

Isn't Jesus Wonderful!

by E.A. Johnston

Maintaining a love relationship with Jesus is essential to staying on the full stretch for God and being proactive for Christ.

Duration: 23:52

Scripture: Revelation 2:1

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the importance of maintaining a strong and intimate relationship with Jesus. It uses the analogy of a boy and his dog to illustrate the desire for companionship and the disappointment when that companionship is neglected. The sermon also references the story of the Church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-5, highlighting the danger of losing one's first love for Jesus. The speaker emphasizes the need for daily quiet time with Jesus and warns against becoming too busy with service to neglect worship and intimacy with Him.

Transcript

Recently I was driving down the road and in front of me was a car with its left turn signal on. It blinked and blinked but the car never turned. The car just kept on driving for miles in that direction.

There's a passage of scripture which illustrates this. It's in Revelation chapter 2 verses 1 through 5. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear with them which are evil.

And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake has labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

These are stern words from the Lord Jesus Christ to his church in Ephesus. Notice how he acknowledges the fact that these church members were busy for the Lord, and for my name's sake has labored. These church members were not lazy or negligent in their service for God.

Quite the contrary, they were model Christians in this regard. They fought for truth, stood against evil, and exercised patience as they labored for their Lord. But something happened in their lives which they were unaware of.

They were like the driver of that car driving down the road and had their turn signal on, but they were not aware of it. You see, they had turned away from God and their affections, and they didn't even know it, but Jesus noticed it. Listen friends, Jesus is more concerned about our love for him than our service to him.

He wants us to maintain an intimate love relationship with him, and when we grow cold toward him, it grieves his heart. Decays often begin in the closet, meaning that our love relationship with Jesus often dries up from a lack of a vital daily quiet time and an utter reliance upon him. Don't misunderstand me here.

You can get up early and faithfully read several chapters of your Bible each day and still grow cold towards Jesus. You can be zealous in your work for him and still lose your love for him. I'm speaking of a daily tryst with the lover of our souls, where when our alarm clock goes off, we jump out of bed and quickly go to our place of devotions because we cannot wait to get in his presence, to hear his voice, to share our troubles with him, and to get on our heart what is on his heart.

Unfortunately, it's easy to grow cold in our love toward him by being too occupied in our service to him. There's a story about Duncan Campbell which illustrates this. Duncan Campbell was in a study early one morning preparing a sermon on the Holy Spirit which he was going to preach to a group of ministers at a convention.

From up in his study, he could hear singing downstairs in the parlor. It was his 16-year-old daughter's voice and she was happily singing a hymn. He went downstairs to listen to her.

He asked her, Lassie, what is there to sing about so early in the morning at six o'clock? She came over and sat in his lap and exclaimed, Oh Daddy, I have just spent an hour with Jesus. Isn't Jesus wonderful, Daddy? Duncan Campbell felt like a knife had been stabbed through his heart. That remark stung him because at that point in his life, Jesus wasn't wonderful to him.

It broke his heart and he went back upstairs to his study, threw himself down on the floor and wept for his lack of love for Jesus. Here he was, a settled pastor, preparing a sermon on the Holy Spirit to preach to a bunch of ministers and Jesus wasn't wonderful to him. Oh friends, how easy it is to become distracted with our service to the King, to the neglect of the King.

Jesus wants us in a red-hot love relationship all the time. We must do everything we can to maintain the embers on the altars of our hearts so that we do not grow cold in our affections to him. Let me ask you a question right now.

Is Jesus wonderful to you today? Is your love for him as deep as it was when you first came to know him? Or have you become like the Christians in Ephesus who have left their first love? Notice in our text in Revelation that Jesus tells his church in Ephesus to remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent. To fall out of love with someone is a terrible thing. When a marriage begins to fall apart, it's usually because one of the partners begun to grow cold towards the other in their affections and soon they forget what it was that even attracted them to that person in the first place.

But when they were first dating, they couldn't wait to get into the other person's presence and be with them. But now their love has grown cold toward that person who was once held dear. Do we not do the same to Jesus? We tell him, look Lord, I'm just too busy to spend time with you right now.

This ministry project is consuming me and I'm on a deadline. I'll spend more time with you tomorrow. But tomorrow comes and we're still too busy to walk in the garden with him.

Remember that old hymn in the garden? I come to the garden alone and the dew is still on the roses and I walk with him and I talk with him. You know, we're just too busy for him today. We don't have time for him because we're too busy serving him.

Jesus said to his disciples, abide in me and I in you. That word abide in the Greek is meno. It means to dwell, to linger, to spend time with Jesus.

But we're too busy for that. I am reminded of a story I heard about Billy Graham. Mordecai Ham was the evangelist who led Billy Graham to the Lord and eventually the two evangelists became friends.

One day Billy Graham went to visit Mordecai Ham to ask his advice about ministry. Billy said, Mordecai, what advice can you give me? Mordecai Ham looked him in the eye and replied, Billy, don't ever lose your sweetheart love for Jesus. Let me ask you, have you lost your sweetheart love for Jesus? Is he your sweetheart right now? If not, what has come between you and him? Has your love for him grown cold through the lack of a vital daily quiet time with him? Listen friends, are we just too busy to spend time with him? Are we like Martha who was preoccupied with many things when we should be more like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and was mindful of the one thing needful? Remember this friends, both service and worship are necessary, but they must have their proper order.

Worship must precede service. Also, our affections can grow cold toward Jesus through discouragements or disappointments. We can allow our hearts to harden from someone who has hurt our feelings and this may affect our love for Christ.

Even disappointments in ministry can make our hearts grow cold towards Jesus. If we're not careful, we must take everything to him. Peter tells us to cast all your cares on him for he cared for you.

We just don't believe that Jesus really wants to spend time with us, but he does. He looks forward to spending time with us. It is like the story about the boy and his dog.

You see, this boy had a bird dog that just loved being with him. It was summertime and every day as that boy got up, he would go out to the porch of his family's farm and there that dog would be waiting for him. They would run together through the fields or the boy would jump on his bike and the dog would playfully run beside him.

Every day as that boy got up, there that dog would be sitting on the front porch wagging his tail, ready to spend the day with his favorite master. But one day the boy met a girl who lived on a neighboring farm and when the boy got up in the morning, he couldn't wait to go visit that pretty red-headed girl. He would get annoyed at that dog if it tried to tag along with him.

Finally, in anger, he threw a stick at that dog one day and told it to scoot. The dog hung its head and backed away. The boy no longer needed his faithful friend.

Another had captured his heart and affections. How is it with you and your faithful friend? Has another captured your heart? Jesus waits every day for you to spend time with him. He actually looks forward to it.

He is waiting for you now to spend time with. He misses you. Listen, friends.

All Jesus wants from us is us. He wants you. He loves you so much, he hung on a cross and died for you.

Why has your love for him grown cold? What has come between you and God? Has your turn signal been on for a while, signaling the fact that you have turned away from God and your affections for him? Notice in this passage from Revelation that Jesus states three things we must do if we find ourselves in this cold-hearted position. Number one, we are to remember from where we have fallen. At what point did your sweetheart love for Jesus begin to wane? We are to recall how it used to be between us and Jesus.

Remember the early love we had for him for saving us. We are to go back and not only recapture that love, but each day stoke it like a fire and make sure the fire never goes out again. Next, Jesus says we are to repent and brokenness over our lovelessness toward him.

The next thing we must do is go back and do the first works. Do the things that kept you in a red-hot love relationship with Jesus. Keep a regular daily quiet time.

Live in obedience to him and spend time in his presence, getting on our heart what is on his heart. Spend more time on our knees and in our Bibles. We are commanded to do the first works.

Then Jesus issues a warning for those who do not comply and remain in this loveless state. He says, do these things or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick. He will set us aside.

Instead of being useful to him, we become useless to him until we are willing to comply with those things which he has mentioned. I know some pastors who have let their ministry steal their love from Jesus and Jesus has set them aside. Oh, they still have a church and people still come, but there is no power there.

They are like Samson who awoke out of his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he wished not that the Lord was departed from him. I know men in the pulpits who are relying on their personalities to keep a crowd because they no longer have power from on high.

So things are substituted to make up for the lack. They may have crowds attending their ministry, but they have no power. Their turn signal is blinking and they don't even know it.

And I know churches that have moved away from the heart of God and have not maintained a vital love relationship with Jesus through brokenness and humility. Their pride has crippled their usefulness for reaching their lost community. Jesus has removed their candlestick.

Their doors are open, but on top of their building is a blink and turn signal that advertises the fact that the glory has departed and they are completely unaware of it. Lord, help us. When will we awake and realize how far we have moved away from God? When I think of walking with God, my mind goes to Enoch and how he walked with God, how God was pleased with him.

God enjoyed walking with Enoch so much he translated in the glory so they could continue their uninterrupted fellowship. Listen, friends, I can hear a man preach and within 10 minutes tell you if he has a close walk with God or not. And I can listen to a man pray and tell you within two minutes if he has a close walk with God or only as good as our walk with God.

That is the one thing in life you cannot fake. You cannot fake a walk with God. You're only fooling yourself.

Let me share an incident which happened to me and it illustrates why we need to maintain a close walk with God every day through a vital love relationship with Him. I was at a week-long conference and every day was a spiritual high. I was busy in the Lord day and night and enjoying those mountaintop experiences.

But what usually follows a mountaintop? A valley of despair. At the end of this particular conference, I had to be at my office early next morning and I rushed my daily quiet time. I did not meet God that morning because I was in a hurry.

And while I was in my office that day, I sinned. On my drive home, tears streamed down my face as I cried out to God, Oh Lord, how could I sin like that after the week I just had with You? How could I do that? Then a certain passage of Scripture was brought to my mind from Exodus in chapter 16 where the Israelites had manna to eat. But when some of the people stored up the manna, when they hoarded it for the next day, it grew worms and stank.

As I pondered that passage, a voice spoke to my heart. Not an audible voice, but that still small voice which speaks to the believer. You know of which I speak.

Anyway, I heard God telling me the following, You cannot live today on yesterday's experience of me. You must come to me fresh every day for your portion. And that is so true.

God wants us to stay in a red hot love relationship with Him. And we must spend quality time with Him every day, seeking His face and hearing His voice. But there is a cost to staying in a close walk with God.

My late mentor Stephen Ofert used to say, what costs counts and what counts costs. But we don't want to pay the price and that is why we lack power. God wants us to stay hot on His trail and hear His voice so we can join Him in His work.

God does not want us to slow down and go easy like D.L. Moody almost made the mistake of doing. When the great evangelist D.L. Moody reached the age of 50, he developed heart trouble. This was confirmed by a leading physician in London, where he was preaching at the time.

He took the doctor's orders to slow down. And before embarking for America, he sent a cable to his friend in Chicago R.A. Torrey. He informed Dr. Torrey that he had decided to cancel his fall campaign on the advice of his physician and he ordered Torrey to make the necessary cancellations to the fall meetings at the upcoming World Fair in Chicago.

On his way back to America, the ship he was on began to sink. His teenage son, Will, was on board with him and this added to his concern. At one point in the dark night as the ship was sinking, the captain informed the passengers all they could do was to await their doom.

All hope seemed to be gone. Moody went below deck to pray in his cabin. Miraculously, the ship just faltered for a few days at sea until another vessel came to its rescue.

But the key here is listen to what went on in Moody's cabin as he wrestled with God that dark terrible night. During the long hours Moody wrestled with his soul, he heard as it were the voice of his Lord. Were you ready to let up, to go slow? Then I will take you to myself.

You are no use to me unless you are on the out and out. Moody said of this incident, no one on earth knows what I passed through as I thought that my work was finished and that I should never again have the privilege of preaching the gospel of the Son of God. And on that dark night, the first night of the accident, I made a vow that if God would spare my life and bring me back to America, the World's Fair campaign should be undertaken with all the power that he would give me.

From that point on, Moody signed his name D.L. Moody, O.O. Once the British minister asked him, Mr. Moody, I signed my name D.D. for Doctor of Divinity, but why do you sign your name O.O.? Moody smiled and replied, I am D.L. Moody, O.O., out and out for him. Listen friends, that is how God wants us to be, on the out and out for him, constantly pursuing him in a red hot love relationship with Jesus, the lover of our souls. We need to be on the out and out for him.

God uses those individuals who are on the full stretch for God. Look at the men and women in history whom God has used and they each share a common denominator. They were each on the out and out for Jesus Christ.

Listen, the Apostle Paul, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, Knox, Edwards, Spurgeon, Moody, each shared a common denominator, a fire in their belly. They were each so eaten up with the gospel and thirsty for Christ and filled with the Holy Ghost, they could not stand idly by while others perished. They saw nothing but eternity, worshiped the Holy God and served the risen Christ, living not for earth nor its gains, but living only for heaven and its rewards.

When they preached, they linked the devil with sin and the cross with salvation. They preached hell and its fire and Christ and him crucified. Not one of them feared king, queen or pope and not one of them sought the compliments of men.

We have an admonition in scripture to occupy till I come and to be proactive for Christ. So we need to remain in a close love relationship with Jesus and every day receive our marching orders from him. To fail to do this is to risk being sidelined or to have our candlestick removed for our disobedience and not loving him enough.

Listen friends, he gave his all for us. We should give our all for him. I believe the real reason why we sometimes leave our first love is that we have lost the wonder of what he has done for us by redeeming us.

The agony of the cross no longer brings tears to our eyes. We no longer weep over the lost and perishing. We have lost sight of how God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

We fail to ponder over the fact that Jesus hung on a bloody tree and the nails in his hands and feet which fastened him to that cross were hammered into his innocent flesh because of our rotten sins. He bore the penalty of sin as our substitute and suffered the scandal of the cross on our behalf. And as we peer into the heart of the father as he turned his face away from his beloved son because he could not look on sin, we see just how much our salvation cost.

It cost everything. Oh friends, if we could only recapture the wonder of what Christ has done for us, it would drive us to our knees in brokenness and repentance. You see, our trouble is that we just don't love him enough.

Pray that God will grant you the necessary grace to recapture your sweetheart love for Jesus because he is wonderful. He is always wonderful. Isn't Jesus wonderful? Is he wonderful to you?

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