Let God Be True!

First Works Work

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"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Revelation 2:4-5

The Rule

1. Waning love is a sin, when God commands love. His three-step rule will restore love.
2. The glorified Christ gave the rule. It is absolute truth. God inspired it and preserved it!
    1. He had something against the church at Ephesus, and just those words are fearful.
    2. He threatened the church with severe consequences for allowing this crisis to exist.
    3. There was something they could do about it, and He expected them to do it then.
3. In this context, it is from Jesus by the Spirit for personal and corporate love of Christ.
    1. Let there be no confusion – we are slaves to context – and context is love of Christ.
    2. But if the three-step approach can restore love to Christ, it can restore marital love.
    3. This is arguing from the greater to the lesser, which has strong, logical legitimacy.
    4. For examples of this type reasoning, see Matthew 10:24-25 and I Corinthians 6:3.
4. The first step to correct marital doldrums is to recognize and admit your waning love.
    1. You do not need a letter from Jesus, as His word and your conscience should do it.
    2. All other things being equal, there is usually a decline in love in most marriages.
    3. You are married to a child of God, and your love should match Him and His word.
    4. It does not matter you are doing much well, because nevertheless condemns you.
    5. Love does not leave you, but rather you leave love, since we trust the words here.
5. The status quo is unacceptable. Something must be done to restore any waning love.
    1. Love is a choice; you are responsible for its decline, drabness, dullness, deadness.
    2. The Bible is clear that you can direct your affection to objects of choice (Col 3:2).
    3. Love is not something that happens to people; love is something you do to people.
    4. Lust is what happens to people, and lust is not love except to whores (Prov 7:18).
    5. If you think love is outside and happens to people, you are quite deceived and lost.
6. The rule has three parts or steps, and they should be understood to realize the benefit.
7. Those that fear God know their duty, fear meeting Him, and will make changes today.

Remember

1. You must recall what it was like in the beginning when madly in love for your spouse.
2. If you cannot remember, or think things okay, then measure yourself against scripture.
3. God did not ordain marriage a boring, cold, dull partnership, but passionate romance.
4. Marriages do grow cold, old, stale, boring, or perfunctory in comparison to the start.
5. Bitterness, coldness, fear, habits, hopelessness, walls do creep or rush into marriages.
6. Spouses understand how loss of love and passion dulls any actions; parents feel this when children obey grudgingly, and children know it when parents listen distantly.
7. First love is not so much returning to specific acts as much as it is a restoration of affection, commitment, emphasis, energy, motivation, priority, sacrifice, zeal, etc.

Repent

1. Repentance is to identify and repudiate things wrong and devote self fully to do right.
2. Regarding marriage, this should first be to God with Elihu's words (Job 33:27-28).
3. Then it should be to your spouse with a full, humble confession of your sinful role.
4. If you feel such a confession is too risky for any reason, then you do not know love.
5. Clearing the air of bitterness, a cold war, resentment, walls is incredibly therapeutic.
6. Some are raised with these things in their home and think them a normal part of life.
7. But they are only a part of sinners' lives, for God's word already ruled against them.

Do the First Works

1. Emphasize doing. It is investing in your spouse by romantic deeds (or words) of love.
2. First works is the desperate, diligent, eager, and excited attitude and desire to please.
3. First works is cheerful zeal to do anything and everything to perfectly satisfy another.
4. First works are loving kindnesses you showed your spouse in the beginning of love.
5. First works are sacrificial actions and investments of love to cause joy in a spouse.
6. How to renew? DO! Flush dead / dull habits – pretend you are wooing for first time.
7. Pursue your spouse and their pleasure like you once did with creative energy and love.
8. Instead of waiting for your spouse to initiate love toward you, initiate love to them.

The Motivation

1. It is an order from the God and Saviour you worship that you must love your spouse.
    1. Love must be passionate and ravishing, free of impediments (Prov 5:19; Col 3:19).
    2. A husband's love must be cherishing, nourishing, honoring (Eph 5:29; I Peter 3:7).
    3. A husband's love is to be sacrificial and costly, like Christ, to perfect (Ep 5:25-27).
    4. A wife's love must be ravishing, reverential, sexual (Pr 5:19; Ep 5:33; I Cor 7:1-5).
    5. A wife's love must be sacrificial, submissive, total (Gen 3:16; Pr 31:12; Tit 2:4-5).

6. God's commandments found clearly and repeatedly in the Bible should be enough.

2. Compromise here can cause God to resist you (I Peter 3:7; Mal 2:13-15; Luke 1:17).
3. The level of romance, pleasure, and obsession is indicated fairly in Song of Solomon.
    1. This eight-chapter intimate, graphic romance is part of the Bible's divine library.
    2. Consider the theme marriage or Christ and the church, the metaphor still stands!
    3. The world did not invent passion – God did! Where is yours (Gen 29:20; Pr 5:19)?
4. The Bible insightfully teaches that loving a wife is loving yourself (Eph 5:28-29)!
    1. Jesus gave Himself for the church for the end and goal of Himself (Eph 5:25-27).
    2. If a man truly invests in his wife with wisdom and passion, he will get more back.
5. It is more blessed to give than receive … except atheists denying God (Acts 20:35).
    1. If you ever fully grasp this law of Christ, it is more fun to love than to be loved.
    2. Investments in another will very quickly, if not immediately, bring good feelings.
    3. A Christian should be the best and easiest servant, and this is much of marriage.
    4. Hey! If you consider your spouse your enemy, this is the way to heap coals of fire!
6. Life is too short … disappointing … to live it without all the pleasure of marital love.
7. When the Lord comes … likely not when you are in church … but married for sure!

What Was It Like?

1. Remember … excitement … intensity … obsession … tirelessness … sacrifice … other-first service … quick forgiveness … blindness … I-will-do-anything, etc.!
2. A glimpse of the other was magical; a look and smile from the other was precious.
3. You willingly … eagerly … unconditionally … rejected all others for your spouse!
4. The innate drive to seduce or win coupled with Christian character is ultimate service.
5. Marital inertia goes from "for you" to "I need" and "I want" and "I have my own life."
6. To the degree it was lust motivating you, confess the fault, make love first, add lust!
7. How about Isaac and Rebekah? – it started well and kept going (Gen 24:62-67; 26:8).
8. God matched Jacob and Rachel … and Ahasuerus and Esther … and both were great!

The Means

1. Do the first works – the early excitement of anything to please – in attitude and action.
    1. Remember! Recall it! You can restore it! You would do anything for your spouse!
    2. Attitude alone will not work; there must be performance to prove it; your spouse has heard your commitments before; he/she wants to see you follow through.
    3. Action alone will not work; there must be passionate and personal involvement; we all know the emptiness of perfunctory performance or mannequin sex. Get real!
2. Make investments in your spouse; your heart will follow your investments (Mat 6:21).

    1. Flush all thoughts about self and go all-out to dote on your spouse, love will rise!
    2. It has little to do with your spouse, for it is a function of your attitude and actions.
    3. If you truly dote on your spouse, as unto the Lord or for Him, He will bless you.
3. If you are a Christian, serving others is pure joy; if married, you are obligated to do it.
    1. Attitude – I will … be the most loving man for the Lord's sake and for my wife.
    2. Attitude – I will … be the most loving wife, as if my husband were the Lord Jesus.
4. Words are powerful – like Shechem (Gen 34:3); use them (Pr 12:18; 7:21; 5:3; 31:26).
    1. If a wicked woman can use words to overpower men, so can a virtuous, wise wife.
    2. There is no way David could have resisted Abigail's incredible choice of words.
5. Ladies, fearing God trumps looks and favor (Pr 31:30), but you should use all three!
6. Perfunctory performance does not cut it; passionate doting of paramours wins all!

The Hindrances

1. These hindrances are irrelevant in light of the duty, but identify them to reject them.
2. Waiting for a spouse is not first works – you had to be first to prove love at the start.
    1. You did not wait for your spouse to act first; you had great creativity and initiative.
    2. If you wait to be a responder, you could only win a loser, and you displease God.
    3. To you, God does not care about your spouse's conduct; He demands your love.
    4. Those that put conditions on God's word by their spouse's conduct are wicked.
3. Bad home examples – the majority of any group – is proof positive of God's word.
    1. You must reject any bad examples that have colored your actions and your hope.
    2. The fact your parents did not have a loving relationship only proves God's word.
    3. Learning and applying the Bible's instruction can save you from sinful examples.
4. Waiting for feelings to drive action is only lust; actions without feelings are real love.
    1. Christians do not need feelings to do what is right before God and kind to a spouse.
    2. The Bible stresses fear of the Lord, because those spouses love without feelings.
5. What have you allowed to creep into your marriage that God condemns or ignores?
    1. If you have bitterness – resentment for unresolved conflict – you sin (Col 3:19).
    2. If you have built a wall of bitterness that colors everything, you must tear it down.
    3. If you have fear – you have not learned love takes risks and what Jesus did for you.
    4. If you are hopeless – you forget God is watching, He will bless, and it may work.
6. Most wives will be weak, so accept it; respond with honor, not bitterness (I Pet 3:7).
7. What if a spouse responds less than you hoped for? Repeat your perfect performance!
8. If your marriage was not very hot to start, it justly means you were sinning at the start!

Love the One You're With

1. Sinners use the words to fornicate; we use them to honor God's providence and word.
2. For creating love or restoring love.
3. Two people on an island, no matter how very different, would learn to love each other.
    1. If there is a need (companionship) and no options (you have none), create love!
    2. Your marriage is God's will for you, even if you married foolishly. Make it good!
    3. Need and no options can generate love by the mutual investment in each other.
    4. You have no other options, because God arranged your spouse and hates divorce.
    5. You are stranded with your spouse, and it can be as much fun as you make it be.
    6. Contentment is crucial, for any thoughts against or outside your spouse ruin you!
    7. The lack of options, either real or imagined, bring both face to face to have love.
4. An arranged marriage, where the young woman was given to a stranger, could work.
    1. Love came after marriage, so no disappointment after dating. You can create love.
    2. Such spouses understood the choice of love, which is what they did to survive.
    3. Grabbing a wife from the bushes can work (Judges 21:16-23)! Why not for you!
    4. Marital love requires the man; he can cheer up a wife by wise kindness (Deu 24:5).
    5. Love can and must be taught, as the older women and mothers should do (Tit 2:4).
    6. Dating is unrealistic and temporary, leading to disappointment when there is a bed!
    7. Those couples – Adam and Eve; Isaac and Rebekah – did what you can do today!
5. All spouses can seduce or win the other sex – they did it once; they could do it again.
    1. This fact is very condemning – for it means a boring marriage is your cruel hatred.
    2. All men are Shechem before marriage; most selfishly withhold it after (Gen 34:3).
    3. Young men at home a year was not waiting for something, but creating something!
    4. Anyone can create love – sacrificial desire and effort to please and profit another!
    5. Women want affection, desire, looks, words, touches, embraces, and what else …?
    6. Men want loyalty, submission, reverence, availability, initiative, and what else …?
    7. Seduction is inborn, for necessity. What keeps you from doing it? Confess the sin.
6. A marriage with baggage, bitterness, disappointment, pain, and walls can be restored.
    1. The text of this study – Rev 2:5 – assumes and proves first love can be restored!
    2. God illustrated restoring love with adulterous Israel (Jer 3:1-4; Ezekiel 16:60-63).
    3. It takes two persons with godly repentance, who will fulfill their roles scripturally.
    4. But it only takes one spouse to get started, and who knows with God blessing one!
    5. If you give up due to doubts of your spouse, you are lazy, selfish, doomed, wrong.
    6. Paul enjoyed loving Corinth, yet the more he gave the less he got (II Cor 12:15)?
    7. Past negatives in mind can be forgiven; the positive future is your godly choice.

The Simplicity

1. Both spouses know exactly how, if they would humble themselves to God and spouse.
    1. They did it to bring about the marriage, didn't they? with the very person at hand!
    2. If a spouse died, all could do it again without classes on courtship, kindness, love!
    3. Therefore it is a matter of selfishness, pride, laziness, or rebellion against the Lord.
2. God would not have told men to cheer up wives unless it was very probable (De 24:5).
    1. The circumstances of this verse were often frightened and reluctant young wives.
    2. The idea of doing it God's way … not dating before marriage … is enlightening.
3. God would not have told men to be satisfied/ravished, unless you can do it (Pr 5:19).
    1. Of course, this takes desire, effort, time, just like it does for your husband to love.
    2. You cop out and deny the Bible, if you forfeit by insecurity or lack of confidence.
4. Strong men have been seduced by strange women, what about a good wife (Pr 7:26)?
    1. A wise woman will say, the other woman always has the advantage over the wife.
    2. A wiser woman will say, with a Christian husband I can whip the other woman.
5. How to regain hunger for what you didn't have, when you have it? It is your favorite!
    1. What if there were no other women … but your wife married to you … it is true!
    2. Treat your wife as if she were the other person marooned on a south Pacific island.
    3. Shopping in a cycle shop or car lot is foolish and wrong … if you already bought.
    4. Take your model and learn everything about it, slant the evidence, turn a blind eye, and make it the most fantastic, unique bike or car in the world. Sell it to yourself!
6. Do the first works … do not wait … do not feel … love is action based on the math.
    1. The math is God is pleased, your wife is pleased, you are pleased, not in that order!
    2. Check the math … any woman will respond … but a Christian will respond better.
7. Put your spouse first, even what seems sacrificially, and more will come back to you.
    1. The math is God is pleased, your wife is pleased, you are pleased, not in that order!
    2. Anytime you make a choice to protect yourself or hurt your spouse, you hurt you!
8. Maybe you need to visit the "love languages," though any language will win anyone!
9. If your spouse makes an effort toward you, notice it, love it, commend him, return it!
10. By being here today, you are responsible before God, your spouse, your children, us.
11. God is too good … judgment too real … life too short … love too sweet … to miss it!

For Further Study:

1. Study Outline: Love the One You're With.
2. Sermon: Maximizing Your Marriage.
3. Sermon Outline: Perfect Marriages.
4. Sermon Outline: Importance of Your Marriage.

5. Sermon Outline: Marriage Essentials.
6. Proverbs commentary, “Proverbs 5:19.
7. Sermon Outline: Role of the Man.
8. Sermon Outline: Role of the Woman.
9. Sermon Outline: Marriage – Only in the Lord.
10. Study Outline: How to Seduce Your Wife.
11. Marriage Covenant.
12. PowerPoint Study, “Managing Your Wife.