

Fiery Fuel to Help You Reignite Your First Love

I was young when I resolved to love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. I was brave and my vision was clear of the fog that seems to settle without warning over the years. I made bold, heartfelt proclamations to love Him without reservation until I saw Him face to face. Yet, I was naive as to how hazardous the way forward would be. It is for all of us.

When setbacks and losses fill our path and life plays out like we would never have projected, disillusionment and disappointment not only knock on our door but seek to encamp and move in to our inner spaces. And the open-hearted fire of our early days is threatened with damping down—if not quenching altogether. Oftentimes, when the soul that was once courageous and alive comes to the outward years of strength, it simultaneously faces an inward implosion. Right when it's time to take a full stride, the heart can't unearth its passion and it sits sidelined by the road.

Jesus' Call to First Love

It can seem unavoidable to us, even justified, that we would lose the lively affections that we once had after all the storms have barreled through. What flame would not go out beneath that set of circumstances? we might reason. Yet Jesus speaks quite a different perspective to us in this place.

When Jesus spoke to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2, He said,

“But I have something against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first, or

else I will come to you quickly and remove your candlestick from its place, unless you repent" (Rev. 2:4-5).

Rather than telling the church of Ephesus that He understood how much they'd been through and how He didn't fault them for their loss of fervency, He spoke of their *first love* as something invaluable that they had started with and something they were never to have lost along the way. The loss was such that Jesus called them to repent for departing from it and to return to what they did at first.

The passion of our early love for God—that all-in, heart-on-the-line, vulnerable given-ness—is so valuable to Him that He wants it from the beginning of our days to the end, no matter what we face in all the struggles of life that follow. First love, then, was never meant to be first love, but just love. And love is always to carry that quality of open-hearted trust and vibrant affections toward God. Circumstances change, seasons cycle through, life plays out, bodies age, but love is always to remain alive and passionate.

The Promise of Resilient Passion

It can feel overwhelming and impossible to hear these words of Jesus—I know I've felt the weight of them. Our defenses rise as we feel as though we would have hung on to our initial fiery zeal had we not been waylaid by the troubles of life. We had intended to stay just as fervent as we were at first had not disillusionment set in like a heavy weight, blanketing our skies. Again, we feel a bit justified for our loss of passion.

Yet our defenses reflect a disconnect from the heart of Jesus. His call back to *first love* is a statement of His deep love for us and His desire for our highest good. He is not asking for something harsh, but something life-giving and freeing to our souls. To live in less is to have our love for Him stifled and our ability to experience His love hindered.

We were never fashioned to live without a heart alive in passion for Jesus, and He desires to give us every grace to walk in that passion again. In fact, within His call to return to first love is also a promise—the promise that living with a persistent fiery heart is actually possible, no matter what we walk through in life. Jesus' admonition to the believers in Ephesus gives us revelation into what kind of lasting, resilient affections are continuously available to us as we respond to God's grace.

He is the Keeper of the Flame

Jesus is so invested in us. We are His inheritance and He has full intention of keeping our love alive for Him—that He might present us to Himself pure and spotless (Eph. 1:18, 5:27). He did not descend from His glory and endure the affliction of dying for us only to receive in culmination a lukewarm flame of love from His people—cooled by all the difficulties and cares of life. He has zeal that our passion for Him would not only survive, but thrive, until the day we see Him. He never settles in and leans back with us in to our waned passion, accepting it. To do so would be to leave us in a way of life so beneath what He desired for us—what He gave His life to provide for us.

When we find ourselves sitting sidelined along the way, unsure when it was that we lost the open-hearted passion that we once had for Jesus, He speaks to us with such tenderness and such grace, stirring our love for Him once more. For though seasons and difficult circumstances and setbacks may test our love, they do not have to strip it of its fire. He is the keeper of the flame and wherever He finds a willing heart, He will stir the flames once again. Embers are not endings to Him—but new beginnings.

How can you strengthen your first love for God?

If you're seeking a refreshing and re-invigorating place to

encounter Jesus, we invite you to Unwavering, IHOPKC's annual women's conference, March 22–24, in Kansas City. Join women from around the globe and hear special guests, as well as IHOPKC speakers and worship leaders. Learn more about Unwavering [here](#).

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