

Losing Our First Love

Discussion Questions

How can we distinguish between genuine spiritual devotion and simply maintaining religious habits or traditions in our personal walk with Christ?

In what ways might a church's busyness and activity actually distract from its primary mission of loving God and loving others?

What does it mean practically for a church to be judged collectively by Christ, and how does this shape our understanding of corporate responsibility?

How can we test whether our theology and teaching align with Scripture without becoming overly critical or divisive within the body of Christ?

What are the warning signs that indicate a believer or church has lost their first love for Christ while still maintaining outward religious practices?

How does the concept of perseverance differ from simply going through the motions, and what role does passion play in sustaining long-term faithfulness?

What specific practices can help us remember and return to the passion we had when we first encountered Christ?

How might churches today be at risk of having their lampstand removed, and what would that look like in a modern context?

In what ways can growing up in a Christian environment become both a blessing and a potential obstacle to authentic faith?

What does it mean to truly listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches today, and how can we cultivate that kind of spiritual attentiveness?

Day 1: The Church That Jesus Evaluates

Reading: Revelation 2:1-7

Devotional: Jesus walks among His churches today just as He did in Ephesus. He sees not just our activities, but the condition of our hearts. The church at Ephesus was busy, doctrinally sound, and persevering through hardship—yet something crucial was missing. They had lost their first love. This passage reminds us that Christ evaluates both our actions and our motivations. Are we serving out of habit or from genuine love? Today, invite Jesus to examine your heart. Ask Him to reveal areas where religious routine has replaced passionate devotion. Remember, He doesn't condemn but calls us back to intimate relationship. The goal is not perfect performance but authentic love.

Day 2: Active but Empty

Reading: James 2:14-26

Devotional: Busyness can become a substitute for genuine spirituality. The Ephesian church was doing many things right—working hard, maintaining doctrinal purity, enduring persecution—yet Jesus identified a critical deficiency. James reminds us that faith without works is dead, but works without love are equally hollow. A full church calendar does not equal spiritual vitality. You can attend every service, volunteer for every ministry, and still drift from your first love. Today, examine your spiritual activities. Are they flowing from a heart captivated by Christ, or have they become mere obligations? God desires relationship before religion. Pause your doing and focus on simply being with Him. Let love motivate your service.

Day 3: Remember, Repent, Return

Reading: Hosea 6:1-6

Devotional: God's prescription for spiritual drift is beautifully simple: remember, repent, and return. Through Hosea, God reveals His heart for restoration. He desires mercy, not sacrifice; knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. When you realize you have wandered from your first love, do not despair. Christ does not immediately remove the lampstand; He issues an invitation to come back. Remember the joy of your early faith—that initial wonder and gratitude. Repent of the drift, acknowledging where duty replaced devotion. Then return to those practices that once fueled your passion: unhurried prayer, worship that moves your heart, Scripture that transforms rather than merely informs. Today, take one concrete step back toward your first love.

Day 4: Listening With Ears to Hear

Reading: Matthew 13:1-23

Devotional: "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This phrase appears throughout Revelation's letters, emphasizing that spiritual hearing requires intentionality. Jesus taught about different soils receiving the same seed with vastly different results. The condition of our hearts determines whether God's Word produces lasting fruit. Are you truly listening to what the Spirit is saying, or merely hearing familiar words? Listening requires slowing down, silencing competing voices, and creating space for God to speak. It means allowing Scripture to function as a mirror, revealing uncomfortable truths about our spiritual condition. Today, read Scripture not to check a box but to encounter the living God. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you ears that truly hear.

Day 5: The Promise of Eternal Life

Reading: Genesis 2:8-9, 3:22-24; Revelation 22:1-5

Devotional: The tree of life bookends the biblical narrative. In Genesis, humanity was barred from it after sin entered the world. In Revelation, access is restored to those who overcome. This promise to the Ephesian church—and to us—is profound: eternal life in unbroken fellowship with God. Sin separated us, but Christ bridges that gap. The one who perseveres, who returns to their first love and maintains it, will eat from the tree of life in God's paradise. This is not about perfect performance but persistent faith. When you stumble, you return. When you drift, you repent. The Christian life is not about never falling but about always coming back to Jesus. Today, rest in this promise: God's desire is eternal relationship with you.