



FIRST LOVE

A BIBLE STUDY BY MICHELLE KAREN D'SILVA



Michelle
KAREN D'SILVA



®FIRST LOVE

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TODAY'S SCATTERED SEED

*“But I have this against you,
that you have abandoned the
love you had at first.”*

REVELATION 2:4



SETTING THE SCENE

The book of Revelation has challenged Biblical scholars for many centuries. Written by the apostle John, on the island of Patmos, to seven churches in Asia Minor, the book focuses on the imminent return of Jesus Christ in glory. The ancient Greek word “revelation”, translated as “apokalupsis” (apocalypse), simply means “a revealing, an unveiling.” Hence, revelation is the unveiling of who Christ is. He is the object revealed and He is the one unveiling the future. “But in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2).

The messages in Revelation focus on Hope. A key word you will find throughout Revelation is “conquering.” Jesus has conquered and is triumphant, as are all who belong to Him. These messages also emphasize the importance of works in the Christian life, while carefully and critically pointing to the essence of faithfulness: God must always take center stage in all that we do.

Therefore, the book of Revelation is both a warning to Christians who have grown apathetic and an encouragement to those who are faithfully enduring struggles in this world. Each of the seven churches received a word of invitation from Jesus to return and revive their faithfulness to Him.

This study focuses on the church of Ephesus.

In antiquity, Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor, a center of land and sea trade. Along with Alexandria and Antioch in Syria, it was one of the three most influential cities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Ephesus was also the center for the worship of Diana, chief Goddess of the Greek Pantheon—a symbol of immorality and sensuality. Starting a church in Ephesus was undoubtedly challenging, but Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years and warned the Ephesians of false teachers, sexual perversion, and unfaithfulness.



GOD'S APPROVAL

The Ephesians were known for their spiritual activities. Their great works were always acknowledged by Jesus. He knew the depth of their desire to establish the church and better serve Him.

Over the years, the Ephesians had steadfastly refused to tolerate sin among their members. They worked hard to maintain integrity in the church, critically examining the claims of false prophets and patiently enduring suffering with joy.

Jesus commended them for their toil and patient endurance. In Biblical Greek, an oft-used word for “endurance” is “hypomonē,” which means “to work under strain.” It is the relentless pursuit of the courage required to accept hardship, suffering, and loss for the glory of God. This is what the church of Ephesus was known for: sacrifice and steadfastness.

Yet Jesus taught them and us, that it is possible to maintain sound teaching and moral purity, but to lose a charitable spirit. In our defense of faith, we must therefore guard our hearts, striving always to maintain the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). We must address quickly anything that weakens the integrity of our love for Christ.

*“I know your works,
your toil and your
patient endurance.”*

REVELATION 2:2



SOW:

Read Revelation 2:1-7; John 13:34;
1 John 3:18:19



CULTIVATE:

How do you see your endurance for the Gospel in light of your intimacy with God? Are you doing more than being with Jesus?



GROW:

Make a list of things in your life that have been transformed through the Gospel? How have they enabled you to know Jesus more personally?



GOD'S ADMONITION



“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

REVELATION 2:4

The Ephesians displayed works, toil, patience, and perseverance — yet the Lord had one thing against them. They had abandoned their first love.

What is this “first love?” It is a passionate devotion that is characteristic of a new believer. Patience, zeal, courage, and humility are often seen in the beginning of any new faith encounter. Very often, this spirit is likened to a honeymoon period of newlyweds. Over the years, the love between spouses matures and deepens, but it is important that they never lose sight of the excitement and affection of their honeymoon days.

The Ephesians had lost their passion for the Lord. They were working for the Lord, but were they really doing the Lord’s work? Were they motivated by love? Labor is no substitute for love. When our focus is only on doing things for God, we can forget that our first commitment is to be with the Lord — basking in His presence, listening to His Spirit, and obeying His will.

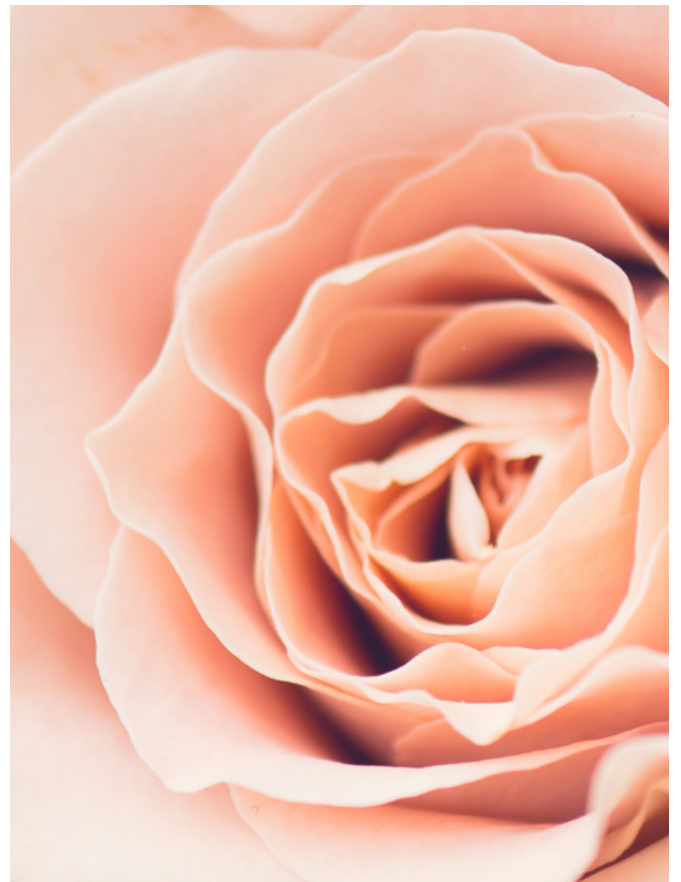
The Lord gave them three instructions to return to the heart of ministry.



REMEMBER

The significance of remembering is a theme carried throughout Scripture. The command to remember was passed down from generation to generation. The people of God were commanded to remember more than the mere events of Israel's history. Rather, they were called to remember God - His faithfulness, His mighty hand that moved among them, and His mercy that saved them. At the heart of any ministry is the passionate pursuit of love.

Jesus was reminding the Ephesians to remember the love that first drew them towards Him. He was calling them to remember the relationship, the passion and the reason they served him.





REPENT

The Greek word for “repent” is the word “metanoia”, which means “change of mind”. It’s a firm decision to turn the other way and return to the heart of God.

The word repent appears numerous times in the Bible and almost six times in the book of Revelation. It is no surprise that repentance precedes faith (Mark 1:15). Conversion begins when we recognize that we are sinners, desperately in need of Grace. God desires that none be lost, but that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3: 9, CCC 1036-1037). Even the grace to respond to God is birthed in our hearts by Him. True repentance always leads to inward freedom. It fuels true passion and propels us to be motivated by our first love.



REPEAT

When Jesus asked the Ephesians to do the works they did first (Revelation 2:5), He was lovingly restoring them to their rightful purpose. The Greek word meaning “do” is “poieo” – a word that is used more than 500 times in the New Testament. It doesn’t just mean to do something; rather, it calls for urgent and quick action in responding to the will of God. God wants us to be intentional in our works and consistent in our pursuit of Love and Truth.

Let us look at some of the “first works” that marked the Ephesians.

- They enjoyed rich fellowship among the brethren (see Acts 18:27)
- They had an eagerness to repent and receive what God had for them (see Acts 19:1-6)
- They were committed to applying God’s Word in their lives (see Acts 19:10)
- They were receptive to the power of God and the gifts of the Spirit (see Acts 19:11, 12)
- They were quick to confess their sin and turn from their evil works (see Acts 19:18)
- They were publicly persecuted for the sake of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:32)
- They were faith-filled (see Ephesians 1:15)
- They were known for their love of the brethren (see Ephesians 1:15)



Over the years, the Ephesians did not become completely void of these attributes, but their affection and intimacy for Jesus was eclipsed by their zeal and ministerial works. Christ urged them to remember, to repent, and to repeat their first works in order to return to the heart of ministry.

What about you? Is Jesus speaking to you today, calling you to return to a simple, passionate love for Him? How will you respond?

In the first steps of your Christian life, you may have had enthusiasm without knowledge. Could it be that today you possess knowledge without enthusiasm?

**SOW:**

Read Revelation 2:1-7 again; additionally, Matthew 24:12-13; Philippians 1:9

**CULTIVATE:**

Where in your life do you need to repent?

**GROW:**

Pray with a friend, remembering your first days after having encountered Christ. Thank the Lord for the gift of His love and the gift of community.



SUGGESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS:

- Talk to your group members about some of the ways you have abandoned your first love in ministry. Take time to remember the days of old, your humble beginnings, and what it felt like to serve with raw passion.
- Let God into these conversations. Lean on each other to provide honest feedback.
- Take time to encourage, comfort, and support one another's journey.
- Pray together and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where the ministry has slacked in true devotion. Carefully discern which steps you will take to reestablish your vision, keeping love at the heart of all you do.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

You might also like to use the resource links provided below to study further.

- Bible Gateway – Every version you can imagine is online
- Bible Word Search
- [You never forget your first love - Meditation by Pope Francis](#)
- [Choose Love: A Message from Pope Francis](#)
- [The Catholic Bible Concordance for the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition \(RSV-CE\)](#)