

Repent and Do the Things You Did at First

Ps. Craig Mobey

Scripture: Revelation 2:1-5 (NIV)

¹ *"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.*

² *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.*

³ *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*

⁴ *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.*

⁵ *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.*

Introduction

Some might be wondering what happened to their Godly passion and excitement that they had soon after conversion. Many of us were "all fired up" and somehow, that seems to taper off as life happens. Yes, we still hold to our faith, and we love the Lord, but where has the glow (innocent excitement) of that first love gone?

This morning's Scripture has a harsh word in it, "*You have forsaken the love you had at first.*" And this is spoken after Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for their perseverance, endurance, hard work, holding to the truth and not growing weary.

This morning's Scripture is challenging us to firstly reflect where we stand in relation to our first love, Jesus, and then, if needed, do something about it.

This is a popular Scripture at weddings, and I will share with you a sermon on marriage, take it to heart, be encouraged in all areas of your spiritual life and marriage. Be willing to act, as the Spirit leads you to.

Body

Notes on the Ceremony

A traditional Christian wedding ceremony also explains why we have marriage. Marriage, being instituted by God, is not the result of social meetings, good ideas or governmental thinking. Marriage is a Godly covenant.

We see in Genesis chapter 1, verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31 that the Lord repeatedly looks at what He created and calls it good. Soon after in Genesis 2:18, God finds something “not good.” God says, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

And so, we gather on the invitation of a couple to be, to witness their making a covenant through vows to God and one another. We gather as witnesses to help keep them accountable. As Dr. Sproul said, *“It is one thing for a man to whisper expressions of love to a woman when no one will hear, but it is quite another thing for him to stand up in a church, in front of parents, friends, ecclesiastical or civil authorities, and God Himself, and there make promises to love and cherish her. Wedding vows are sacred promises made in the presence of witnesses who will remember them.”*

The marriage ceremony is not a religiously flavoured social gathering. A Christian marriage ceremony is an act of worship, during which something that was never there before, is brought into being with the blessing of God since it is God who gives us life and love. It is on God that we rely to keep our marriage alive and aligned.

A wedding day is a day into which much preparation goes. Marriage is where we pour our greatest and deepest expectations and put all of our emotions on the line. Marriage is where one can achieve great happiness as well as disappointment, frustration, and pain.

The Success Element of Marriage

Don't stray from your first love, Jesus. Keep Him at the centre of your marriage and cherish the love that God has given you for each other as you keep your marriage aligned with the Word of God.

It may surprise you that the success of your marriage does not depend on circumstances, nor does it depend on your environment. It does not depend on your feelings either because your feelings are subject to change. It does not depend on finding the right person either because we believe that just as God brought Adam and Eve together, God has brought you together – God knows that you are the right people for one another.

Therefore, the success of your marriage is about being the right person, the person who God has created you to be in Jesus Christ.

The Best Advice I Have Heard

There is no shortage of marital advice in books, talk shows, social media, and so on. The advice can be from differing points of view, even differing religions. And while this advice can be useful it does not change the fact that God instituted marriage and, in His Word, we find very clear guidelines and principles for marriage. Judge all and any marriage advice by what the Word of God says.

The Word of God is the basis of a successful marriage. Ask couples who have been married for 40, 50 years and longer what the foundation of their marriage is.

The best advice that I have heard about rekindling love is in this morning's Scripture reading. The text is about Christians whose love for God has faded and become cold. Your love for your spouse grows cold when your love for Christ grows cold! Think about that for a moment...your love for your spouse grows cold when your love for Christ grows cold...

In this Scripture reading, we also receive the best advice on what to do about it: *"Repent and do the things you did at first."*

Those things you did, in the beginning, to win over each other's affection are the things that help cherish your love for each other. Do not wait for things to deteriorate. Go back to doing those things you did in the beginning: create habits!

Here are some of the things that you did in the beginning – go back to them!

- Listen to the Lord, consult His Word in all that you do. Have – at least – a daily time of Scripture reading and prayer together. The love of God must

be actively kept at the centre of your marriage. Through His grace and love, your love for each other will grow.

- Tell one another, daily, “I love you.” And mean it. You mean it when the love of Christ – which unlike our love is unlimited – is undergirding your words. Therefore, if it is hard to say, examine yourself in the presence of God. You must love each other through Christ’s love.
- Kiss. No, not “keep it simple stupid.” Kiss – that physical reminder of your love for one another.
- Talk and listen. Not merely hear...listen. There is a difference, one is acknowledging noise and the other is part of meaningful conversation. James 1:18 guides us, “...*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,*”
- The only time you may shout at your spouse is when he/she is in imminent danger: about to be run over or if the house is on fire etc.
- Never be too proud to apologise. Ask yourself, “*Which do I value more; which will glorify God? Being right or being reconciled?*” In pride, God opposes you, in humility God shows you grace. Choose between the two with wisdom.
- Make time for each other. True, you only have 24 hours in the day. If there is such a word, “truer” is that you will first do those things which are important to you. Making time for each other is both important and always urgent – we need each other all the time.
- Keep your partner feeling safe both physically and emotionally. Security matters. Your relationship grew in the safety of one another and the safety of Christ.
- You may differ from one another but do it through Christ so that God is glorified.

- Do something – every day – for the other. Even if it's making a cup of coffee. Do it willingly and lovingly. Find out what the other needs, acknowledge it and make work of it, if possible.

The TV series "Survivor" is about outwitting, outlasting, and outplaying. Don't your marriage be another episode of "Survivor." Instead, serve one another, keeping the example of Christ in mind.

Remind each other of the three Greek words for love, meaning that your love is expressed physically, emotionally and spiritually: eros (romance – sensual through biology), philia (friendship – those things you do together) and agape (self-sacrificing and unconditional – in spite of).

Conclusion

You cannot "fall" out of love. Falling out of love is not a "something that happens." Falling out of love is a choice. And that choice is made when the couple or one of the two take their or his/her eyes off Christ.

Therefore, there is only one thing that can go wrong in a marriage. What follows, arguments, violence, unfaithfulness, gradual separation, incompatibility – call it what you will – each and every one of them is symptomatic of that one thing that can go wrong in a marriage. That thing is, taking one's eyes off Jesus Christ.

And that brothers and sisters, is also how your affection and love for Christ can cool down: when you take your eyes off Him and busy yourself with other things instead.

In an article for Discovery Publishing, Steve Zeisler wrote:

"In many respects, the best biological analogy to marriage is the creation of a life. Man and woman each contribute a cell having 23 chromosomes. The two cells are joined together, and a new human being who has never existed, a unique individual life, is created. In marriage, when two unique individuals, known and loved by God, are given to each other, another sort of life begins. God creates a living thing that never existed before, a unique oneness. And God cares about the life that he calls into being. God made you and me and we matter to him. But if he makes marriages, they also matter to him, and we ought to regard them that way." – Amen.