



Sunday December 11, 2022
RETURNING TO OUR FIRST LOVE

Revelation 2:1-7

1 “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.” ’

The Lord Jesus gave His assessment of the disciples at Ephesus.

They had done commendable deeds which involved their labor, works, patience, perseverance & discernment.

The Lord found one thing which was lacking in them and mentioned it—they had left their first love.

Since they had left their first love, the Lord instructed them to do the following:

- 1) To Remember—from where they have fallen
- 2) To Repent
- 3) To do the first works

So, the first works are supposed to take us back to the place from where we fell—back to our first love.

The consequence for not following the above instructions is rather severe—“I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.”



Lampstand—the light shining capacity of the believer and the body of believers—the church—to influence & impact. The Lord admonished that He would remove that capacity.

Key to understanding First Love & First Works

Matthew 22:37-40

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

This was the Lord’s Jesus response when the lawyer asked the question to Jesus about the great commandment in the law.

- 1) **“You shall”** –It is a command. Not an option.
- 2) **“With all”**—qualifies the command – with everything – without holding anything back.
- 3) **“Your heart ... your soul ... your mind ... your strength” (Mark 12:30).**
 - Heart – your spirit. Your innermost being.
 - Soul – your desires, emotions, your imaginations, your thoughts
 - Mind – your understanding, your intellect.
 - Strength – your physical ability

You shall **love** (Greek, *Agapao*)—quality of love is (Greek, *Agape*)—unconditional, highest form of love.

The question – “Is it really possible for me to humanly obey this command?”

Let’s look at a few other verses to help understand this further.

1 John 4:7,8

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.**

8 **He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

Vs. 8 God is love—Love is the very nature of God

Vs. 7 Love is of God—this love originates from God. He is the source



1 John 4:19

We love Him because He first loved us.

He first loved us. We first receive, experience His love and then we reciprocate with that very same love

So, yes ... it is a command to **demonstrate** this high-quality love to God.
But it is actually a command to first **receive** and secondly **reciprocate**.

Romans 5:5

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

So, the Holy Spirit will **enable/empower** us to love in this manner with the God kind of love which He has poured into our hearts.

So, what does it mean to love God and to return to this first love, do the first works?

Is it telling the Lord that we love Him—in song, in worship, in our prayers?

It is a warm and fuzzy feeling in our heart?

1) TO LOVE GOD IS TO KNOW HIM

1 John 4:7,8

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8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Vs. 8 God is love—Love is the very nature of God.

Vs. 7 Love is of God—this love originates from God. He is the source.

Vs. 7 & 8—There is a connection between knowing God and truly being able to demonstrate this kind of love for Him and for people.

So, if we want to truly love God, we need to make every effort to know Him more. Knowing God is not about getting more information about Him but being in a close relationship with Him.

We have different degrees of relating to and knowing people:

1) **Strangers**—we don't know anything about them.



2) **Acquaintances**—shopkeeper, colleagues, classmates, even neighbors—we know their name and some info about them & we will also share just that much info about us to them.

We might see them frequently though—sometimes every day also.

3) **Friends**—we know a lot more about them, spend a lot more time with them, share a lot more info about us to them, we are close to our friends.

4) **Confidante**—transparency, trust, mutual respect, etc.—**Example:** Spouse.

Philippians 3:10

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

John 15:5

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

- ✓ The Lord is inviting us to the “vine & branch” relationship.
- ✓ The life that is in the vine flows to the branches.
- ✓ The branches abide in the vine.
- ✓ The branches bear fruit because of being connected to the vine.
- ✓ This is ours because we are born again, spiritually united with the Lord and the Holy Spirit indwells us.

So, when we make the effort and the time to be in His presence, to worship Him, read the Word, to pray, commune with Him, the Holy Spirit introduces more of Jesus to us, reveals His Word (His nature and character to us) and thereby we really get to know Him.

When we increase in our “knowing” of Him, we begin to increase in our ability to love Him and love His people.

2) TO LOVE GOD IS TO OBEY HIM

John 14:15

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.



1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Keep = to guard, to fulfil (obey), to hold fast

When we guard/preserve what the Lord has committed to us—call, anointing, gifts, revelation,

When we fulfil (obey) what He instructs us to do,

When we hold fast to the Word, the truth, the ways of God despite opposition, difficulties,

Then, we are actually demonstrating and expressing our love for God.

We are saying, “Lord, I love you!” without actually saying, “Lord, I love you!” when we obey Him.

1 John 2:5

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

Not only are we demonstrating God’s love but His love is brought to completion, fullness in us.

Are we keeping His commands with our whole heart?

Proverbs 3:1

My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands;

So, we carry out the spirit of the command and not just the letter.

Example: Obeying traffic lights only when there is a traffic policeman—*just the letter not the spirit.*

Whenever we say “Yes” to God and “No” to sin, we are showing Him that we love Him.

So, let us not just love God with our words but, through our actions, from our heart.

Today, let us not miss out on the opportunity to love God through our obedience—through keeping His Word—the principles, the precepts, the promises, the instructions and the commandments.



3) TO LOVE GOD IS TO LOVE OTHERS

Matthew 22:37-40

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Loving our neighbor is an expression of our love for God.

1 John 3:16

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 4:10,11

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

The Lord led by example for the kind of love that we must have for one another.

The sacrificial love that esteems the highest good of the other person and lays itself down for the other

1 John 4:11 The Passion Translation (TPT)

Delightfully loved ones, if he loved us with such tremendous love, then “loving one another” should be our way of life!

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 The Passion Translation (TPT)

4 Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one’s achievements nor inflate its own importance.

5 Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honour. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense.

6 Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong.

7 Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up.



This is the quality of love that God wants us to have for our neighbors.

Question: *Who is my neighbor?*

Luke 10:25-37

Vs. 29 Loving God, Loving your neighbor. *Who is my neighbor?*

Vs. 30-36 parable of the good Samaritan

– A man travels (Jerusalem to Jericho), thieves, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan.

Vs. 37 – Jesus says “Go and do likewise”

So let brotherly love continue. Let us do good to all as we have opportunity knowing that when we do this, we do it unto the Lord and as an expression of love for God.

4) TO LOVE GOD IS TO HATE EVIL

Psalm 97:10

You who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked

***Hate** – Intense dislike, to consider as a foe*

***Evil** – wickedness, morally corrupt/bad*

What does it mean to hate evil?

Dislike it & Distance oneself from it

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

If we want our love to be without hypocrisy (unpretentious, undisguised, truthful and sincere) then, we need to intensely dislike every evil deed.

Note: *Dislike the evil deed NOT the evil doer.*

God loves the sinner despite the sin. He is our example.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him.

16 For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world.



17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

- The lust of the flesh (ungodly sensual appetites of the human body).
- The lust of the eyes (craving of the eye—to covet, to be envious of).
- The pride of life (to be arrogant, to be boastful of—position, wealth, power, social status, education).

Do we **tolerate** these in our own lives?

Do we **practice** them?

Have we **allowed** these to become our lifestyle?

If yes, then the love of God cannot be expressed in and through us the way it should be.

And,

We cannot esteem what God esteems

We will be unable to love what God loves.

5) TO LOVE GOD IS TO TRUST HIM

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- Believe that He exists.
- Believe that He is all that He has revealed Himself to be.
- Believe that He is a rewarder to those who seek Him.

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;

Trusting the Lord requires faith

Some hindrances

- A wrong understanding of God. A distorted picture of God. A deficient view of God's love.
- Our past experiences—hurts, disappointments.
- Our rationale, intellect. Our mind is a gift from God but when it is not renewed/aligned to His Word, it becomes a barrier, hindering us from trusting Him wholly.



We are commanded to trust in the Lord with all our hearts just like how we need to love Him with all our heart.

Psalm 18:1,2

1 I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Vs. 1 – I will love

Vs. 2 – I will trust

6) TO LOVE GOD IS TO WORSHIP HIM ONLY

Mark 12:29,30

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

Mark 12 also records the conversation that the Lord Jesus had with the scribe. The Lord’s response to the question is that the great and first commandment is to acknowledge that the Lord our God is one. And then He goes on to teach about loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

- We love God when we start by acknowledging the He alone is God.
- ***And the acknowledgement or recognition of who God is = Worship***

Psalm 95

- Here, the psalmist gives an invitation for everyone to come and worship the Lord. Vs. 1
- He invites everyone to sing and shout joyfully to God and come before His presence with thanksgiving. Vs. 2
- He then acknowledges in worship that the Lord is the great God and the great King above all Gods. Vs. 3

Vs. 6 – Invitation

Vs. 7 – Acknowledgement of who God is.



Worship is so much more than just the songs we sing. It is an attitude of the heart, it is complete surrender, it is a lifestyle, it is a consecrated lifestyle (Romans 12:1,2), it is kindness and generosity (Hebrews 13:15,16)

REVIEW

- 1) To love God is to know Him
- 2) To love God is to obey Him
- 3) To love God is to love others
- 4) To love God is to hate evil
- 5) To love God is to trust Him
- 6) To love God is to worship Him

ACTION

- 1) REMEMBER – from where you have fallen
- 2) REPENT
- 3) DO the first works

SALVATION CALL

SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY TIME

Minister as the Spirit leads



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday December 11, 2022
RETURNING TO OUR FIRST LOVE

The is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full-length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at our [sermons page](#) . Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship, and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture references: Revelation 2:1-7; Matthew 22:34-40

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

Talk about your personal learnings, experiences and challenges faced in growing to love God in all these ways:

- 1) To love God is to know Him
- 2) To love God is to obey Him
- 3) To love God is to love others
- 4) To love God is to hate evil
- 5) To love God is to trust Him
- 6) To love God is to worship Him



If time permits, each one can take a few (3 minutes maximum) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes maximum) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

- 1. families to be protected and strengthened*
- 2. a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.*
- 3. for the BUILD TO IMPACT project—for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.*

Close by thanking God together.



USEFUL RESOURCES



Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

WEEKEND SCHOOLS: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/weekend-schools>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP: <https://pamfi.org>

CHURCH APP: <https://apcwo.org/app>

CHURCHES: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

WORLD MISSIONS: <https://apcworldmissions.org>

SERMON OUTLINE

This sermon is a reminder and a call to return to our first love - God Himself.

In Revelation 2:1-7, the Lord Jesus while commending the church in Ephesus for many good things - their works, labor, patience, perseverance and discernment points out that they were lacking in one area. They had left their first love. In the Lord's eyes, it was akin to falling to a lower place, relationally, from Him.

If they did not repent and do what was necessary to get back, they as a church could risk losing their ability to influence and impact the world for the Kingdom of God.

So, the call is to remember, repent and do the first works.

Let him who has an ear hear what the Spirit of God is saying.

KEYWORDS

love, loving God, loving Jesus, loving people, loving others, growing in love, first love, repent, return, reminder, returning to our first love, first works, loveless, loveless church,



works driven, knowing God, obedience, obeying Jesus, hate, hate evil, hating evil, lampstand, golden lampstands, angel, angel of the church, Ephesus, sermon, sermons, sermon notes, sermon outline, free sermon notes, free sermon outlines, Bible study resources, free Bible study resources.

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

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