

MINISTERIO LA FUENTE



# RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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## REDISCOVERING YOUR FIRST LOVE

To set the scene, please begin by reading Revelation chapter one. The apostle John has been exiled to the Island of Patmos because of his stand for Jesus. Jesus himself appears to him, and gives him a message for the seven churches in Asia. Today we are going to focus on the message to Ephesus.

*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* (Revelation 2:1 KJV) Jesus is speaking. The seven candlesticks represent the seven churches. He is walking amongst those seven churches. Today, he still walks amongst the churches.

*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: <sup>3</sup>And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* (Revelation 2:2-3) Jesus begins by commending the church for the qualities he sees in them. This is a group of people that have been working hard because they love the name of Jesus. They have demonstrated patience while undergoing trials and sufferings. They have correctly identified and rejected false teachers because they love the truth. And they have persevered.

*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* (Revelation 2:4) But Jesus has something against them. They have “left their 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.* (Revelation 2:5) Jesus calls them to repent. In other words, to change their way of thinking and their way of living, and in this case to return to “the first works”. If they do not, he will soon come to them and remove their candlestick. What does it mean, to remove their candlestick? A candlestick gives light. Jesus said that a light should not be hid under a bushel but should be placed on a stand to give light to the whole house (Matthew 5:15). The church should be a light to the world around it. So if the candlestick is removed, the church will no longer be a light to the world around it. It will lose its testimony. He is not saying that he will reject his children or take away their salvation. They will simply lose their testimony as a church. How tragic that would be. Jesus is here disciplining his beloved children, so that that tragedy need not necessarily happen.

*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* (Revelation 2:6) Jesus now returns to complimenting them, commending them for “hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans” which he also hates. Who were the Nicolaitans and why did Jesus hate their works? I will quote to you from C. I. Schofield: “[The name ‘Nicolaitans’] comes from the Greek words, *nikao*, which means, *to conquer*, and *laos*, which means *the people* or *the laity*. There is no record in ancient history of the existence of a sect called the Nicolaitans. If the word is symbolic, it refers to the older notion of a priestly order or a ‘clergy’, which later led to the division between ‘priests’ and ‘laity’ in a brotherhood in which everyone was supposed to be equal.”

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In other words, all of those who are in Christ are priests and have direct access to God. There is no-one who has special access to God and can therefore lord it over other people. Yes, within the church God has established some to preach and teach and lead; but this is a position of service not a position of privilege. God hates the notion that certain special people are the only ones who can hear from God, and therefore exercise power over the 'normal' people. Here he commends the Ephesian church for also hating that notion and therefore for teaching that all believers have equal access to God.

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Revelation 1:7)*

In other words, listen carefully to what God is saying to the church and to you as an individual part of the church. Although this message was written to the Ephesian church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it has applied to the church in general throughout history and still applies to us today. That is why God saw fit to put these messages in the Bible.

**S**o, what is the main point that Jesus made to the Ephesian church here?

They had left their first love.

Yes, they had demonstrated patience in the face of many sufferings. Yes, they had rejected lies and embraced the love of the truth. Yes, they had rejected the false doctrine of "clergy/laity" and therefore the leadership in their church was operating on the right basis. Yes, they had been working very hard for the love of the name of Christ. Really, they sound like a model church! But they had left their first love. And this one thing was so significant, that if they did not repent and return to their first love, they were going to lose their testimony as a church. Jesus Himself had to be their first love.

**They had not to be in love primarily with their character qualities, or with their doctrinal correctness, or with the work they were doing in Jesus' name. They had to be in love with the person Jesus Christ.**

Paul wrote a whole letter to the Ephesian church, and judging by his letter they were a mature body of believers. So we can see that it is possible to be a mature believer, who is giving his life for the work and cause of Christ, but at the same time to have left one's first love. In our hearts, Jesus Christ should be our first love. Is Jesus Christ the first love in your heart this morning? As a church, are we in love with Jesus Christ first and foremost, more than we are in love with correct doctrine, more than we are in love with correct church order, more than we are in love with ministry in the name of Jesus? These things are all good and important and God commends us for them. But the Christian walk is first and foremost about being in love with a person, with Jesus Christ. There are many believers who have fallen in love with ministry or correct doctrine and have forgotten their first love; and their testimony is so weak as a result.

We have talked much recently about the love of God for us. We will keep sharing about that love and rejoicing in that love, because it is so vast and huge and powerful and personal and it is the very basis of our lives. We love him because he first loved us. When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, one of the things he prayed was that they would know the love of Christ in its vastness and power. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,* <sup>18</sup>*May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;* <sup>19</sup>*And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19 KJV)* He prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ; in Christ's love for them. Jesus **loves** you!

*And we have experienced and believed in the love God has for us. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.* (1 John 4:16 KJV) We do not fear God's punishment because he loved us enough to send his son to pay 100% of the punishment which we deserve. We are his beloved children! He **loves** us! Never stop believing and trusting in that love. We can only love him because he has loved us first and placed his love in our heart. We love him back with the same love that he has given us!

But what Jesus was saying to the Ephesian church, was, "You have forgotten this love. You have forgotten how much he loves you and you have forgotten to love him back like you used to do". He calls on them to remember from where they have fallen. Have they fallen into deep sin? No! Have they fallen into terrible doctrinal error? No! Have they fallen into laziness, not caring about the work of God? No! Then where have they fallen from?

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They have fallen from a place where they simply let Jesus love them, trusted in his love for them, and loved him back with their whole being. They have fallen from a place of simplicity and liberty in him.

Jesus calls on them to do the “first works” again. What does he mean? It is not as if they are not doing works for God. They are doing many valuable works for God. But what are the “first works” that they need to return to?

In our men’s meetings recently, we have been talking about marriage. One of the things we have talked about is that when we first fall in love with our spouse and begin to go out with them, indeed right up to our wedding and for some-time beyond, we do special, cute, good things for our spouses. We constantly tell them we love them. We do silly, illogical things just to express our love for them. We care for them and are always thinking about how to please them. We feel an incredible freedom in our love for that person.

But time passes, and later we forget to be so concerned for the other person; we begin to feel that now it isn’t necessary to express our love like before. We find that there are some areas of our relationship that are difficult, so in some ways we pull back and don’t just love with an open heart like we did before. We lose the beauty and simplicity of two people being in love with each other. We lose that sense of freedom and fun and joy.

It is the same in our walk with Christ. This is what had happened to the Ephesian church and this is what happens to us. We forget that this whole thing is basically about being in love.

Brothers and sisters, we do not need to prove to God that we love him. That is not what he is asking us to do. He knows that we love him. We have nothing to prove.

But more than anything else in our lives, he wants us to be in love with him. To open our hearts wider and wider to experience his love for us. And then to love him back, expressing our love to him and letting him be our first love. Letting him have first place in our hearts. And enjoying the freedom to just love and be loved, like we felt when we were first in love with him.

Good works are good and important. Working in his name, being patient in trials, loving the truth, all these things are important and good. But there is something more basic and more important than everything. Being in love with Him. Letting him love us, and loving him back.

**L**et me finish with an example. I just spoke about how in a marriage we can forget that first love. Yes, we still love our spouse, but we forget to make them our first love. We forget that simplicity and freedom of being in love, we forget to keep opening our hearts wider and wider to their love, we forget to keep expressing our love.

This happened to Joy and I once we had got married. Our courtship was so beautiful. We would spend hours and hours and hours walking the streets of our town under the stars of the night, holding hands and talking. We would spend so much time together, getting to know each other and developing that beautiful, unique love which God placed us together to enjoy. Then we married and of course the relationship took on new dimensions and became even more beautiful. But in time, we forgot that first love. Yes, we still loved each other, but in some ways we forgot the importance of cultivating that love relationship. I for one didn’t open my heart up to the love that Joy was offering me. And I didn’t love her back the way she needed and the way I should have. I was never unfaithful, but I just forgot to let her be my first love in a human sense. We neglected that first love. A few years ago, God got a hold of me in this. He got a hold of both of us. And we realized what we had been missing. We thought about where we had fallen from and we decided to do the first works again. I began to open up my heart to her wider than ever. She did the same. We began to cultivate our love again.

I made her once more my first love. We began to do the first works again. Every day we tell each other we love each other and we find a million ways to express it. Now we do not need to walk the streets at night under the stars to be able to spend time together and cultivate our love. We have a home and a family and a multitude of memories of love that shine like stars over us as we continue to learn to love each other more.

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And God has transformed our marriage. We are deeply, deeply in love. It is better than ever before, and every day it gets better. Why? Because it is all about love. Without love, we are nothing. And the same applies in our relationship with Jesus. Marriage should be a reflection of our spiritual relationship with Jesus.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned but have not love, it profits me nothing. <sup>4</sup>Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup>does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, <sup>6</sup>thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8 NKJV)*

Let's keep doing the good works God is giving us to do. Let's be patient in the face of trials. Let's reject lies and false doctrines and embrace and love the truth. Let's continue to operate this church as God would have it operated.

But most of all let's remember our first love. Remember the freedom you felt of just being in love with Jesus. No rules, no regulations, just a love affair with the King of Kings. Let's do the things we did at first. Let's allow Jesus to love us and let's love him back as the first love of our hearts.

How do you do that? Well, he loves you. He will help you and teach you and inspire you and show you. Meanwhile you just have to open your heart to his love for you, trust in his love for you, and keep learning to love him back.

Lord, we love you this morning. We love you, we love you, we love you. We're going to enjoy your love. Thank you for the beautiful freedom and the powerful simplicity we have in you. You are our first love. Love us, and let us love you back. Amen.

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**We want to serve you in your walk with Christ. Contact us with any questions you may have.**

"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK" - JESUS ( JOHN 7:37 )

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

**We at Ministerio La Fuente believe in Jesus, the Son of God— His virgin birth - His sinless life – His death and resurrection.**

**We believe He sent His Holy Spirit to convict, comfort and empower every believer to live a life wholly for God.**

**We believe in God's Word, the Bible, infallible and eternal.**

**We believe Jesus is Lord of all and is coming back for all those who love Him.**

**Also, we believe that the life Christians lead should clearly demonstrate the Lordship of Christ and the Love of God.**