

LESSON 4: The Greatest Commandment.

God gave Moses some commandments and rules for his people. These helped the people to love God and live in peace with each other. In the Book of Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, which is part of the Torah, God gives his people a special reminder of their responsibility to love God. It is a prayer called the Shema. It helps the Jewish people to focus on the day ahead and on the day that has just gone. It is a commitment to belief. It shows belief in God. The *Shema* is recited twice a day by Jewish people and is a special prayer in the synagogue.

Listen Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your souls and with all your might.

These words which I am commanding you today must remain in your heart.

Teach them to your children and speak of them when you are at home, when you are travelling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Tie these words as a sign on your hand; let them be a sign in the centre of your head.

Also write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-9

Read *God's Story 3* page 92, *What does God want?* based on Mark 12: 28-31. Make it explicit that Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- Q Why do you think the Pharisees and scribes ask Jesus what commandment is the most important of all?
- Q What do you think it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength?
- Q What has Jesus added to the Shema and what difference does that make?
- Q How do we love our neighbours as we love ourselves?
- Q How do we love and care for ourselves well?
- Q How do these two commandments given by Jesus sum up all the Ten Commandments?
- Q How do you think these two commandments give you freedom and what is the responsibility?

YOUR ACTIVITY

- Write a profile of a person showing how they have lived out these two commandments. e.g. Saint Teresa of Kolkata, Pope Francis, Father Richard, Miss Pluckrose or someone you know.