

First Love: A Deeper Understanding of Church
From the Book of Ephesians
Northern Virginia Church of Christ Fall 2017
Teachers: Brett Kreider / Mark Templer

Date	Class	Memory Verse
October 1	Ephesians 1: Restore Awe	Ephesians 1:18
October 8	Ephesians 2: Get Grace	Ephesians 2:10
October 15	Ephesians 3: Behold the Bride	Ephesians 3:10
October 22	Ephesians 4: The Battle for Unity	Ephesians 4:15
October 29	Ephesians 5: The Song of Life	Ephesians 6:18
November 5	Ephesians 6/Revelation 2: First Love	Test

Devotional Thoughts from Ephesians 6: The Supernatural

The Spiritual War (6:10-12)

- Eph. 1-5 explain the spiritual nature of church
- Now: Fight for Family; build up the church

Ready your Resources: every person, gift, and spiritual weapon

- The battle is for your soul - you can't lose this!

Recognize the Enemy: Fighting each other wastes our energy; Don't take Satan lightly (Rev. 12:12)

*"Satan has a fiery hatred for God, an army of evil spiritual forces, an insight into our weaknesses, an understanding of the spiritual realm that we cannot fathom, and a diabolical motivation that is out of control."
 (First Love)*

Spiritual Weapons (6:13-17)

- The Belt of Truth and Breastplate of Righteousness protect your heart
- The Gospel prepares you to preach
- Shield of Faith extinguishes every devilish attack
- Helmet of Salvation spiritually guards your mind
- The Word of God defines God's standards, cutting through lies like a Spiritual Sword

*"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."
 (2 Corinthians 10:4)*

Engage the Spirit: Prayer in the Spirit (6:18-20)

- Brings us into spiritual reality
- Draws us close to God
- Energizes us by the power of the gospel
- Opens our eyes to our own feelings and desires
- Reveals others needs so we may serve them
- Increases our faith so we understand the implications of our salvation

*"With all of this firepower, we would be neglectful, incompetent warriors if we failed to "pray in the Spirit."
 (First Love)*

Undying Love (6:23-24)

- *"Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love."*
- Most earthly and spiritual attacks aim to extinguish or diminish our First Love. (First Love)

Devotional Thoughts from Revelation 2: First Love

Revelation 2 – Background (~95 AD, 40 years after the church was planted)

- John “the Elder” of Ephesus
- Exiled to Patmos where he saw a vision of Jesus
- John recognized THE AUTHOR
- Jesus addressed the 7 churches of Asia, including Ephesus

The Call of Duty

Commended for: deeds, hard work, and perseverance

They didn't tolerate wicked people, endured hardships for my name, and didn't grow weary... But why? Does the why matter?

First Love Lost. They lost the love (agapē) they had at first (principal, most important) → God was no longer first.

What does that look like?

- God/Church becomes a “duty”
- Unwilling to speak truth → Disunity
- Unable to sing wholeheartedly
- Losing the spiritual battle

First Love is Possible

- Need to... Get to... Choose to!
- Infatuation or Agapé?
- What about my emotions?
- Honeymoon or Longevity?
- Choose to love God first in response to his love – our actions put God first
- A lifestyle of willing sacrifice for the sake of God and his bride, the church

By the time Jesus addressed the Ephesians in Revelation, they had already lost their first love. He called them back to a choice that he believed they could make – to choose a love response (agapé) and elevate their love for God back to that “first” position. God reminded them that he loved them enough to chase them down, win them over, and share his One and only Son's inheritance. Jesus, through John, illustrated the certainty of God's ultimate victory in the Revelation. Jesus' call to them was not complicated or something they had never done before. He called them to repent and do the things they did at first – to put their love for God first in their lives, above every other love.

As a motivator, Jesus held out the ultimate hope:

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

How is your spiritual battle going? Most of us begin with great fervor, but few maintain that passion to keep our love for God “first” over time. I hope that this book has stirred your heart to fight the good fight and finish the race. First Love is not something you can do on your own, but it is something that must be fanned into flame in the dark lonely corners of your prayer closet. God's plan has always been for the church to be the place where First Love is not only encouraged, but also expected and inspired.

He saw Jesus:

*White dazzling clothes
Burning eyes | Glowing skin
Blazing face
Stars collected in his hands
Voice thundering like a
waterfall
Commands proceeding from a
sword-shaped mouth.
John fainted at Jesus' feet.”
(First Love)*

*“Jesus wanted them to recognize that they had fallen so that they could repent.
Love for God was no longer first in their lives.
If we don't admit that our first love is gone,
how can we ever change?” (First Love)*