

Things I Have Never Regretted

I have never regretted waiting until tomorrow to send an angry email.

I have never regretted going today to visit a person in the hospital or nursing home.

I have never regretted asking if the patient would like to have a word of prayer before I leave.

I have never regretted refusing to post a picture or comment on Facebook.

I have never regretted speaking immediately to a person about his soul.

I have never regretted arriving early and leaving late.

I have never regretted choosing to read rather than watch TV.

I have never regretted spending money on a date night or a family vacation.

—John Guzzetta

Your First Love

Jesus said to His church at Ephesus, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent (Revelation 2:4-5). We often think of one’s “first love” as a teen crush that flamed out. But in this context, Jesus uses the phrase in the sense of first in place rather than first in time. That is, “you have left the thing that used to be (and should still be) the most important thing in your life.”

Clearly, the Ephesians’ relationship with Jesus Christ wasn’t as strong as it used to be. While I suppose there are a number of ways that one can “fall out of love” with Jesus, the Ephesians’ problem can be understood by the prescribed solution: “repent and do the deeds you did at first!”

Let us do some soul searching this day, for our selves, for our families, for our congregation. Is the Lord still the center of our affections? Are we doing the deeds we did at first? Is He still in the top spot, the biggest priority in our lives? Or have we relegated Him to second or third place

behind the other distractions that clamor for our attention?

When you were first baptized into Christ, you couldn't wait to assemble with the saints and lift up songs to His name. Do you still feel that same sense of excitement and joy when the Lord's Day approaches? Or do you allow other things to get in the way—a trip to the beach, an activity, a stuffy nose?

When you first made the good confession of the name of Christ, you were ready to give up anything, to do anything, to go anywhere, to follow down the narrow road that leads to salvation. Do you still feel that same sense of urgency and abandon? Or have you shrugged your shoulders and complacently allowed temptations to take up residence in your heart?

When you first learned that Christ opened up the door of access to God's throne, you prayed often, speaking to Him like a trusted friend. You could feel His presence listening to you. Do you still talk to Him that way? Or is prayer no longer the regular, frequent, productive activity it once was?

When you first bought a Bible, you loved the smell of the pages and the smooth feel of the leather. You took notes in it and made a promise to read a little each day. Have you kept that promise? Would you rather catch up on another rerun, or spend just a moment of that time in quiet meditation?

If any of this hits too close to home, fear not, there is a fix! "Repent and do the deeds you did at first!" It's never too late to rediscover that same sense of wonder and joy, by getting busy in the Lord's work. Act yourself into a better way of feeling. You'll quickly fall in love again with Jesus.

Any couple who has been married a long time will tell you that a relationship takes work. Intensity of devotion and emotion don't come automatically, and don't stick around without diligence. If you keep dating and talking and spending time together, you will remain emotionally invested in one another. The same is true in your relationship with Christ.

This passage ends on a frightful note. If the Ephesians do not repent and repair their relationship with Jesus, being as devoted and busy in their service to Him as they once were, He is planning to come and "remove your lampstand."

When John first sees Jesus, he is walking amongst the lampstands, which represent the various churches of Asia. He held in His hand the angels of each congregation. He had fellowship with them, He strode purposefully among them, He protected them and opened doors for them. As they served Him, they spread light to their respective communities, and all throughout the Roman province of Asia.

For Jesus to remove a lampstand indicates that their light has grown dim, and Jesus no longer

wishes to be identified with them.

I can only wonder at what point in a church's collapse this occurs. Perhaps there are many congregations with whom Jesus ceased to associate long ago, even though a building still stands, a preacher still preaches, and worshippers still attend.

When a church stops standing firm on the doctrine of Christ, when it stops spreading the light of the gospel to the community, when it stops working hard in His name, it runs the risk of having its connection to the head severed.

So do your best to keep the flame of your relationship with Christ burning bright. In your personal life, in your family, and in your congregation, make fellowship with Christ and attention to His work the number one priority. Make Him your first love now and forevermore!

—John Guzzetta