

Losing Your First Love (Part 1)

“One day a woman boarded a bus, holding a baby and the bus driver said, ‘Wow!!! That’s the ugliest baby I have EVER seen in my life’

Well, in a huff, the woman slammed her fare into the fare box and took an aisle seat near the rear of the bus. And boy was she ever fuming about what was said. In fact, the longer she thought about it, the more she got worked up about it.

And the man seated next to her sensed that she was agitated and asked her what was wrong.

So she said through clenched teeth, ‘The bus driver insulted me!’

And the man began to sympathize with her and said, ‘Hey! He’s a public servant and he shouldn’t say things to insult the passengers.’

And the lady said, ‘You’re right! I think I’ll go back up there and give him a piece of my mind.’

And the man said, ‘That’s a good idea. Here, let me hold your monkey!’”

Now how many of you would say that man was just about to get slapped? Oh, he had **great intentions** of wanting to help, but his behavior got him into trouble didn’t it? **Why?** Because he wasn’t paying attention, was he? And folks, did you know he’s not the only one whose behavior’s getting them into trouble. Believe it or not so is the behavior of a lot of Christians. Why? Because they’re **also not paying attention** to one thing. Can you guess what that is? That’s right, it’s called **Bible study**. And because of this, **they are** getting slapped around **spiritually!** And if that

wasn't bad enough, now because many Christians refuse to **study the Bible**, it's producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He's not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we're going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, "**Who Is God?**" We've already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. The **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And in the last four times we saw that the **fourth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Powerful**. And last week we saw **four things** that God's Power does for us. And there we saw that it gives us **Strength**, it gives us **Courage**, it gives us **Protection**, and because of this it gives us **Hope**, especially when we need it most.

Now that's pretty awesome, don't you think? But you might be thinking, "Okay, I understand what God's Power is like and I even understand what it can do for me. But the question I have is this, "**Why**

don't I experience it?" Hey great question. I'm glad you asked. And folks, it's pretty simple. The **main reason** why we don't experience God's Power in our lives is **Because We Don't Love God Like We Used To**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Revelation 2:1-4 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.

I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love."

Now according to our text here, the Ephesian Church had it going, right? I mean, they were working hard, persevering, and staying away from false teachers, which is a good thing to do, right? But they had **one big glaring problem**. And can anybody guess what that was? They had forsaken or lost their first love. What? Could that really happen? Could Christians do all the right stuff but still have the wrong heart? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. In fact, it happens all the time. **And what makes it so tricky to spot** is that you usually don't notice right away. All it takes is a little **compromise** here and a few **excuses** there and the next thing you know, **over time**, it feels like God's a million miles away. But folks, if it ever feels like God's a million miles away, guess who moved? Not God, you did! And if it

continues, you not only run the risk of losing your first love, but of **losing out on the power of God** in your life.

Therefore, I think we better take a look at some of the signs to indicate when we've started to lose our first love, how about you? And folks it's pretty simple. The **first sign** to indicate that we've lost our first love is that **We No Longer Place Our Faith in God**.

Hebrews 11:1-2 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for."

Now folks, according to our text, if we want to be commended by God, what do we need to do? We need to have faith in God, right? And notice the definition of faith there. It's not only being sure of what you hope for, **but certain about it** even though you don't see it.

And people, this is precisely our problem. You see, **over time** we're tempted to not understand things spiritually, but **naturally**. We no longer trust in **God**, we start thinking about the **odds**. We don't apply mountains of **faith**, we try to mentally **figure** it out! And if we really want to be intelligent, we don't turn to the Savior, we turn to the **latest statistics** to determine whether or not something is feasible. But folks, did you know that 73.4% of statistics are wrong? Did you know that 5 out of 4 people have trouble with fractions? And how about those 4 out of 5 dentists who like this brand of toothpaste or those 4 out of 5 doctors who recommend this

particular brand of cold medicine. I mean, have you ever stopped to think about this? Why is it always 4 out of 5? Is there really one guy in the medical world **always holding out** just to be a troublemaker so they'll never get a perfect 5 out of 5? I mean, come on! Get real!

And people the whole point is this. In our naturalistic world, we are totally inundated with and tempted to listen to statistical data as if it's the gospel truth! But let me ask you, is God bound by statistics? Is a mathematical probability more powerful than Him? Is your cranium bigger than the Creator? Then why in the world would we place more faith in a statistic instead of the Savior? I mean, who's the real source of power here? And just to make sure we realize just how powerful **faith in God** can be, let's take a look at what faith in God has done for some of God's children.

1. By faith Enoch was **raptured to God**.
2. By faith Noah **survived** a worldwide **flood**.
3. By faith Abraham **received** the **Promised Land**.
4. By faith Moses' parents **saved** him **from death**.
5. By faith Moses **led** the **Israelites** out into the desert.
6. By faith David **conquered kingdoms**.
7. By faith Daniel **shut** the **mouths of the lions**.
8. By faith others **endured being flogged** and thrown into prison.
9. By faith others **endured torture** and even refused to be released.
10. By faith others **endured being sawed in two**.

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say those people benefited just a little bit by having faith in God, didn't they? They not only received the power to overcome their enemies but also the power to overcome some

pretty horrible circumstances. And people, this is the great news. Faith in God doesn't just work for those folks in the past. **It works for you and I today!** And folks, I'm telling you, as long as you and I refuse to place our faith in God, all we're doing is causing ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear, like this guy observed.

“One time I heard of a story about the early days of our country when a weary traveler came to the banks of the Mississippi River for the first time and there was no bridge. It was early winter, and the surface of the mighty stream was covered with ice. Could he dare cross over? Would the uncertain ice be able to bear his weight?

Well, night was falling, and it was urgent that he reach the other side. So finally, after much hesitation and with many fears, he began to creep cautiously across the surface of the ice on his hands and knees.

He thought that he might distribute his weight as much as possible and keep the ice from breaking beneath him. And about halfway over, he heard the sound of singing behind him. And out of the dusk, there came a man, driving a horse-drawn load of coal across the ice, singing merrily as he went on his way.

Now here he was—on his hands and knees, trembling lest the ice should break! And there went the man, his horses, his sleigh, and his load of coal, upheld by the same ice on which he was creeping!

And he says this, ‘And so it is like this traveler that some of us have learned only to creep upon the promises of God. Cautiously, timidly, tremblingly we venture forth upon His promises, as though the lightness of our step might make His promises more secure.

God has promised to be with us. Let us believe that promise! He has promised to uphold us. Let us take Him at His word.

We are not to creep upon these promises as though they were too fragile to uphold us. We are to stand on them—confident that God is as good as His Word and that He will do what He has pledged to do.”

People, when are we going to realize that God will keep His promises? Hello, He’s God! He is **faithful** and therefore **worthy of our faith**. And how sad it is that many Christians are creeping around in life full of pain and fear when other Christians are skating around having a good ol’ time. **Why?** Because they’re not creeping around on God’s promises, they’re standing on them. How? **By placing their faith in a faithful God!**

People, it not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to place your faith in a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second sign** to indicate that we’ve lost our first love is that **We No Longer Pray to God**.

Acts 4:24,29,31 “Hearing the report, they lifted their voices in a wonderful harmony in prayer: Strong God, you made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. And now they’re at it again! Take care of their threats and give your servants fearless confidence in preaching your Message.

While they were praying, the place where they were meeting trembled and shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God’s Word with fearless confidence.”

Now folks, according to our text, the early Church was facing some serious problems and serious persecution. So what did they do? Did they

stop and pout about it? No! They prayed to God about it. And what happened? They not only got the **boldness** to preach the Word but the **buildings** began to shake! Now that's a powerful prayer, don't you think? And people, **that's what prayer can do!**

But here's our problem. We all talk about prayer, we believe in prayer, and we encourage each other to pray, but do we ever get around to praying? No! And here's what happens. **Over time**, instead of praying to God right off the bat when troubles hit, we turn to **entertainment**. Instead of praying, **we go playing!** And pretty soon we come up with the all time biggest excuse of all, "**I Don't Have Time To Pray.**" How many of you guys heard that one before? But people, I'm telling you this is one of the biggest lies from the pit of hell. You see, I've learned over the years that it's not that we don't have time to pray. No! It's that we don't take the time to pray. How do I know? Because we don't seem to have a problem **finding time** for all sorts of **other things**.

For instance, how about **the sacred cow of TV**? Oh, it might be visually entertaining but it's not spiritually stimulating. In fact, it's a mindless activity. For instance, "How much TV would you watch if you had to chop wood to keep it going?" Think about it. It not only puts waste in your mind but **it wastes your time**. For instance, **the average family**

watches 6 hours 59 minutes of TV per day. And because of this, by the age of 10, most children can name more brands of beer than Presidents. Wow! What an accomplishment, huh? Oh but that's not all. Did you know that **the average person** spends 4 ½ hours a day watching TV. And that's enough time to read the Bible 22 times in just one year, not to mention a whole lot of prayer in between.

And people, that's just the **one non-spiritual activity**. What about all the other habits and hobbies we seem to always find time for? I mean, come on man! Who are we kidding? It's not that we don't have time to pray, we just don't take the time to pray. We waste our time on non-spiritual things.

One person had this to say.

“The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back and listening to God. Why? Because he who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day.”

And might I add, and the next day and the next day and the next day until one day you wake up and it feels like God's a million miles away.

Why? All because you fell for the lie, “I just don't have the time.” But let me ask you, “Is the media more important than the Maker of the Universe? Will a sit-com soothe your soul better than the Savior? Then why in the world would we spend all our time with Hollywood instead of our Heavenly Father? Who's the real source of power here? And just to make sure we

realize just how powerful praying to God can be, let's take a look at what prayer can do for God's children.

1. By prayer Moses **parted** the **Red Sea**.
2. By prayer Hannah was **able to conceive**.
3. By prayer David **defeated Goliath**.
4. By prayer Jonah was **released from** the belly of a **whale**.
5. By prayer Elijah **caused** it to **rain**.
6. By prayer Elisha **raised a boy from the dead**.
7. By prayer Samson received **supernatural strength**.
8. By prayer Solomon received **supernatural wisdom**.
9. By prayer Hezekiah's **life was spared**.
10. By prayer Peter was **released from jail**.
11. By prayer Jesus **endured the cross**.

Now folks, I'd say those people benefited just a little bit by praying to God, how about you? They not only received the power to overcome their enemies but also the power to overcome some pretty horrible circumstances. And people, this is the great news. Prayer to God doesn't work just for those people in the past. **It works for you and I today!**

And people, I'm telling you, as long as you and I refuse to pray to God, we're going to cause ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear. Therefore, it **has to become a daily precedent** in our lives! Remember, Daniel chose to spend a night in the lion's den rather than to go through one day without prayer. How about us? And if all our troubles are deep-seated and longstanding then maybe its time we try kneeling.

People, it's not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to pray to a supernatural God then don't expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It's that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you're losing your first love!

And people, this is the great news. As soon as we turn away from these temptations and get our faith back in and start praying to God again **like we used to when we first fell in love with Him**, then guess what? We're going to experience the same power and passion like we did before. It's really that easy! In fact, sometimes it's as simple as returning to that child-like faith like we automatically had when we first got saved, like this lady learned.

“It was the summer of 2002 and it was a bittersweet time for my three young children and I. We had just moved and needless to say we were struggling financially.

One afternoon after picking my two youngest kids up from school my 7-year old son asked if we could have pizza for supper. My heart broke a little when I replied that we couldn't afford pizza. But my 9-year old daughter spoke up and told my son that if he really wanted pizza he should just pray for it because God could afford it.

So my son proceeded to lift his little request up to God with all of the faith a child has. And for a split second, I envied his childlike faith and wondered at what point in my life I lost the ability to just believe.

Also, during the course of his prayer, my son remembered we were out of toilet paper so he prayed, ‘God, could You also get us some toilet paper?’

And she said, ‘I was slightly embarrassed that he would ask our Creator, the Lord of Heaven and earth for such a thing but I just let him pray.’

Well, the rest of the afternoon was uneventful but about 4:45 the doorbell rang and my two youngest children went to look through the window to see who it was. Fully expecting them to tell me it was one of their friends, I was not in any way prepared for what came next.

My son yelled out, ‘MOM! The pizza dude’s here!’ ‘The who?’ I asked. As I made my way to the front door in a state of confusion, my son came running thru the house shouting, ‘It’s an angel! God sent an angel to bring us pizza!’

So I went to the door to clear up the confusion as I was sure this ‘pizza dude’ was at the wrong house. I was also worried though about the disappointment my son would feel when this delivery boy realized he was at the wrong house.

So I greeted the pizza boy and explained we hadn’t ordered pizza. To which the delivery boy replied, ‘I know ma’am. Someone called the order in and paid for it with a credit card and we were asked to deliver to you around 5:00.’

And she said, ‘I must have been quite a sight standing there with my two daughters and our mouths hanging open in total disbelief and my son standing behind us saying, ‘See, I told you God sends angels to deliver pizza!’’

So the delivery boy handed me 4 large pizzas and I carried our feast into the kitchen still in shock. I spent the rest of the evening trying to absorb what had just happened.

And just as I was pondering these things my son yelled from the garage ‘Mom! I was looking through this box and guess what I found! Four rolls of Charmin toilet paper!’

Well, apparently I had packed the toilet paper in that box some 3-years ago from one of our previous moves. So I just broke down and cried thanking God for the miracles he had showered over us that day.

That summer of 2002 turned out to be one of the best of my life. I learned to “simply believe” no matter what life looks like. Why? Because God is good and yes He does send angels to deliver pizza.”

People, if it ever feels like God’s a million miles away, guess who moved? Not God, you did! And people this is the great news. Even if you’ve been tricked into living like a practical atheist, **you don’t have to stay that way**. Like that lady discovered, sometimes it’s as easy as becoming a child again. Sometimes you just need to go back to having **faith in God** and **praying to God** for the seemingly impossible like that little boy. Why? Because you too will discover that yes, God still sends angels to deliver pizzas!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, “God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it’s too late!**” But people, I’m telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we’ve got to stop acting like practical atheists. We’ve got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that God is not just **Real**, He’s not just **Personal**, He’s not just **Wise**, but **God is Powerful!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
