

COMING BACK TO OUR FIRST LOVE FOR JESUS



I will begin with the words of Jesus, “‘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 12:30)

- What really matters to God is that we have a sincere love for Him and not so much about what we do for Him**

- The simple fact is that we are now living in a world that is becoming more and more secular and impersonal and materialistically focused
- We will all also experience many trials and challenges in life that can cause us to lose our passion for the things of God if we are not careful



The Apostle Paul wrote, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” **(Galatians 6:9)**

- So today I want to share about one great key to seeing revival in the body of Christ and a spiritual awakening in our nation



- That is, that believers come back to their first love for Jesus



In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

- Our love for Christ must always be our greatest priority in life
- The church at Ephesus was full of good works and could discern who were false Apostles but Jesus rebuked this church because they had lost their first love for Him
- We see an account of this in Revelation 2:1-5



“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, “These things says He who hold the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands: I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostle and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”



“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place-unless you repent.” **(Revelation 2:1-5)**



We are now living in the lawless times that Jesus spoke about when He said,

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:12-13)



- Given the challenging times that we are now living in and given that the rapture of all true believers is imminent I felt the Lord impress upon my heart to share today on coming back to our first love for Jesus

In the gospel of Luke, we see an amazing portion of Scripture in Jesus' Parable of the Persistent Widow,

"Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said,

"And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?"

"I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:6-8)



- So today I want to share on the importance of continually maintaining our first love for Jesus at a time when there are so many influences that can pull our hearts away from having a whole hearted devotion to Christ



- HAVING A GREAT LOVE FOR GOD IS SUCH A GREAT KEY TO REMAINING STRONG IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK AND TO DOING GREAT THINGS FOR GOD'S GLORY



In the book of Daniel we read,

“...but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” (Daniel 11:32)

- The real battle is for the mind and our heart



- What we think upon will ultimately affect our heart attitudes and our passion for the things of God



- The bible says much about the importance of ALWAYS maintaining a right heart towards God and others as what is in our heart will also ultimately determine the outcome of our life

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.... ” (Proverbs 23:7)

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)



Jesus Himself said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)

- So especially given the state of the world at present and the nearness of the rapture of all true believers, the bible makes it clear that it is crucial that we maintain a right heart in the times that we are now living in



In the book of James we read, “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the LORD is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:8-9)

- It is so important that we never lose our first love for Jesus and for the things of the Kingdom



- Even the comforts of life and God's blessings in our life can cause people's hearts to grow cold towards God
- This has been a real phenomenon in the Western World where Christianity over the past decade has declined in many countries

Jesus Himself shared on the issue of materialism during His time here on earth.

Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” **(Matthew 6:24)**



Jesus also said,

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)



- It is so important that we do not also allow the things of this world and the cares of this life to draw our hearts away from a whole hearted devotion to Christ



Jesus Himself made this very clear when He said, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36)

- So today I want to share some thoughts and keys that can help all of us to continually maintain our passion for Jesus and the things of God in a world that is becoming more and more secular and ungodly



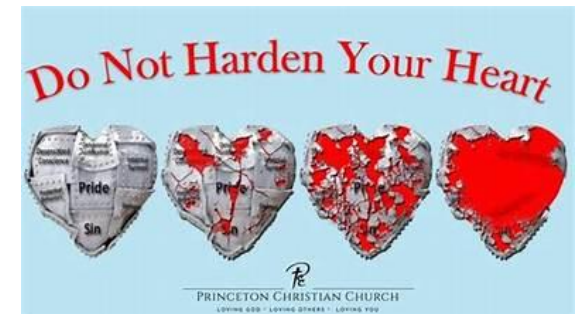
- I will now firstly look at 5 things that can cause us to lose our first love for Jesus before sharing some keys to continually maintaining our first love for Him

1) Allowing offences to enter into our heart

Jesus Himself said in relation to the times that we are now living in,

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”

(Matthew 24:10-11)



2) Allowing wrong people to enter into our inner circle of close friends. We become like the company that we keep



- King Solomon, though he had two visitations from God in dreams early in his life, lost his love and devotion for God after marrying many idol worshipping foreign wives
- We see an account of this in 1 Kings 11:4-9



“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David.” **(1 Kings 11:4-6)**



“Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,” **(1 Kings 11:7-9)**



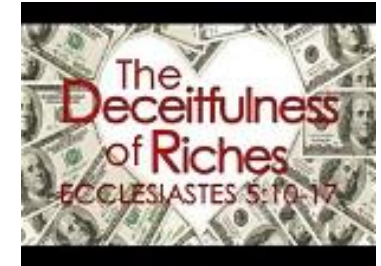
The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

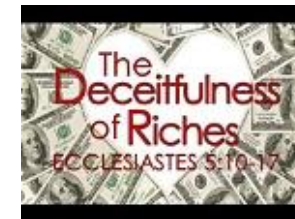


In the book of Proverbs we read, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.” (Proverbs 12:26)

3) Allowing the things of this world to take our focus off the things of God



In His explanation of the Parable of the Sower Jesus said, “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” (Mark 4:18-19)



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out... But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” **(1 Timothy 6:6, 7, 9-10)**

4) Continually persisting in an area of known sin in our lives



In the book of Hebrews we read, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,” **(Hebrews 3:12-14) AND**

5) Getting too busy and neglecting our quiet times with the Lord



In the gospel of Luke we read, “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.” (Luke 10:38-39)

“But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”
(Luke 10:40-42)



So how then can we continually maintain a faith filled heart and a passion for Jesus in the lawless and perverse times that we are now living in:



1) We need to make time to spend ALONE with God and in His word. In His presence is fullness of joy

In the book of Jeremiah we read, “For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it?” (Jeremiah 23:18)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” **(Ephesians 3:17-19)**



King David wrote,

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” **(Psalm 63:1-3)**



2) It is good to have a place where you meet with God away from the distractions of life



Jesus Himself said,

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:6)

3) We need to be continually quick to repent of any known sin in our lives and to be always quick to forgive others



- We cannot have our heart shut to people and open to God at the same time. We need to simply be quick to choose to forgive those who have hurt us
- We must also keep short accounts with God by having a repentant heart where we are continually quick to repent of any known sin in our lives

- **This is such a great key to maintaining intimacy in our walk with the Lord**



The Apostle John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)



Jesus Himself said, “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)

King David, the only man referred to in the bible as being a man after God's own heart, wrote;

"Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;

And see if there is any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)



4) We need to win the battle for the mind

- The real battle is for the mind
- The enemy will continually bombard our mind with negative and distracting thoughts to pull our focus off the Lord
- It is so important that we always take all wrong and negative thoughts captive before they take us captive



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 10:4-5)



5) We need to keep our focus on things above

- It is so important that we continually live our lives with eternity in mind



- In a world full of temptations and distractions we need to continually choose to set our mind on things above. To keep our focus on the eternal things

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **(Romans 12:2)**



“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” **(Colossians 3:1-2)**

6) The importance of being planted in a loving bible-based Spirit filled church



- The simple fact is that we cannot do the Christian Walk alone



- We all need the encouragement and support that we receive when we fellowship with other believers

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)

AND



7) The importance of spending quality time in God's word. We need to get back to the bible

- When we meditate on the word of God, we get to know the character of Christ and about His incredible love for us in a very real and tangible way
- The Holy Spirit will continually encourage us and direct our steps through the word of God as the Holy Spirit highlights passages of Scripture that are relevant to our lives and circumstances



- We need to have an expectation that God will speak to us through His word when we spend time in His word.
- He will!



In the book of Hebrews we read, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Jesus Himself said,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:13)



- **As we seek direction through God's word, the Holy Spirit will clearly highlight passages of Scripture that are relevant to our lives and circumstances**

The Psalmist wrote, “Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, And teach out of Your law,” (Psalm 94:12)



In Psalm 119 we read,

“Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them. The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” (Psalm 119:129-130)

“Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.” (Psalm 119:133)

- The bible makes it clear how God has such an incredible love for all people



Jesus Himself said,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” **(John 3:16)**

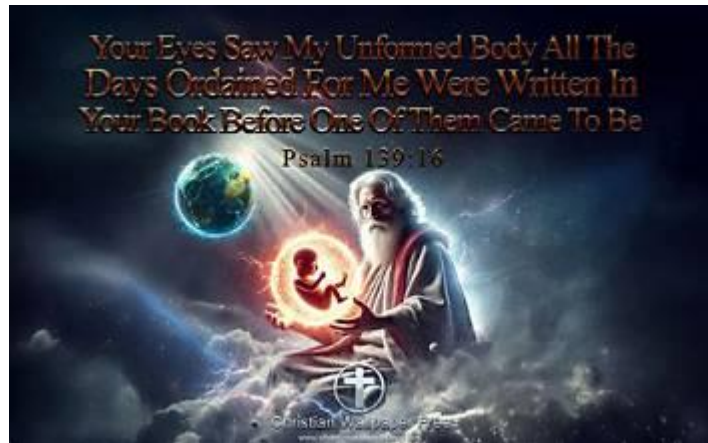
King David wrote about God’s perfect knowledge of man in Psalm 139

King David wrote, “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvellous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.



My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth **(that is your mother’s womb)**. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.” **(Psalm 139:13-16)**

“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.” **(Psalm 139:17-18)**



- When the enemy is attacking our mind, the best way to maintain stability and peace of mind is to go to the promises of God in His word as we continually choose to also commit our cares to the Lord in prayer



The Apostle Paul wrote, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)

- One of God’s greatest promises is that if we put Christ and the things of the Kingdom first in our lives we do not have to worry about the everyday things of life

Jesus Himself said,

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ Or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” **(Matthew 6:31-33)**



- When we need to make important decisions in life it is so important that we always seek God with an open Bible



- This is such a great key to prospering and have good success in life. God always knows what is best for us

The LORD said to Joshua, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

- Spending quality time in God's word is such a great key to always maintaining a dynamic and faith filled Christian life



- God has so much planned for every believer's life

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

- So, in conclusion may I encourage everyone today to make your pursuit of God's presence in your life the greatest priority in the times that we are now living in, at a time when Jesus said because of lawlessness the love of many will grow cold



- It is our love for God that will help us to finish our Christian walk well and to fulfil all that God has planned for our life

- Like the Apostle Paul we want to be able to say at the end of our time here on earth “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” **(2 Timothy 4:7)**

