



## **Return To Your First Love**

Sermon Small Group Questions  
Speaker: Pastor Raymond Beaty

### USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
  1. one section of questions
  2. one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

### INTRODUCTION

When we hear the phrase "first love," we often jump to our first "true love." Maybe, this brings you back to your high school years or to a relationship from earlier in your adult years. A flood of emotions get stirred up in you. To think that somebody loves you more than himself or herself, is a overwhelming thought. In your own mind, perhaps you think, "I don't even love myself that much." Knowing that this love is a spiritual reality, however, brings us hope in our Savior Jesus. This session we're called back to, or in some cases, called to discover our First Love.

## MESSAGE

[Revelation 2.1-4]

*"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. 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. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first."*

### Background on Ephesus:

- largest, wealthiest city in Asia for hundreds of years
- major trade route for goods and people (slavery was prominent)
- known for its art & culture (Temple of Artemis)
- idolatry from various world cultures
- free government (even the Romans wouldn't try anything)

The bottom line was it was an enormous international cosmopolitan city flowing with money, culture, beauty, creativity, and entertainment, but it was morally bankrupt.

### Characteristics of the Ephesian church:

- planted by Paul, developed by a team of disciples, and pastored by Timothy
- hardworking, patient, and courageous
- willing to protect the church and suffer for the cause of Christ (a sacrificing church)

After 40 years of solid community and kingdom-building, the people stopped loving each other well. (At the core, that's what makes us a church.)

[Revelation 1.20]

*The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

Lampstands represent the churches.

***Our challenge then and now: Don't back down! Stay passionate!***

[Ephesians 1.15]

*For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people...*

[1 Corinthians 13.1-3]

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

Our church and theology can be clear as ice, and just as cold, if we live without love as our driving force.

This is not "The Father's High School;" this is "The Father's House." Leave the drama, the gossip, and the past behind.

CONCLUSION

We're just not that lovable all the time. At the same time, we are God's representation of what love looks like here on earth. We need to keep the first love fresh and appealing to those around us.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. What do you think about when you hear "first love?"**
- 2. If you got a letter from the Lord (in red letters), what would you hope it would say to you and about you?**
- 3. When you read the Bible are you able to read it as though it was written to you? What are some hurdles that might make it difficult to read it this way?**
- 4. Why is it so hard to just receive love?**
- 5. What are some ways to keep our "first love" our first priority?**