

These 2 Key Elements Will Help You Rekindle Your Marriage's Holy Fire

The best way for couples to keep their marriage in a place of vibrant growth is by keeping their hearts engaged with what the Bible calls “first love.” There is nothing as deep or dynamic as a vibrant and unhindered Jesus-centered union—divine embers in the heart, from which all other fires catch their flame. One of the ways I understand it is this: *The more beautiful God looks to me, the more beautiful my spouse looks to me.*

The concept of *first love* is set among a series of exhortations given by Jesus to the church in the city of Ephesus (Rev. 2:2–4). In attempting to define exactly what first love is, we may gain some insight by looking at what God's Word gives as a solution to regaining it.

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. 2:5).

There are two key elements here: One is to be able to sense a conviction and awareness—that I have fallen from the first love I once had, and then to make repentance a priority. Two is to take action—remember what I did before, and do some facsimile of it again.

Two applications on the restoration of first love: One is clearly stated in the text—the manner in which my love was first awakened to God. The other is how I initially felt when I connected with my life partner. Both of these relationships are the most important ones in life. They correlate to the

first and second of the great commandments—loving God first and then our neighbor (Matt. 22:37–39).

Two action phrases come to mind: staying thirsty and staying attracted.

O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh faints for You, in a dry and thirsty land with no water. ... Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise you (Ps. 63:1-3).

One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I will seek after—for me to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple (Ps. 27:4).

Staying thirsty and staying attracted are vital components that draw me closer to God and to my spouse.

Not everyone encounters Christ in the same way, thus, first love will have many variations, combined with the fact that when experiencing a renewal of first love you are not the same person you once were. Truth is, however, that God desires every person to experience a manifest enjoyment of who He is. When I first committed my life to Christ, I was thirsty, parched for fulfillment in life. My experience was not lacking in emotion, as I experienced love in a way that I never had before. Likewise, when I first met my wife, I marveled at her beauty, both inside and out. I was thirsty as well, yearning for a life partner to journey with and raise a family.

Repent and re-engage—that's the process to regain first love, with God and in your marriage. For me, on the heels of experiencing Christ for the first time, I recall spending long hours caught up in Bible meditation and study (Matt. 4:4). I could feel the sustenance of God's Word nourishing my soul. I loved listening to worship music— anything that connected me

to God's heart. Six years later, I met a woman who was running in tandem with my heart, and the phrase that we chose as the banner over our marriage was "harnessed together for the kingdom." Covenant partnerships, both Godward and in a marriage, are sustainable when vision and vows are renewed. Find the "restart" button that is most familiar to you and keep pressing it!

I have found that hard times hinder devotion, but when I push through and embrace the working of my faith-muscle, I am able to offer a sacrifice of joy (Ps. 27:6). There are times when this may feel mostly fake and insincere, but we cannot expect every sacrifice and offering in life to always *feel* good. One chapter in the Bible that is the epitome of hard times is Matthew 24, where Jesus discusses the coming destruction of the temple and the intense testing of believers.

Then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another; many false prophets will rise and will deceive many. Iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved (Matt. 24:10-13).

Standing firm includes two elements: not being deceived by false teaching, and making sure that your love does not grow cold. The church in Ephesus was excelling in the first but failing in the second. Some believe that John wrote Revelation just prior to these intense times coming to pass (Rev. 1:1). I've walked with many couples through an "end-times" scenario in their marriage and family. I am thankful for the fact that there is mercy, grace, forgiveness and continuing life vision, even after a divorce and family fracture. I am more thankful for the couples who refused to give up and persevered into the "resurrection resources" available in God.

God is all about the canvas for His portraits. What better place to showcase a fiery first love than against the backdrop of an iced-over passion, in the midst of swirling winds of

betrayal and resignation? May we repent and re-engage, that our love may stand firm to the end.

What can you do to repent and re-engage in your marriage and significant relationships? {eoa}

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