

Reigniting the Vision

Love God, serve people, reach our world
Sunday January 9th 2022

Revelation 2:2-4 (ESV) “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² “‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Introduction: A lot of us have set goals and made resolutions for the new year and for the most part, some of those things will be realized.

Many times, when people think about a vision, they think about what they want to achieve with their life. Of course, we know that doing the right things requires knowing what the end game is (the goal, the vision or the dream).

But in the end, it's not what you achieve in activity that matters most, it's who you become in the process.

For example, if you achieve the vision of reaching your ideal weight and becoming fit yet, in the process, you become prideful of your accomplishment and critical of those who have not attained your level of achievement then you may have succeeded at one level however failed at the most important one.

It's not what you accomplish in activity that matters most, it's who you become in the process. In the process of doing, do not lose value of being.

When it comes to the vision of our church, our focus is not first and foremost on doing things for God, our focus is first on being who God called us to be.

Our vision may include objectives such as equipping believers, planting churches, raising missionaries, opening new small groups, building a youth center, expanding children's facilities and launching a training center however, our passion of doing things for God should never supersede our passion and love for God.

Once again, the vision of our church is not focused first and foremost on doing things for God, our focus is first on being what God called us to be.

What has God called us to be? A community of believers that Love God, serve people and reaches our world.

My prayer for 2022 is that our love for God would grow deeper, our hearts to serve would grow stronger and our desire to reach our world would be rekindled. May the vision of the house be reignited in our hearts.

In the next three Sunday's I want to focus on these three topics, love God, serve people and reach our world.

Let start by talking about being a community of believers that truly love God first...

Why is it important that we love God?

The ultimate motivation to serve others and reach our world should be our love for God. Not a love for His approval or acceptance but a love for who He is and what He has done for us. Everything we do should flow from a deep love for God.

When we lose sight of this truth then our spiritual activities become nothing more than religious lifeless exercises that serve only to make us feel better about ourselves.

It's possible to do a lot of the right activities and even have a measure of success in the eyes of the people and community around us yet in the process lose our passion and first love for God.

This is what happened to the powerful church in Ephesus that Jesus addressed in our opening passage.

The works they were doing were commendable. They were doctrinally sound, they were quick to detect false teachers, they hated moral corruption and they were hard working and patient, all for the name of Christ.

However, there was one thing that they had lost and it was supposed to be the main thing.

Revelation 2:4 (ESV) But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

(NKJV) You have left your first love.

(CEV) You don't have as much love as you used to.

(GNB) You do not love me now as you did at first.

(AMP) You have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me].

The Ephesians Jesus addresses are second-generation believers and even though they had maintained a life of purity and service for Christ they had lost their deep devotion to Him.

How does this happen?

Abandoning our first love happens quietly and gradually and at times in imperceptible shifts of focus. Sometimes we can get so caught up serving in the name of Christ that we lose sight of spending time with Christ.

Biblical example: Martha and Mary

Luke 10:38-42 (NLT) As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! ⁴² There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

Activity is not a sign of intimacy anymore then a man who spends time working around the house and running back and forth doing many things for his wife is cultivating intimacy with her.

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth made a list of 40 evidences that you may have left your first love. We won't read them all but here are a few of them

- You can go hours or days without having more than a passing thought of Him.
- You don't have a strong desire to spend time with Him.
- You don't have a strong hunger for the Word; Bible reading is a "chore" something to mark off your "to do" list.
- Your worship is formal, dry, lifeless, merely going through the motions.
- You crave human companionship more than a relationship with Christ.
- Christianity is more of a checklist than a relationship with Christ.
- You measure spirituality (yours/others') by performance rather than the condition of the heart.
- You are more concerned about physical health, well-being, and comfort than about the well-being and condition of your soul.
- Christianity is defined more what by what you "do" than who you "are" ("doing" vs. "being").

I think that all of us would perhaps admit that maybe our love for God has waned in the last few months or years with all the craziness and busyness that has been going on around us.

This message is not intended to tear us down but to bring us back to that which matters most. Our first love.

Jesus didn't address this church to simply put them out. He was calling them back to their first love.

Revelation 2:5a (NLT) Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first.

The church was found painstakingly working for him with much activity but her love for other things took the place of importance over the love she had for Him. In the place of a bride loving Him he finds a slave working for him.

Why does Jesus want to be our first Love?

We don't love God because it meets some need in him. He is eternally self-sufficient, absolutely perfect, and lacking in nothing.

Jesus wants to be our first love not for His sake, but for ours. God wants our love, first and foremost, because He is love. And love must exist in relationship. Love must have relationship to exist.

God wants for us, what will bring us true fulfillment. And loving God is one of the things that will bring us true fulfillment.

"The basic biblical pattern is happiness with God, unhappiness without God, and happiness regained with God again." - David Naugle

1 John 4:10 and 19 (AMP) This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins...¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

Conclusion: Like the Church of Ephesus we are always called back to the place of the first love. Activity isn't a sign of intimacy. It is important that when we work in kingdom business that we not lose the right motivation, a true love for the head of the church.