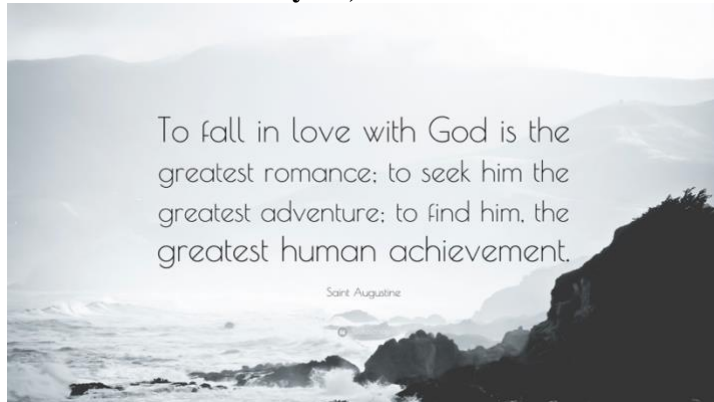


## 20190512 Revelation 2:4-5 Returning to Your First Love - Falling in Love with Jesus Again

### Returning to Your First Love - Falling in Love with Jesus Again – Faber McMullen May 12, 2019



Most all of us have heard Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson singing the famous country song "Let's go to Luckenbach, Texas."

Waylon starts off saying that "the only two things in life that make it worth livin' is guitars that tune good and firm feelin' women. I don't need my name in the marquee lights, I got a song and I

got you with me tonight. Maybe it's time we got back to the basics of love." He goes on talking about a life that's gotten way too complicated. They're feuding with each other and it's all become about high society, coats and ties, and diamond rings, 4 car garages, and keeping up with the Joneses ..... the song is a cry to "get back to the basics of love."

Waylon is longing for a simpler time; a time when things weren't out of hand, and when love seemed pure and simple. His expression of "love" might not be exactly biblical, but the idea of it being a purer, simpler love is biblical. Getting back to a real love for Jesus is biblical. Remember in the parable of the sower, it is the weeds of the world that come along and choke out the joy of the believer. This makes the believer grow cold. He or she begins to feel far, far, far away from God and the joy of the Lord. We have all experienced a red hot love that in time cools and sometimes even dies out. Sometimes we call it spiritual "burn out."

I remember the intense feelings when I first fell in love with Sandy. Being in her presence took my breath away. Knowing that I loved her and she loved me were almost more than my human psyche could take. I thought of her when I got up. I thought of her when I went to bed. I thought of her in the middle of the day. We got married and then the cares of life slowly began to happen. The car broke down. I did poorly on my oral exams for my master's degree. My \$340 salary a month was having trouble keeping up with the life I was now living. The cares of this world attracted me and distracted me from my first love. That love needed some attention and it still does to stay alive and well.

When I first came to the Lord the feelings I experienced were similar to the kind of human love I felt for Sandy, but the feelings were even more dramatic. When I realized that God had forgiven me for any and all wrongs I had done, I was thrilled. When I realized that He was real and that He cared for me, it was overwhelming. I remember the sheer joy of suddenly falling out of love with myself and falling in love with Him. It made me treat everyone I met in a very different way. That was the passion of my "first love." I couldn't help telling anyone and everyone about God's love for me and them. Over time that love cooled. It is part of the human condition to fall in love with something worth loving, and then gradually to fall out of love with that thing or

person if the love isn't rekindled. Most of us have loved the Lord intensely. We have felt His immediate presence, and we have heard His voice as we've feasted on His Word, the Bible. Then slowly, gradually, we look up and He feels so far away. We wonder whether He even exists, and if He does, we wonder if He hears us or has any hand in our lives. How do we get "back to the basics of love" in our relationship with God? How do we rekindle that first love we had for Him?

Jesus addressed this issue when He spoke to the church of Ephesus in the Book of Revelation. He said: *"<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."* (Revelation 2:4–5, NKJV).

History tells us that the church in Ephesus was a mighty church. But with time, the glowing enthusiasm disappeared. The church was still sound in its doctrine and active in Christian service, but the true motive of all of their worship and service was missing. They were just going through the motions. In this verse, Jesus is crying out to the church, telling them to pursue three things to get back their love for Him. He called them to: (1) remember the sweet days of their early faith, (2) repent of the coldness of their love, and (3) repeat the devoted service that was exciting as they started on their journey with Christ. His call came with a warning; either get that love back or else run the risk of the "lampstand being removed" at Ephesus. He would remove them as part of His Church. Let's look at these three steps and see how we each might incorporate them into our lives.



1. **Remember** - Go back to that point of spending time in His presence. The disciple Peter tells us, *"to stir up you pure MINDS by way of remembrance"* (2 Peter 3:1). Stirring up your mind means we need to take back time from the demands of this life. Give 20-30 minutes in the early morning hours to making yourself available to get to know your first love again. We are promised that if *"we draw near to God, He will draw near to us"* (James 4:8). That is a promise.

For me, prayer and meditation have become an almost continual state. I wake up repeatedly through the night. I pet my little doggie in bed, often thanking God for her companionship, and then I pray for someone in this flock. Or, I pray about a situation that is troubling me. A great part of prayer should really be just the quiet listening for a response. I suppose my routine is that I quietly listen and usually fall back to sleep in the night.

Part of remembering is to remind yourself of what He did for you on the cross. Remind yourself that you needed a Savior and that He is your Savior. Remember the promises that He has made to you. When families left Scotland centuries ago, they would pile a heap of stones at the place where something significant happened. This heap of stones is called a "cairn." Go back to the cairns where God did something great in your life, and rejoice once again in those events and in

those victories. Recall the places and points where God's promises turned to testimonies in your life.



2. **Repent** - Repent of your cold heart. Repent of your indifference to God and the things of God. Repentance requires a change of heart, mind, *and* direction in your spiritual life. Ask God to show you attitudes, desires, hopes, actions, thoughts, and deeds that have drawn your attention away from a "sold-out" kind of love for Him. Receive God's forgiveness. He still loves

you. He never stopped loving you. He's not even mad at you.

*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16, ESV).* It is His grace and His mercy that we seek. This is forgiveness we didn't earn or deserve. Admit to God that you have moved. Admit to God that you've become distracted. *"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, ESV). You merely need to ask and agree with God that you're not where you need to be and the forgiveness is immediate. The beautiful thing is that this act of grace and love is repeated over and over and over....as oftentimes as you need it. The prophet Jeremiah shouts to us through the echoes of time, *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV).

3. **Return and Repeat** – Remember those devoted acts of service you did when you first loved Him? Those acts are the discipline. It doesn't mean just going through the motions.

*"David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."* (1 Samuel 30:6, KJV). We are told that this is going to involve some work. Peter tells us, *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your MIND, be sober and hope to the end for the grace...."* (1 Peter 1:13a, KJV). That means there is some discipline and sincerity to this act of returning and repeating. I like to think of it as avoiding merely going through the motions of being a Christian. Yes, we come to church because we're commanded to do so, but that obedience is so much more beautiful and full of grace when we come because we LOVE HIM and we want HIM with all of our hearts, souls, and minds. What are some of the disciplines of love we can start right now?

Obviously, from the definition of *work*, this involves effort; it is not something that happens without effort on your part or without grace on God's part. First, works could refer to many "important efforts," and here we will discuss several of them: worship, prayer, Bible study, giving, fasting, and service to others. **Each of these activities is designed to deepen your intimate relationship with God.**



attitudes that are just outside of His will for me. I said, "Lord, I place myself back into your hands, and I apologize for trying to take over the steering wheel of my life." That, my friends, is worship. Take time to "behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." And where is His temple? It is right there in your heart. *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to **behold the beauty of the Lord**, and to inquire in his temple"* (Psalm 27:4, NKJV).

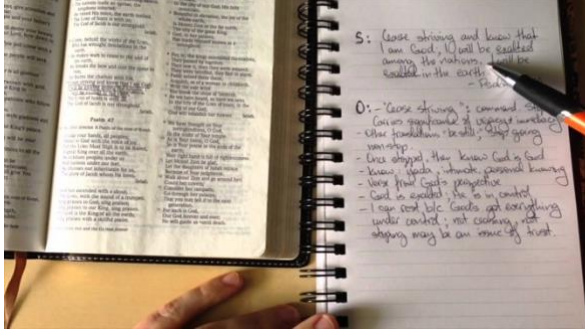


**B. Prayer - Real Prayer** - Speak your heart to the Lord. Be truthful. Then listen. Then listen again. There are 4-5 little steps that might help you to have a full prayer life: A.C.T.S.

- **Adoration** - Tell God how much you love Him and state all of the reasons you love Him. (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)
- **Confession** - Recognize your unworthiness before a holy God and be grateful for His limitless mercy and love for you, His precious child. Agree with Him on the ways you have sinned. (Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9)
- **Thanksgiving** - Return to a grateful heart that praises Him for all He has already given you or done in your life. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- **Supplication (Intercession/Petition)** - Bring to mind

the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs that you and others face each day. Your resources cannot meet these needs—you need God’s intervention. Again, the disciple Peter tells us to cast ALL of our cares on Him for He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). Take a truthful look at what are you asking for? Why are you asking for it? Are you desirous to advance God’s kingdom, or are you attempting to build your own kingdom (i.e., satisfying selfish desires)? When I think about this, I come to the sobering conclusion that many of my prayers are for my own selfish desires. As I think about whether those are good for the kingdom of God, my own requests will sometimes convict me. (Colossians 4:12, 1 John 5:14-15)

*"...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6b–7, KJV).



### C. Reading God's Word: JUST DO IT!!! Study, Memorization, and Meditation

I find that when I pick up the Bible and read it....I am encouraged. This is because God's word is ALIVE AND POWERFUL (Hebrews 4:12). It will transform you. It will empower you. It will change you and it will change your wrong attitudes. Get into the Word and grow closer to

God. Begin by reading John.



### D. Giving - Real Giving

Jesus instructed His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8b, NKJV). Ask God to help you to be more generous. Generosity is the antidote to be "rich, and increased with goods" (Revelation 3:17a). I think one reason America has become so spiritually starved is because we're so materially rich. Give regularly to others. Give regularly to the

church. It will be good for the church and it will be good for your soul. It is a regular reminder that all of your time, talent, and treasure is from Him.

### E. Fasting - Genuine Fasting

Fasting effectively reminds us of the reality that life does not consist merely of the things you possess (see Luke 12:15 and Deuteronomy 8:3) Fasting will deepen your awareness of spiritual, mental, and emotional needs. There is power in it. Jesus told us that some of the greatest spiritual strongholds are not overcome except by fasting and prayer.



### F. Serving - Real Service Born Out of Love

Ask God to make you alert and attentive to His voice as He brings needs to your attention and directs you to meet them—in His strength, with His love, and for His glory. As you serve in His name, you will know the joy of the Lord, which is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

If you have left your first love of the Lord, remember, repent, and return to the first works of your faith. May God rekindle your love for Him!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Structure of this teaching is based on an on-line article found at <https://iblp.org/questions/how-can-i-return-my-first-love-lord>

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.