



“Returning to our First Love”

FMCIC WEEK OF PRAYER & FASTING 2025

REVELATION 2:1-7

Church of Ephesus: Return to your First Love

JAN 26 – FEB 2, 2025

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this 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. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’ (NIV)

What an amazing beginning for the church at Ephesus! Acts 19 and 20 tell the dramatic story of how the Holy Spirit fell on the believers, and how for two years the Apostle Paul argued persuasively about the kingdom of God, until *“all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10)*. Demons were cast out, those who practiced sorcery burned their scrolls, and worshippers of the goddess Artemis were converted to Jesus. The church began with a bang!

In his parting speech, however, Paul warned them that *“savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:29-31a.)*

Jesus' words to the church at Ephesus imply that this church had taken Paul's warning to heart. They were a hardworking church with a high regard for truth and no tolerance for false teaching. They could sniff out error, blow the whistle on wicked people, and unmask false apostles. They were on their guard! Jesus praises their perseverance and applauds their hard work and willingness to endure hardship for his name. These believers are untiring, unbending, and unable to be fooled.

“Yet...I hold this against you.” Jesus, who walks among the seven lampstands, *knows* his church in Ephesus. He knows not only their deeds, but their hearts. And he holds something against them—they've lost their love. They've fallen far from where they started.

We may wonder what kind of love Jesus found lacking. Was it love for the work, love for the fight—in other words, zeal? I don't think so. They still had that kind of passion. Jesus is calling them out for falling away from their relationship with him. Once that devotion is gone, love for neighbour dissipates, too, and the way we fight lacks love.

The first lesson for the seven churches comes through the failure of the believers at Ephesus to maintain the love they had at first. The lesson is for us, too. Like the Ephesians, we may lose our love in the press of opposition and hardship. **But according to Jesus, to lose the love is to lose it all.**

Listen to his invitation and warning: *“Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”*

To repent is to experience a complete turnaround. “Stop!” Jesus says. “Go back the other way; recover your earlier life in me, with its practices. Do the things you did at first.” Jesus offers them the privilege of returning him to first place in their lives, expressed in acts of devotion and service. If they don't, the church will no longer exist as Jesus' living embodiment in the world, represented by the lampstand. Without love, it's not his church.

Jesus ends with a promise: They can hear what the Spirit says. They can be victorious. If they are, he will give them the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. There is time, and they have a chance. “Come back to me! Recover your first love! There are rewards for all who do.