

# Your First Love

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon emphasizes the importance of rekindling one's first love for Jesus through remembrance, repentance, and returning to initial practices of faith.*

**Duration:** 35:51

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 2:2, John 4:14, Ephesians 2:7, Revelation 2:4-5, Revelation 3:15-16

**Topics:** "First Love", "Repentance"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Revelation chapter 2, focusing on the message to the church of Ephesus about their loss of first love for Jesus. It emphasizes the importance of repentance, returning to the initial fervor and love for Christ, and rekindling the joy of serving Him. The sermon highlights the danger of lukewarmness in one's relationship with God and the need to act out motions of love to reignite true emotions of love for Him.

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## Transcript

Well, we're in the book of Revelation, chapter 2 this week. We encourage you to read it over and join with us tonight. We get into the history of the church as Jesus addresses the seven churches.

And so in chapters 2 and 3, we get sort of a brief prophecy of the future of the church from its beginning to the present time. So we encourage you to read over chapter 2 and study it and then join with us tonight as we gather to study together the second chapter of Revelation. Beginning with verse 1 through verse 5, I'd like to read to you a portion of the message of Jesus to the church of Ephesus.

He said, unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil, and how you have tried those which say they are apostles and are not, and you have found them liars. And you have borne, and you have patience for my name's sake, and you have labored, and you have not fainted.

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works, or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, unless you repent. First love.

Love is a many-splendored thing, someone has said. Many things, however, that pass for love are not true love. It seems like we spend a great part of our early life searching for true love.

And so many times when we thought that we have found it, it turned out to be very disappointing for what we thought was true love was not true. The reason for this is that we have in our minds an ill-defined picture of that perfect person that God has prepared for us. And we meet someone, and they seem to have some of the qualities of that image that we have in our minds of that perfect person.

We're looking for that mate that fate has created us for. And we get acquainted with them, and we have this ideal in our mind, and suddenly we imagine that this person fits that ideal. And as we go with them, we are prone to overlook any discrepancies and any failings.

But as we get better acquainted, we begin to observe traits that do not fit the ideal that we have. And we try to ignore the disparity in the beginning, but as time goes on, it becomes very obvious that they're not that ideal person that we've been dreaming about. And we wonder, how could they have ever deceived me? Into thinking that they were the one, when in reality they are not.

But in reality, you were deceiving them too. As you were going with them, you were so gallant and gracious. You always made sure that you opened the car door for them.

And you were so understanding and so forgiving, and so kind and generous, because you were seeking to make a good impression. But there comes the time of reality, when we realize I was wrong. This was not the one.

First love is an interesting phenomena. You lose your appetite. Your mind is completely absorbed in thinking about that person.

You can't get them out of your mind. You want to be constantly with them forever. And saying goodbye to them was always a painful experience.

And you fantasize about that day when you'll be standing before the minister, taking your vows of love and faithfulness, and being joined together as husband and wife. Where you will no longer have to say goodnight and get in your car and drive home alone. But you can say goodnight, turn off the light, and just enjoy the presence of that one sleeping beside you.

You close your eyes and you dream beautiful dreams. First love. A total beautiful experience.

A euphoria that you never want to end. But somehow it does seem to end. Somehow the blush of love begins to fade.

And you begin to take for granted something that once was so exciting and so thrilling to you. I don't know why it is that love does seem to lose its allure and glamour. Reality never can quite measure up to the fantasies that we had.

Here with the church of Ephesus. Jesus is chiding them. They're a good church.

They're a working church. They are a discerning church. But Jesus said, I have somewhat against you.

You have left your first love. Notice he didn't say you've lost your first love. You don't lose it, you leave it.

Big difference. If you lose something, you don't know where to find it. If you leave something, you know where you left it and you can go back and pick it up again.

But the joy, the excitement that they experienced when they first surrendered their lives to Jesus was somehow not as great as it once was. And perhaps that is the case with you. When you first discovered the love of Jesus Christ and you surrendered your life to him, you couldn't wait to get to church.

You were reluctant to leave even after the service ended. You were eager for the word of God and you loved to gather and study and to learn more about Jesus. You enthusiastically sang the songs of praise and you wanted to talk about Jesus to everyone you met.

Can you remember those days? But what about today? Now you are looking for almost any excuse not to come to church. You keep looking at your watch and wondering how much longer before you can get out of here. And you've lost your interest in studying the scriptures.

You no longer truly worship as you sing but just sing sort of out of rote. You mouth the words but you're not thinking of the meaning. And you're embarrassed to talk about Jesus.

If his name comes up in a conversation, you just sort of try to avoid it. If I'm describing your symptoms, then I will give you the proper diagnosis. You have left your first love.

Interesting to read God's lament in the book of Jeremiah over Israel. God said, I remember the kindness of your youth. I remember the love that you had for me when we were first going together.

How you were willing to follow me anywhere even into that barren wilderness. Then God said, what iniquity did your fathers find in me? What did I do wrong? Where did I go wrong that that love is no longer what it once was? You are now following after emptiness. And you've become empty.

The Lord said, I delivered you out of Egypt. I led you through the wilderness. I brought you into this fruitful land that you might enjoy a wonderful life.

But over time, you defiled the land. The priests no longer seek the Lord. The pastors have transgressed the law and the prophets were prophesying unto Baal.

He said, search your history books. Find out if a nation has ever changed their gods. Even though their gods were false.

God said, my people have created two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water. And they've hewn out cisterns.

But they are broken cisterns. They can't hold water. In the land of Israel, which is a land that is always, it seems, lacking rain during the long summers.

Two sources of water. The artesian springs that are there in the land. And then the cisterns.

Sort of reservoirs. They would carve them out of the solid rock. And they would then direct the flow of the rain water during the spring and winter months.

Into an opening into this big cave underneath where they would store. It was water that would be stored for the summer months. And it was always rather stale.

But yet it was water and water was important for survival. God said, you've forsaken me. I'm a fountain of living water.

I'm an artesian well. And instead you've gone after these cisterns. But they are broken cisterns.

They can't hold water. Up near the top of the Mount of Olives. There near the hotel, just on the path coming down from the hotel.

You will see a sign that says, grave of the prophets. And there is there a path leading into this cistern. That the fellow it says is the grave of the prophets.

And though there's no sign that any prophet was ever buried there. He's trying to make a prophet off of it. And for a few shekels you can go in and look at what he calls the grave of the prophets.

I've been in there. What happened is that some fellow years ago, how long we don't know. Spent probably the better part of his life.

Carving this huge cavern out of the solid rock. In order that he might have a reservoir to store the rainwater during the winter and spring. So he could water his gardens in the summer.

Having completed this project. Carving the little channels above to channel the rainwater that fell there on the Mount of Olives. Into his cistern.

When he finally completed it. Everything ready to go. The rains came.

Excited, you know, I now got my water storage. And going out and letting his bucket down. He hears this clang.

No water. What had happened? He mistakenly spent all of these years. Carving out this cistern.

But he carved it over a fissure. And all of the water that came in just drained out. So what they did was make a family burial plot.

Out of the cistern. And so you can go in and you can see all of the places where the bodies of the family were laid. As it has become or did become.

Now, as I say, the guy's trying to just profit off of it. But it's interesting. Forsaking the fountain of living water.

The word of God. You hew out cisterns. You have to have a system of belief.

You have to believe in something. But they are broken cisterns. They can't hold water.

And the interesting thing to me is that they end up a grave. People are buried there in these broken cisterns. In the next chapter of Revelation.

We find that Jesus is taking the temperature. Of the church of Laodicea. The church in the last days.

And he is saying to them. You are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were either hot or cold.

But because you are lukewarm. I will spew you out of my mouth. What the Lord basically is saying is.

I can't stand a lukewarm relationship. He was taking the temperature of the church. And he graded it on the bell curve.

And so it is today. There are some who are very fervent in their love for the Lord. Very excited about their relationship with him.

And then there are those that are rather cold. Cool. But I am afraid that the vast majority.

Lie in that condition that Jesus described as lukewarm. Neither hot nor cold. And in taking your temperature today.

Where would the mercury fall? Fervent? Hot? Cold? Or would it be in that vast range of lukewarm? The Ephesian church was in that lukewarm area. He said, I have this against you. You have left the first love.

No longer that fervent love for me. And Jesus counsels them. First of all, remember from whence you have fallen.

Remember the relationship that you once had with Jesus. The sheer joy of serving him. The excitement of feeling the presence of Jesus so near to you.

And the full abandonment of yourself to his love. Maybe you even wrote little love notes to him and put them in your Bible. But those days are past.

Jesus said, remember them. And then he said, repent. As you look at your condition and your relationship with him today.

It's to be sorry. Sorry enough to change. Many times a person will say, oh, I'm sorry for what I did.

But then they go back and do it again. That isn't true repentance. Repentance is being sorry.

But sorry enough that you change and you don't do it again. And then Jesus said, repeat. Do your first works over.

Now there is an interesting psychological observation. And it is this. If you act out a motion.

You will soon get the corresponding emotion. It's an important law to understand. Especially in marital relationships.

Acting out a motion, you'll get the corresponding emotion. Sometimes we play dangerous games in marriage. We act like we're upset.

We're angry over this. And it's sort of an act. We act aloof.

Like I'm angry with you and I can't forget it. But you soon get the corresponding emotion. And you really are aloof.

And you really become separated. It works the other way too. Act out the motions of love.

I love you and I need you and I can't live without you. You're so important to me. More important than any person on this earth.

And as you act out those motions of love. You will get the corresponding emotion. And so many marriages are torn apart.

Because you're acting like you don't care. And so many marriages are healed. Because you act like I do care.

And I do love you. In spite of what's happened. Jesus is saying, do your first works over.

Go ahead and act out. Do the works that you once did. And you'll find that you'll soon get the corresponding emotion.

And that love that you once had will be rekindled. The joy that you once experienced is still there. Worshipping, singing to him and all.

Will still become a very beautiful and meaningful experience in your life. Start singing with real enthusiasm. And go back and begin to daily feed on the word of God.

The problem with the church of Ephesus was not works. Jesus said in verse 2, I know your works. And your labor.

In verse 3, again he speaks of their works. And he said the latter are greater than the first. But he was concerned.

Because their works were not motivated by love. Their works were motivated by a sense of duty. Or a sense of obligation.

They had become sort of cool. In their relationship with the Lord. Though they were going on with the works.

The love that prompted the works in the beginning was no longer there. And they began to resent the works. They kept doing them.

But they were thinking, oh, do I have to do that again today? Oh, you know, I'm tired of this. I'm sick of this. But still they were faithful doing the works.

But the heart wasn't in it any longer. And that's the thing that disturbed Jesus. Though they had the works.

The motivation was changed. And it wasn't love. A love for him prompting the works.

We had a gardener here at the church several years ago. Great gardener. He was a landscaper.

He had a great eye for beauty. As far as flowers and all. And he kept the church looking so beautiful.

But this guy. As he was working out there. In the gardens.

Planting the plants and so forth. He would be muttering under his breath. Cursing.

Cursing the job. People would walk by and they would be shocked. Because they'd hear this guy.

And they'd come in and they'd say, I just walked past him. And he was just talking about how miserable he was. And how he hated this job and so forth.

And so I called him in. And I said, you know, you're a great gardener. But we're going to let you go.

We don't want anybody serving the Lord without heart. Without your heart being in it. And obviously your heart isn't in it.

And so we have to let you go. God doesn't want service without heart. He doesn't want you to be motivated through the sense of obligation.

Oh, if I don't do it, they're going to call me up and find out why I wasn't there and so forth. And so I better go. No, he doesn't want that kind of service.

Or that kind of work from you. He only wants that which is prompted by fervent love. It's interesting.

That this was so important to Jesus. That he threatened the church of Ephesus. Many threats are coupled with the words, or else.

If you don't do this, or you do this, or else. And Jesus is basically saying this to Ephesus. Repent.

Do your first works over again, or else. I will come and remove the candlestick out of its place. This takes us back to chapter 1. As John has his vision of the glorified Christ.

He sees him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And he declares that these seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches. Where is Christ? Walking in the midst.

Jesus promised his disciples. That if just two or three of you gather together in my name. I will be there in the midst.

And so, John sees Jesus walking in the midst of his churches. But Jesus said to the church of Ephesus. Unless you repent.

Unless you do your first works over. I'm going to move the candlestick out of its place. Or basically, I will remove my presence from the church.

And as we look at the history of the church. And as we look at many churches today. Tragically, they are without the presence of Jesus in the midst of the people.

They have left their first love. And Jesus has left the church. As we pointed out in the beginning.

Many times we are fooled. Into thinking that a person is that ideal person. Until we come to know them better.

And then we realize they are not what we had fantasized them to be. And what we were in love with was something in our own mind. And not the reality of the person.

And coming to know them. I no longer feel that great love for them. With Jesus, it's different.

The more you know him. The more you will love him. To know him is to love him.

The more you know him. The more you will love him. And thus the importance of coming to know him better.

And that will revive the first love. That will bring you back to that fervent love for him. As you come to truly know him.

You'll never fully know him in this life. You'll never know the fullness of his love in this life. It is so great, so vast.

It will take all of eternity to reveal it to you. One of my favorite passages of scripture is Ephesians 2.7. As Paul is writing to them concerning the future. And he said that in the ages to come.

He might show the exceeding riches. Of his grace and kindness toward you through Jesus Christ. Ages to come.

God will be revealing and showing just how great, how vast. His love is for you. It will take all of eternity to take it in.

Oh may God help us today. As we look at our relationship with the Lord. And as we question.

Where am I today? Is my love for him greater than it has ever been in the past? Do I desire him more than I have ever desired him before? Am I going forward in my walk and love for him? Or have I left my first love? If so. Then remember what it once was. And repent.

And go back and do your first works over. And you will find that he hasn't changed. You were the one that changed.

He is still there loving you supremely. And desiring your supreme love for him. Father we thank you.

That you have loved us with an everlasting love. And you have drawn us by that love unto yourself. We might know the blessings of living in fellowship with you.

Lord we realize that in the church today. In the congregation here. There are many.

Who have left their first love. They are not as fervent for you as they once were. The cares of this life.

The deceitfulness of riches. And the desire for other things has come in. And has diminished their love.

Lord help them to take means to correct this wrong. And may they return to their first works. That they might experience again.

The fullness of your love. And mercies through our Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we ask these things father.

And for our sake. That we might not find that. You have removed your presence from our lives.

But may we always Lord experience. Your presence in the midst of your people. In Jesus name.

Amen. Shall we stand. The pastors are down here at the front.

To pray for you today. If God has spoken to your heart. And the Holy Spirit has sort of turned the light on.

And you see you know I am not. Where I once was in my walk with Jesus. I have grown cold.

I have left that first love. May he draw you back to it. And may you just come today.

Back to that place. They are here to pray with you and to pray for you. And we would encourage you as we are dismissed come down.

And let them minister to you this day. Make it a resolve. I am going to love him with all of my heart.

Mind, soul, strength. As he would have me to love him. The Lord bless thee.

And keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee.

And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up. His countenance.

Upon thee. And give thee peace. God bless you.

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