

Returning to Our First Love

Series: Reset

Revelations 2:1-7 (ESV) “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ² “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Introduction: There was a man who while cleaning out his attic came across letters stuffed into an old box marked “*papers.*” Inside were notes, cards, and handwritten pages he had once written to his wife. He sat down on the floor and began to read.

The words startled him. They were full of passion, tenderness, and devotion. He wrote about missing her when she was only a few hours away, about noticing the smallest details, about how her presence made everything else feel lighter in life. Line after line, he barely recognized the man who had written them.

Life hadn’t fallen apart. No unfaithfulness, no dramatic event that separated them. Just years of routine. Work, bills, responsibilities, exhaustion. Somewhere along the way, affection had been replaced with efficiency, and love with familiarity. He still cared, but the fire had cooled, and he hadn’t noticed when it happened.

Here is a truth for us to remember: Love doesn’t usually disappear in a moment. It fades quietly when it is no longer tended.

And that is exactly what Jesus was speaking to when He addressed the church in Ephesus. They were still serving. Still believing. Still standing for truth and holiness. From the outside, everything looked right.

But Jesus, who sees the heart, said these piercing words: “*Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*”

(NIV) You have forsaken the love you had at first.

Ephesus was the church that the apostle Paul had written to more than thirty years earlier, commending them for their faith in Christ and their love for God’s people.

Ephesians 1:15 (NLT) Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God’s people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you.

It’s sad that this amazing church known for their deep devotion to Christ, a church with a reputation for strong doctrine and perseverance, decades later is being addressed by Christ

Himself, through the Apostle John, being warned that they are in danger: The loss of their first love.

Sure, they kept serving, believing, and standing up for what's right, but their love for activity was greater than their love for Him. Everything they were doing was more about routine than real, heartfelt affection.

- Ministry replaced relationship
- Work replaced worship
- Duty replaced devotion
- Busyness replaced nearness

There are moments in life when we are forced to pause, perhaps during a crisis, or through a dedicated time of prayer and fasting.

In these quiet moments it can feel as though we are sitting alone in a spiritual attic, surrounded by the memories and values that once shaped us. Things that we have lost or neglected because of the hurried pace of trying to make a living.

We don't know the exact reason that led to the believers of Ephesus to lose first love but one thing we do know Jesus, who sees what's really going on inside, encouraged them to turn things around, to reset their love, and get back to how things used to be.

RESET begins when we admit: We have allowed other things to take first place in our hearts.

RESET Requires a Response (Revelations 2:5)

Jesus gives a clear pathway back. RESET is not complicated.

R — Remember "Remember from where you have fallen."

Recall:

- The joy you had when you first came to Christ
- The love for times of worship
- The hunger for His presence

E — Evaluate - what caused you to drift

Be honest about what shifted:

- What became more important than Him?
- When did serving Him become more satisfying than knowing Him?
- Where did intimacy give way to routine?

S — Surrender & Repent

“Repent...” Repentance is not sorrow alone. It is a reset of direction, affection, and priority.

E — Engage Again “...and do the works you did at first.”

Return to practices that stir love:

- Prayer that lingers, not rushes
- Worship that engages the heart
- Time in Word that feeds your soul
- Serving from love, not obligation

T — Take the Warning Seriously “If not, I will remove your lampstand.”

The warning directed at the church of Ephesus was intended for the entire congregation. Unfortunately, they failed to respond to this caution, leading to a notable decrease in both their presence and influence throughout the centuries, especially following the 5th century.

As a local church celebrating 50 years of God’s faithfulness this should also speak to us.

A church can keep its programs and lose His manifested presence. Crowds can remain while the passion for God dies. Leaders can remain active and visible and yet lead without divine direction and power.

Jesus loves the church too much to let it drift quietly; however, He doesn’t override human choice. He will not force devotion or obedience. Each day presents us with the choice to either grow closer or drift away, to deepen our faith or remain superficial, and to dedicate our lives to Christ or prioritize our own desires.

The one who bears the consequences of poor choices is not Christ, but rather us. Ignoring the warnings leads to weakened faith, reduced joy, fractured relationships, and a decline in spiritual vitality.

Despite human shortcomings, Jesus remains committed to His mission. He persists in establishing His church, remaining true to His promises and steadfast in His purpose.

Heeding His warning, by returning to our first love and resetting our hearts, produces the opposite result.

The Reward of Reset

Revelation 2:7 (NKJV) “To the one who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life...”

Those who reset:

- Experience renewed life in Christ
- Walk in restored intimacy
- Live in the joy of His presence
- Carry His light again into a dark world

Conclusion: RESET Starts Now

Like Ephesus, we have a rich story, a faithful past, and meaningful ministry...

But Jesus still asks: Do you love Me like you did at first? RESET is not about doing more. RESET is about loving more. Not increased effort... But renewed affection. Today is a call: Remember. Repent. Return. RESET our heart back to first love.