

Think with me for a moment about when you first fell in love with your spouse, your children or someone else. Think with me about love. It can be a love for a friend or sibling as well, but it cannot be a love for an object. Studies will show that when you first fall in love your whole mentality changes. The brain actually, literally changes. When you are new in love you have more energy and this is why you can stay up late at night to go on dates and spend time together. Employers will complain about employees that were once good employees until they met that someone. Love changes us, and to an extent that needs to happen. Pastors will often not officiate a wedding for a couple that hasn't been together longer than six months because they have yet to realize each other's idiosyncrasies. You know what I mean. Many of you have raised children and maybe you have had to have that conversation with your daughter. She is saying, "I love him." But you are saying don't you realize that he is wanted in six states for something..." She doesn't get it, because love is like a drug.

But, then things change. You stay together and get married. Maybe you have children. Eventually, maybe you think, "Do we love each other?" This is because we associate love with that euphoria we once had. The euphoria changes but that does not mean the love isn't there. Everything we do for each other is because of the love that is there. This is also true of our commitment to Jesus. Let's talk about that.

In Rev. 2:1-7 The Church at Ephesus is exhorted to not forget their first love.

**My burning theme today is that we love Jesus.**

**My burning application is that all we do stems from our love for Jesus.**

**Let's read Rev. 2:1-7:**

*"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*

*These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. <sup>2</sup>I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. <sup>3</sup>You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*

*<sup>4</sup>Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.<sup>5</sup> Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. <sup>6</sup>But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

*<sup>7</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

- I. All that we do must stem from our love for God.
  - a. The church at Ephesus persevered (verse 2), we see this in verse 2. By the way, there was a real church at Ephesus, but I do believe these letters are to apply to all the churches. In fact, if you look at verse 7 it says for us to hear what the Spirit says to the “churches,” plural.
    - i. This likely included persecution.

*Actor Jim Caviezel, who played Jesus in the movie The Passion of the Christ, suffered during filming. He was struck by lightning more than once. Carrying the cross through the streets of Jerusalem, he fell, separating a shoulder. The harsh Italian weather, grueling days on the set, and hours in the makeup chair every day, contributed to his battles with pneumonia, and hypothermia. During the brutal whipping scene, the actors playing Roman guards accidentally missed the board protecting his back—twice—causing severe pain and wounds.*

*During the filming of the crucifixion, Caviezel hung on a cross, buffeted by stiff winds. The cross swayed as much as three feet in either direction, aggravating his shoulder injury. That was when Caviezel wondered if he had made a mistake.*

*For the first time, I started questioning whether I had done the right thing. More important, I wondered whether it would be possible to finish the film.*

*I actually had the thought that this cross is killing me.... It wasn't funny at the time. I was in pain and I was freezing. Then something happened. It's hard to explain, except to say it might be what an athlete goes through when he seems to be thoroughly beaten and defeated, and then he finds the strength within him to overcome and win.*

You know in what I just shared with you Jim Caviezel persevered. He pressed and as we get into these letters to the seven churches in Revelation I see that we are also commended to press on. We must persevere. But we must not forget about why we are in this. We must remember that it is all about Jesus.

- ii. We will face hardship and maybe persecution, but we must persevere as well.
  - b. The church at Ephesus did not tolerate evil (verse 2), we see this in verse 2. It actually says “evil people.” I would refer you to 1 Cor. 5:9-13:

*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—<sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.<sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.*

<sup>12</sup> *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?*<sup>13</sup> *God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."*

- c. The issue is when we condone evil within the church.**
  - d. The church at Ephesus would test the apostles and would not tolerate false apostles (verse 2)
  - e. Testing church leaders is critical.
- *1 John 4:1-3: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*<sup>1</sup>
  - *2 Cor. 11:13: For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*<sup>2</sup>
    - f. The church at Ephesus endured for Jesus and did not grow weary (verse 3).
    - g. The church at Ephesus hates the Nicolaitans as does Jesus (verse 6).
    - h. It is difficult to say who the Nicolaitans were but they were some form of cult that may have denied moral values during that time, or it could be metaphorical of something else. We could get into that at another time, or give me a call or an email if you want more answers to who they were.
- II. The church at Ephesus neglected their first love (verse 4)
- a. This is the key application for us. Let's break it down.
    - 1. We can be very good about a routine of studying the Word and prayer, but we must do these because of our intense love for God.
    - 2. Our Christian life must not be simply about blind orthodoxy. Orthodoxy means correct beliefs.
    - 3. We must be careful about always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the Truth (2 Timothy 3:7).
    - 4. We must love Jesus.
    - 5. We must desire Jesus.
    - 6. We must be satisfied in Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 1 Jn 4:1–3.

<sup>2</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 2 Co 11:13.

7. Loving Jesus means that we do love His Word because we want to be close to Him and being in His Word means that we are listening to Him.
8. Loving Jesus means that we love prayer because this is communicating with Him.
9. Loving Jesus means that we love the church because He loves the church (Eph. 5:25-26)
10. This means that we must be a part of the church. In connecting with the church we are connecting with Jesus indirectly and directly. (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:14-31 and chapter 13)
11. We must remember our first love, we must remember the Gospel which saved us (verse 5)

III. The church at Ephesus is called to repent.

- a. Repent is listed twice (verse 5). Jesus is giving them a chance to repent. This is showing that there are second chances.
- b. *If they don't repent the Lampstand is removed. Remember the Jewish pool of imagery. I like what the Life Application Study Bible says: For Jesus to "remove your lampstand from its place" would mean the church would cease to be an effective church. Just as the seven-branched candlestick in the Temple gave light for the priests to see, the churches were to give light to their surrounding communities. But Jesus warned them that their lights could go out. In fact, Jesus himself would extinguish any light that did not fulfill its purpose. The church needed to repent of its sins.*<sup>3</sup>
- c. Kierkegaard wrote: *There are, in the end, only two ways open to us: to honestly and honorably make an admission of how far we are from the Christianity of the New Testament, or to perform skillful tricks to conceal the true situation.*<sup>4</sup>

*The Fiddler on the Roof*

"Do you love me?"

All that we do must stem from our love for Jesus. How do you know whether you really love Jesus? I think in your daily walk with Him examine yourself, think about it. 2 Cor. 13:5 says to examine yourself and see if you are in the faith.

When we think about love I notice that with my children there was instant love. There was no question about it.

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<sup>3</sup> Tyndale House Publishers (2011-08-01). Life Application Study Bible NLT (Kindle Locations 161702-161705). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, "What Madness," in *Provocations: The Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Plough, 1999), p. 180; submitted by Mark Galli, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

I recently heard a message where Ravi Zacharius talked about his grandson. He was at Moody's Founder's week and said that one of Winston Churchill's military commanders once said, "I never told you about my grandchildren." Winston said, "Yes, thank you." Ravi said that he was going to tell about his grandchildren. His oldest is Jude and he is four years old. He has a great vocabulary. A few weeks ago, Ravi's daughter was missing her keys. She was looking around and she commented, "I'm losing my mind." The four year old, Jude, said, "Don't lose your heart mom, I'm in there."

We are in the heart of God, He loves us. Don't forget your first love.