled, take a moment to focus on your breathing. Breathe in slowly, hold it for a moment, and then slowly release. Allow your body to relax and your thoughts to settle.

Take a moment and tell God what is on your mind - any anxieties, worries, fears, your to-do list, etc. Hand these things over to God and pray this preparation prayer:

“Here I am, Lord. Allow me to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the truth of my life.”

Prayer - Part 1 (about 20 minutes)

God loves you more than you know. Ask the Lord, “Lord, will you show me how you see me?” Sit with this for a moment and see what he brings to mind.

Read through this quote and scripture slowly.

“Genuine transformation requires vulnerability. It is not the fact of being loved unconditionally that is life changing. It is the risky experience of allowing myself to be loved unconditionally.” - David Benner

Romans 8:35-39 (NLT)

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.” 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.

39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Pray through and journal about your feelings and thoughts regarding the quote and passage of Scripture.

- What are you drawn to?
- What are you resistant towards?
- What do both this quote and passage mean to you?
- Express this to God and then take some time to just sit in the truth of God's love for you.

Part 2 (about 20 minutes)

Ask the Lord, "Lord, What may be hindering me from believing and internalizing your love for me?" (sin, relationships with a parent or both, another relationship, wounds, etc)? Open to God about this and sit with him for some time praying through this. **Journal your prayer and/or thoughts.**

Week 3

We LOVE God First

Beginning

(about 5-10 minutes)

Find a place where you can be alone for some time and be free of distractions.

Allow yourself to get comfortable. Once you are settled, take a moment to focus on your breathing. Breathe in slowly, hold it for a moment, and then slowly release. Allow your body to relax and your thoughts to settle.

Take a moment and tell God what is on your mind - any anxieties, worries, fears, your to-do list, etc. Hand these things over to God and pray this preparation prayer:

“Here I am, Lord. Allow me to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the truth of my life.”

Part 2 (about 20 minutes)

Ask the Lord, “Lord, teach me about myself. Is there a certain part of me that is resistant to loving you? What makes it hard for me to love you?”

Maybe your prayer right now needs to be something like, “Lord, I want to love you, but right now I am struggling to.” Or maybe it is even, “Lord, I want to want to love you, but I am struggling.”

Or maybe your prayer is, “Lord, I really do love you.” Tell him that. Express your love to him. Maybe you continue with, “And, Lord, I want to love you more. What would it be to love you more?” Just open to him wherever you are at.

Part 3 (about 20 minutes)

There is nothing you can share with the Lord that you will not be loved in.

In prayer, take something you struggle with (anger, envy, worry, arrogance, etc.) and open to it in the presence of God. Come out of hiding a little with it. What is going on as you do? Then ask God, “Lord, how is this struggle preventing me from loving you?” Take some time to open to the Lord with this. Then, just let it be and see what happens.

Then ask him, “Lord, what would it be for me to be honest with this struggle, but to open to you with it? To remain in you as I struggle? And, Lord, what is it for me to be open to, and cooperate with, your Spirit's transforming work in regard to this struggle?”

Journal your prayer and/or thoughts.

Week 4

OUR SECOND FIRST IS TO LOVE PEOPLE

Beginning

(about 5-10 minutes)

Find a place where you can be alone for some time and be free of distractions.

Allow yourself to get comfortable. Once you are settled, take a moment to focus on your breathing. Breathe in slowly, hold it for a moment, and then slowly release. Allow your body to relax and your thoughts to settle.

Take a moment and tell God what is on your mind - any anxieties, worries, fears, your to-do list, etc. Hand these things over to God and pray this preparation prayer:

“Here I am, Lord. Allow me to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit and the truth of my life.”

Prayer - Part 1 (about 20 minutes)

In the Gospel of Luke (10:30-37) there is a man who asked Jesus, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus responds by sharing this parable:

“A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

“Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Jesus tells us to “go and do the same” as the Samaritan did. In this story the Samaritan has compassion on the man, but he also acts on that compassion by tending to his wounds and paying for his stay at the inn.

Ask the Lord, “Lord, what does this story tell me about the compassion and mercy you have on me?”

Then ask him, “Lord, would you fill me with compassion and love towards my neighbor? And, Lord, would you bring someone to mind who I can have compassion and mercy on? What would it be for me to act on this compassion towards this person?”

Journal your prayer and/or thoughts.

Part 2 (about 20 minutes)

Read through this Bible passage slowly and notice what stands out to you.

Matthew 26:39

“A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Ask the Lord, “Lord, what is it to love my neighbor as myself? How do I love myself? How can I love my neighbor in the same way?” Open to the Lord about this.

Pray through and journal about your feelings and thoughts about this passage and your prayer.

OUR VISION

Calvary seeks to be
a church family that
is better together,
being changed by
the Gospel to

LOVE

like Jesus across
all cultures and
generations.