

KING OF THE JUNGLE

SERMON TITLE: LOVELESS IN EPHESUS REVELATION 2:1-7

There are around 340,000 Christian churches in the United States. That's over 300 different denominations. And each of these denominations, if not each church itself, has a different flavor and focus. Christianity and church life in America seems extremely diverse...

Which reminds me, ***“How many Southern Baptists does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but 15,738,283 had to vote on it first... How many Roman Catholics does it take to change a lightbulb? Nine, one to change it, and eight to raffle off the old one... How many Charismatics does it take to change a lightbulb? Three, one to cast it out, and two to catch it when it falls... How many Presbyterians does it take to change a lightbulb? Change? What's change?... How many Amish does it take to change a lightbulb? A lightbulb? What's a lightbulb... How many Church of Christ does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one, but if anyone else tries it, the light won't come on. How many Nazarenes does it take to change a lightbulb? Five, one to change it, and four to serve refreshments... How many Episcopalians does it take to change a lightbulb? Three, one to do it, one to bless the element, and one to say how much they like the old one... How many Methodist does it take to change a lightbulb? They don't***

know, but there's a committee studying the issue... And last, but not least, ***How many Calvary Chapel guys does it take to change a light bulb?*** One, but he's never on time." *Ouch!*

We assume churches are like ice cream - they come in 31 flavors - *but that's not how Jesus sees us!* I believe Revelation 1-3 teaches that there're only *seven types of churches and seven sorts of members.*

In chapter 1 Jesus routed His Revelation through the Apostle John to seven of the churches in Mediterranean Asia - what is today Western Turkey. In 1:11 Jesus instructed John, ***“What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea...”*** There were other churches in the Asian province - at least a dozen - but Jesus chose to address these seven. So, the question arises, ***“Why did Jesus select these churches, and why are they listed in this order?”***

First, realize these seven cities were all connected in horses-shoe shape by Roman roads. Historians suggest these cities were stops on the postal route. Mail came by sea to the port of Ephesus. From there the Pony Express followed a circuit... north along the coast to Smyrna and Pergamos - then the route swung inland, east to Thyatira - afterwards it turned south, through Sardis, and Philadelphia - arriving in Laodicea. All seven cities were within 50 miles of each other.

These were cities with actual churches - that had real people, and hardships, and blessings. And Jesus writes each of these churches a customized letter. We can learn a lot, both personally and corporately, from Jesus' analysis of each of these seven churches. Author Jeff Lasseigne pens, "Nearly every challenge, difficulty, and problem facing the church today is addressed in these letters to the seven churches."

In the Scriptures the number "**seven**" speaks of *spiritual perfection and completion*. I believe these seven churches are a representative sample of ALL churches - *at that time, through the ages, even today*. There might be 340,000 different congregations in America, but there're really only seven types of churches and Christians. *You can find you... I can find me... we can find us... multiple times in these letters.*

In fact, I believe the order in which these letters were delivered is no accident. There was more to it than Jesus making it easy on the mailman. I know God loves postal workers, but the spiritual postage on these letters was enough to send them much, much further. Amos 3:7 is a provocative verse. It relays a divine principle, "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." In essence, God keeps us in the loop. *He's upfront* about what *He's up to...* From creation to Christ, **the OT** records God's workings and ways... **The Gospels** recount the earthly ministry of Jesus... **Acts** is the first 30 years of the church. But what about the 1900 years since – *the Christian era? Has God not commented?*

I've heard it said, "A good mailman always keeps you posted." And based on Amos 3:7, I believe God has kept us posted! He recorded the Church Age in advance - *in these seven letters to the seven churches*. As we study these letters, you'll see how each one bears an amazing resemblance to a succeeding era of church history... From **Ephesus**, the Early Church - to **Smyrna**, the Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries - to **Pergamos**, the Byzantine Church - then **Thyatira**, the papal church of the Middle Ages - on to **Sardis**, and the churches of the Protestant Reformation - through **Philadelphia**, and the missionary zeal of the 19th century - down to **Laodecia**, and the modern Church... You can trace church history by looking at these seven churches in the order Jesus mentions them. Bible commentator, Joseph Seiss, sums it up, "The churches of all time are comprehended in seven..."

This morning we want to look at the first of these seven letters. We could title it, "Loveless in Ephesus." Jesus begins His message in chapter 2, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, these things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands..." Immediately, we're taken back to the vision John received in chapter 1 of the exalted, glorified Christ.

Remember John hung out with Jesus while He was on Earth. John was a *cousin* prior to being a *disciple*. And he had a ringside seat for the ministry of Jesus. Throughout the Gospels, John was always the first to recognize Jesus. When the Man on the beach told the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat it was John who realized it was the risen Lord Jesus!

You would've thought John of all people was prepared for the glory of Christ. He was one of three disciples to catch a glimpse of Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop. Jesus' humanity was peeled back, and His glory shone through. But nothing prepared John for the mind-bending revelation of Chapter One...

When John saw the unveiled Jesus - *clothed in royalty, characterized by integrity, coursing with ability, carrying great authority...* He *“fell at His feet as dead.”* He was no longer following just a *model Servant*, or a *sacrificial Savior* - Jesus was now a *conquering king!* And to prove it, all John had to do was look in Jesus' right hand. The hand that broke the bread, and healed the sick, and lifted a sinking Peter out of a stormy sea - *His nail-scarred hand* - is now holding *“seven stars.”* Revelation 1:20 identifies these *“seven stars”* as the *“seven angels of the seven churches.”* Jesus is now King of heaven and earth. Even angels fit in His palm.

And notice where Jesus walks... *“in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”* Or according to 1:20 *“the seven churches.”* Notice, our Lord Jesus hangs out in the midst of these seven local gatherings of believers! The one place Jesus promises to be is at church. On occasion, folks tell me they don't feel close to the Lord anymore. There's a distance. And I always ask, *“Are you going to church?”* *“Well, I like Jesus, but not the church.”* Maybe so, but the reason you're missing Jesus is *you're not hanging out where He hangs out.*

Jesus walks and talks among the churches - and not just *perfect churches*... There's no such animal. The majority of the seven churches we'll read about have serious negativity going on - yet Jesus *speaks to them*, and *works with them*. Our Lord "*walks (and talks) in the midst of the lampstands.*" So if you're not going to church how can you really be walking with Jesus?

So Jesus writes to the messenger of the church at Ephesus. He says in verse 2, "*I know your works...*" In each of these letters to the seven churches Jesus makes this same statement, "*I know your works...*" There may be 340,000 churches in America, but Jesus is aware of what's going on *in our midst* and *in our heart*. Deep within, He knows what we're about.

And Jesus starts with the good He sees... "*I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.*" *What a commendation!* The Ephesians were doing a lot right! Here's a church that's recognized for their *service*, and *sacrifice*, and *steadfastness*, and *sensitivity*, and *servanthood*.

Jesus says to them, "*I know your works.*" Ancient Ephesus and its quarter million population was *a busy city* - and it made for *a busy church*. The city of Ephesus was a prosperous port - the gateway to Asia. Its Main Street was paved with marble. The

Ephesians had *places to go*, and *things to do*... Even the church was hopping with activity. Their calendar was chalked full of events and programs.

Recently, I visited a large church in California, and was browsing through their weekly bulletin. It included, “A Spanish service, Deaf Ministry, Arabic service, Women’s Intercessory Prayer, Working Women’s Study, Men’s Prayer Breakfast, High School Mother’s Prayer Meeting, Music Ministry Bible Study, Korean Fellowship, Alcohol and Drug Recovery, College and Career, Prison Fellowship, Prayer For the Sick, Home Fellowships, Single’s Potluck, Adults 50 and Over, Missionary Fellowship, Prayer For Life, Vacation Bible School Training, and Prenatal Classes.” *To name just a few...* This sounded like the Ephesian Church. They had a full slate of worthwhile **service**.

He also notes their “**labor**.” The Greek word translated “*labor*” means “to toil until exhausted.” This was a church willing to **sacrifice** for Jesus’ sake. The church in Ephesus was committed to the Lord and ministry. They had a “*whatever it takes*” mentality.

One of the structures that still stands among the ruins of Ephesus is its famous library - built in 100 AD. It could be one of the reasons the library was constructed was to protect the city’s pagan literature... In Acts 19 when Paul preached in Ephesus the believers were so moved by the Gospel they burned their occult books and

paraphernalia. *All their Harry Potter novels went up in flames!...* This was the kind of *serious, sacrificial* faith evidenced in Ephesus.

The Ephesians were also commended for their “**patience**” - the Greek word means “*to endure.*” This church had a *stick-with-it tenacity*. Knock them down, and they got back up. Try and fail, and they tried again. They kept a hand to the plough - their nose to the grindstone. They were persistent!

Ephesus was home to the Temple of Diana. It was a magnificent structure dedicated to a perverted cult. Diana was the fertility goddess. She was worshipped by committing sex acts with Temple prostitutes. Little idols were made so men could take home a souvenir. But the spread of the Gospel had such an impact on the city it was cutting into the profits of the idol-makers. As a result, a riot erupted, and Paul’s pals were roughed up. It was just the beginning of persecution. Yet it didn’t shake the Church in Ephesus. They continued to grow. They plowed ahead... *serving the Lord - sacrificing for the Lord - **steadfast** in the Lord.*

And notice too, this church could *sniff out false doctrine, and discern false teachers* a mile away. Jesus commends them, “**you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars...**” The Ephesians were heresy hound-dogs. They could tree a deceiver faster than you could say sic’em. Here was a Church with an acute **sensitivity** to right over wrong – truth over error – real over

bogus. They understood not everybody who says he's speaking for God actually is... Even good teachers can be wrong at times. This church was zealous for truth.

And there's one more positive commendation Jesus gives to the church at Ephesus. Skip down to verse 6, **"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."** What in the world is a Nicolaitan? *A TV channel for kids? A box of candies?* No, there was nothing sweet about the Nicolaitans. They were spiritual bullies. They claimed to have God-given authority. They threw their weight around and used ecclesiastical position for their personal gain.

"Nikan or Nike" means **"conqueror."** **"Laos or laity"** were the **"common folk."** The Nicolaitans were religious leaders who used and abused the common folk... And to their credit the Ephesians, just like Jesus, **"hated their deeds..."** The Nicolaitans acted as if the church existed to serve them. Godly leaders are there to serve people. This Church had been planted by Paul, pastored by Timothy, still later by John. They knew good leadership. There was no tolerance for the Nicolaitans.

So here's the Church of Ephesus... busy **servicing** the Lord, willing to **sacrifice** for the Lord, **steadfast** in the Lord, **sensitive** to doctrine contrary to the Lord, and faithful **servants** of the Lord. They seemed to have it all - but Jesus found one fatal flaw with this Church... The Exalted Jesus says in verse 4, **"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."**

In 1993 Reggie Lewis was a rising star for the Boston Celtics - a future All-Star. That's why the basketball world was shocked when an apparently healthy Reggie collapsed in practice after shooting a few baskets. He died of an undetected heart problem. And this was the case with the Church at Ephesus... Outwardly, they were a well-toned *Body*, healthy and holy. If you were to visit this church you'd think, "Wow, this is an All Star Church." You'd be honored to join. But like Reggie, Ephesus had a heart disease.

There's a classic Hank Williams song my daddy use to sing. Here's the chorus, "Why don't you love me like you use to do? How come you treat me like a worn out shoe? My hair is still curly and my eyes are still blue. Why don't you love me like you use to do?" And this is what the Lord is saying to the Church at Ephesus... They no longer love Jesus as they once did!

Jesus straps the electrodes to the chest of this Church, and reads the EKG. *Their love is old and cold!* One commentator puts it, "The furnace was still there, but the fire had gone out." The Ephesian church was going through the *motions* without the *emotion*. There's *piety*, but no *passion* - *duty*, but no *delight*.

Ironically, the word "*Ephesus*" means "darling, or desired one." When these Christians first embraced Jesus they felt like *sweethearts*, not just *servants*. They were truly "the Bride of Christ." There was a spark, a thrill, a romance in their fellowship with the Savior. Their relationship with Jesus was indeed a *love*

relationship! Their love was a “*first love*” - a honeymoon love. But like most marriages this honeymoon happiness eventually came to an end.

If you’ve been married for more than a few days you know how this can happen. A marriage gets busy. A husband and wife begin to ignore each other - they take each other for granted – they stop communicating and nurturing their relationship – they allow unresolved differences to drive a wedge between them. The same can occur in our relationship with Jesus. Our fellowship grows distant. Other stuff - other cares become more important to us than pleasing Jesus!

First love operates off a peculiar kind of logic. Lovers think on a different plane. Abandon *the logic of first love* and you’ll leave behind the love it produces. In 1875 a Paris painter named, *Marcel de Leclure*, fell madly in love with an aristocratic girlfriend. Desiring to demonstrate his undying devotion he sent her the longest and simplest love letter ever written. It consisted of a single phrase written 1,875,000 times. The letter read, “*I love you,*” over and over again.

Lovers do strange stuff. Behavior that’s completely logical to a lover appears foolish to everyone else. A lover will write the initials of their sweetheart in the steam on the shower door... Lovers can’t pay the rent, but they buy each other expensive gifts... They travel dangerous, icy roads just to be with one another... Lovers stay up all night talking - then muddle through work the next day... They smooch while trying to steer a two ton car that’s flying down the road at 60 mph.

To a non-participant *first love* looks reckless, foolish, extravagant, wasteful, uncouth. Its been said, “Nothing raises a man to such noble peaks nor drops him into such ash-pits of absurdity as the act of falling in love.”

Understand, “*first love*” has a logic all its own. It has but one goal, one priority, one overriding consideration. **And that’s to bring pleasure to the person it loves.** *First love* is oblivious to all other concerns. *First love* says, “*Who cares about the cost?... or the danger?... or the risk?... or the opinions of others?...*” This kind of logic befuddles the onlooker, *but for lovers it makes perfect sense!* All that matters to “*first love*” is pleasing the one it loves! It desires to please!

And when a couple abandons their “*first love*” it’s because they leave behind the logic that fueled the fire. Life gets complicated... *work, and kids, and responsibilities, and finances - and all sorts of concerns - come flooding in, and drown out first love...* Nights on the town became evenings in the recliner. We leave behind *first love* when we care more about *preserving* than *pleasing* - or when *caution* overrides *creativity* - or we prioritize *safety* over *spontaneity*.

Labor logic insists that lovers go to work rather than hold hands... *Laundry logic* tells us to wash clothes rather than take a walk together... *Ledger logic* tells you to pay your bills instead of purchase flowers... The secret to a successful marriage is to take care of the *labor* and *laundry* and *ledgers* without allowing *the logic of responsibility* to drown out *the logic of love*.

In a sense this is what happened to the Ephesians... They were so determined to *serve and sacrifice* for the Lord - and *sniff out* false doctrine – and be devoted followers of Jesus - they neglected to love Him! Their goal was to be orthodox, and look spiritual - but they stopped trying to please and know Him personally. The Church at Ephesus set aside the logic of love!

In his book “[The Applause of Heaven](#)” Max Lucado tells the story about the builder of India’s Taj Mahal. When the Emperor’s favorite wife died, Shah Mahan was devastated. He was determined to honor his wife by constructing a shrine that would serve as her tomb. Her coffin was placed in the middle of a large parcel of land, and construction began. As time wore on, the Shah’s grief was eclipsed by a passion for his temple. One day he bumped his leg against a wooden box. He wondered what worker had grown lazy and left the box sitting around. He ordered it thrown away. He didn’t realize the box was the coffin of his beloved.

Max Lucado ends the story with these words, “[The person the Taj Mahal was intended to honor was forgotten, but the temple was erected anyway... Could someone build a temple and forget why? Can you construct a palace, yet forget the king?](#)” The answer is “[Yes!](#)” The Ephesians were building a Temple - a Church - but without its Lord and King.

There was a time when you read the Bible like a love letter or an action novel - there was suspense on every page - but now your *reading* has become *robotic*? Once you were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Now you're *plugging away* without *plugging in*?

Sundays use to be like family reunions - a party with God's people. Today, there's not much difference between Sundays and Mondays - both feel like work. You use to long for opportunities to tell people about Jesus... *when did you become an uncover Christian?* How did serving the Lord turn into such a grind - a chore, a duty - rather than an act of love and gratitude?

Remember Mary's example of *first love*? She brought a vial of expensive perfume and emptied it on Jesus' feet? Even wiped His feet with her hair. The vial represented her life's savings – her 401K. Her gift was extravagant and costly - *and obviously misunderstood*. The disciples wanted to know why the perfume wasn't auctioned on E-bay, and the money used to feed the poor? *Why waste* a valuable tube of perfume on worship when a little epon salt would do? And I've got to ask would we have shared the same opinion? Would we have called Mary's gift "a waste?"

Have we abandoned the logic of *first love*? *First love* is always extravagant! It spares no expense to please the One it loves... What have you "wasted" on Jesus lately? *An hour on nothing but praise?... A Saturday to help a person in His name?.. A week's vacation to share the Lord at Youth Camp?...*

You say, “But Sandy, I only get two weeks vacation, and you want me to spend one with a bunch of kids who aren’t even my own! That just doesn’t make sense?” And that’s precisely the point! *First love*, extravagant love, doesn’t always have to make sense, as long as it’s pleasing the person it’s seeking to love. *First love* is eager to do - and generous to a fault, -and it still sheds tears over lost friends - and it reads the Scriptures with a desire to obey - and when it prays, it doesn’t just say *prayers*, it *prays prayers!*

Let me be clear, I know most of you love the Lord or you wouldn’t be here. You want to worship, serve, learn, give - some of you will even muster an offering. At home you read your Bible on occasion, and pray at meals, and share your faith when someone asks. You’ve even thought about hosting a home group. Most people look at your Christianity, and assume you’re doing well. Even Jesus commends you for your service, and sacrifice, and stick-to-it-ness, and sensitivity. But is there something missing inside? Are you passionate about Jesus? Is your love *a first love?*

Well, if not - if this is your problem - if you’ve left your first love, and want to get it back - I have good news! You don’t **lose** a *first love* - you **leave** a *first love*. If I *lose* my wallet, it’s almost impossible for *me* to get it back on my own. *If I lose it, I don’t know where it is...* My only hope is for someone else to run across it and return it to me. But if I *leave* my wallet - then all I have to do is to return to that spot and take it back!

And the same is true with a *“first love.”* If you can lose it, then *you* can do very little to get it back. But Jesus doesn't tell the Ephesians, *“you have lost your first love.”* He tells them, *“you have left your first love.”* Since you left it, all you have to do to get it back is return to where you left it, and pick it back up again. *And this is what God desires for you today!* In verse 5, Jesus lays out three Rs for recovering our *first love...* He tells the Church, *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...”* Here it is, *remember - repent - repeat...*

First, *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen”*. I like how the NIV renders verse 5, *“Remember the height from which you have fallen.”* In other words, recall the high point in your relationship with God. Reflect back on the good times when your love for Jesus was fresh and fierce and new. When you were passionate about the Bible and thrilled about your faith.

Once upon a time, Mark Twain was asked to explain his success. He answered, *“I was born excited.”* And so were you! When you first embraced Jesus you were born again - excited! There was zeal. The Holy Spirit was the fuel in your tank. Joy spilled over. Remember how thankful you were that your sins were forgiven - that a weight had rolled from your shoulders... You wore a smile for weeks. There was a bounce in your step. Your soul had a permanent grin. Reminisce over the passion you had for the things of God... *You were hungry for the Word - ready to serve - burdened for people.* To recover *first love*, the first step is to *“remember the height from which you have fallen.”*

The second step in retrieving your *first love* is to “**repent.**” Be sorry for allowing your love to grow cold. Here’re a few questions... What was it that became more important than pleasing Jesus?... What other concern slipped in and smother your passion?... What rationale caused you to reject the logic of *first love*? Again, Max Lucado writes, “Satan won’t steal your salvation; he’ll just make you forget what it’s like to be lost. You’ll grow accustomed to prayer and thereby not pray. Worship will become commonplace and Bible study optional. With the passing of time he’ll infiltrate your heart with boredom and cover the cross with dust so you’ll be ‘safely’ out of the reach of change. He’ll take nothing from you, but will cause you to take everything for granted.” This is why you need to find the cause of the coldness and “**repent,**” *return, retake!*

Today, *recommitment* yourself... that from this point onward you’ll live with a *first love* mentality! You’re going to make pleasing the Lord your top priority, regardless how silly or wasteful it seems to others! Repentance is the willingness to change! We can’t change ourselves - only Jesus can change us - but we supply the willingness! Are you willing to do whatever it takes to guard against boredom and keep love alive? Real repentance doesn’t just express sorrow over sin... it develops a plan to keep it from happening again... *it challenges unbiblical thinking, and applies Scripture to life, and develops godly habits, and installs spiritual safeguards, and seeks out genuine fellowship.* Take note, the second step to recovering a person’s “**first love**” is to repent for leaving it in the first place.

And finally, we're told to "do the first works." The third R is to **repeat**. Here's a vital principle. Jot it down... "It is easier to act your way into a feeling, than it is to feel your way into an action." (say it again) If you want to restore a *first love*, then begin to do the same sort of activities you were doing when you were at the height of your spiritual passion and zeal.

This is what we suggest to troubled marriages. Start doing the first works... Farm out the kids and go on a date... Perform random acts of kindness... Be spontaneous... Write a love letter... Send flowers.. Do what you did in the beginning when passion and romance were alive. *Act your way back into the feeling!* And this is also how you revive that *first love* in your relationship with God. Do those things you did in the beginning when you were a brand, new Christian...

Turn off the secular station and listen to Christian music... Read your Bible as if you were reading it for the first time - with an eye on applying it to your life... Witness to a stranger... Get on your knees when you pray... Do something daring for God – make a costly sacrifice... On occasion let your heart lead, rather than just your head... Be bold in what you ask of God... Step out in faith... Take a stand for Jesus even if you look uncouth or offend someone... Pray like you mean it... *Do what you did when you were at your height!*

Here's how you retrieve a *"first love..."* There're three Rs... **Remember** from where you have fallen. - **Repent** of your lapse. - And **repeat** those first works. And it's important you take care of business - for the stakes are really high. Jesus warns us at the end of verse 5, *"or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent."*

As a pastor and church planter I mourn the statistics on church closures. Did you know that in the US, 3000 churches close their doors every year?... *Yet I wonder how many of that number get shut down by Jesus?* There were times in the upbringing of my teenage sons when I looked my boy in the eye and warned, *"I brought you into the world, and I can take you out!"* This is what Jesus is saying to the Ephesian Church. **He can light a lamp, and He can snuff one out!**

Realize Jesus tires of a loveless church! A church that's left its *"first love"* is a blight on His name. He would sooner put it out of business, than watch it step mindlessly through its paces, and *play church*. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love Him with *"all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength."*

When a church ends up a *heartless organization* - or a *machine* - or puts *efficiency above pleasing God* - that church is in danger of being placed on the shelf. Even if some religious activities continue, the church forfeits its spiritual usefulness, and its Kingdom impact.

And what's true of churches is true of the people in them... Jesus says in verse 7, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." When the King of the Jungle roars, we'd better pay attention! Don't miss Jesus' message to His Church *and us!*

And not only is there a warning for failing to take heed - there's also a reward for those who do. Jesus closes His letter to the Ephesians by saying, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Those who go back to where they "left their first love," and retrieve it - God promises the same sweet fellowship with Him for which they were created. They'll discover Paradise and munch fruit from the tree of life.

Henrietta Mears founded Gospel Light - one of the largest Christian publishers in the world. But despite her success what set her apart was her love for Jesus. In Eternity magazine, Russell Hitt, wrote about Mrs. Mears, "We were having a sandwich during a Christian bookseller's convention when she began to reminisce about the wonderful things God had done in her life. She talked of the Lord Jesus as simply and genuinely as a new convert possessed by first love. Tears flowed down her cheeks. It was thrilling to be with a Christian worker who had not become a pro. She really loved Jesus, and lived to make Him known."

This is my prayer. I don't ever want to become a pro! Call me an "amateur." Ever since I learned what the French word meant I've embraced my *amateur status*.

“Amateur” means **“for the love of it.”** This is why I serve Jesus - not because I’m paid to, or it’s my duty. So what if I **serve**, and **sacrifice**, and be **steadfast**, and **sniff-out** heresy, and be a **servant** leader... If I don’t love Jesus with a *“first love”* it’s all for naught.

This morning if you’ve **“left your first love”** - I’m going to ask you to **remember** from where you have fallen - then **repent** - **then I want you to repeat a first work...** When you pledge your heart to Jesus the first time you may’ve walked an aisle - and stood in an altar - and prayed a prayer... Well, I’m asking you to repeat that step of faith. You may think it’s embarrassing, or silly, or unnecessary - but somewhere you left that first love, and Jesus is asking you to repeat the first works. Matt’s going to play - I’m going to pray - and you’re going to come... Together we’ll renew our *“first love.”*