

Revelation 2:2-5 - The Church of Ephesus

Revision: The Divine Outline of the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:19 NKJV

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

v 19 **Write the things:** This second command to write gives us a structure to understand the Book of Revelation. John is commanded to **write** regarding the past, present, and future (looking from John's perspective).

v 19 **The things which you have seen:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write the things he had just **seen** in his vision of the glorious, heavenly Jesus — Chapter 1

v 19 **The things which are:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write about the things of his present day, the things regarding the *seven churches which are in Asia* — Chapters 2 and 3.

v 19 **The things which will take place after this:** This means that Jesus wanted John to write about the things that would happen after the things regarding the *seven churches*, the things of the last days — chapters 4-22.

We are now in the second section of the Book of Revelation, which deals with “the things which are.”

These are seven messages or letters given by Jesus Himself to seven specific churches that were located in what is today the country of Turkey. However, all churches need to learn the lessons and listen to what Jesus says. There is a personal message from Jesus to each church. No where else in the scriptures does Jesus speak so directly to the churches. We need to pay attention to what Jesus says to us.

The Structure of the Letters to the Seven Churches

Each of the seven letters is made up of six parts (including two more in addition to the basic four described last week). There is a formula or pattern that Jesus follows when giving the 7 messages to the 7 churches.

1. ***It's addressed to a specific church.***
2. ***Jesus reveals specific attributes about Himself to that church.*** What Jesus reveals about Himself is the answer to the problem or difficult circumstances that the church is facing. This is awesome, because it shows that Jesus Himself is the answer to everything. And because the churches also apply to us individually, it means that Jesus is the answer to all our problems and circumstances as well. **We just need to have a good understand of Jesus' attributes, that is, who He is, to realise and understand, not that Jesus has all the answers, but Jesus is the answer to anything and everything we can face or experience. If we simply understand and believe who Jesus is, we can overcome any problem that we may experience.**

3. ***A commendation.*** God is so gracious. If God is going to disciple us, He will always start out with something that He can commend us for, where possible. So here we see Jesus commending the churches for what they are doing right. Jesus is demonstrating how to effectively discipline children. It's awful and discouraging to only be told what you are doing wrong. We need to find things to praise as well. As parents we need to be careful to be balanced. Also, wives, be careful to remember this when talking to your husbands, and vice versa.
4. ***Then Jesus shows them where they can improve.*** It's like a medical checkup. He shows them where they are failing or going wrong. There's only one church that Jesus can't find anything good to say about, and that's the church of Sardis, the dead church. This church represents the reformation movement and today is represented by the mainline denominations, which as we know, have almost wholesale embraced liberal theology. For example, homosexuality, female pastors, teaching evolution and denying prophecy, especially the end times. All these things are a symptom of a singular cause — a move away from the authority of the Scriptures. The singular focus of the reformation was to get back to the bible, but now there is very little concern for the authority of the bible — man's teaching and traditions are much more important.
5. ***Then Jesus gives them a rebuke for that failing.*** There are two churches that don't get a rebuke. The first is the church of Smyrna, the suffering church. This represents the church as it was being persecuted by the Roman Empire from A.D. 100 to 312. This is a reminder that trials purify us. The second is the church of Philadelphia, also known as the faithful church or the missionary church. It's a time of revival and evangelism, and there is no rebuke for this stage of the church.
6. ***Then Jesus gives them promises that directly apply to their need.*** Always remember that the most important thing that we can learn as a believer of Jesus Christ is not just to believe generally, but believe specifically (Recommended book: Faith for the final hour by Hal Lindsay). We can humbly come boldly to the throne of Grace, when we come to the Lord, because God always keeps His promises.

The church of Ephesus — The Loveless Church

Revelation 2:1-7 NKJV

“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: ²“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; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name’s sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

Revelation 2:2 NKJV

...And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Here, Jesus gives His affirmation. He says, “First of all, I affirm or commend you for staying with the task. That is, you’ve worked hard. You haven’t fainted, given up or quit. Secondly, you’ve stood with the truth and protected the truth.

Last week we looked at what the bible says about false prophets. This is a very important topic today as there are many false prophets around who are deceiving many people. Before we move on, I would like to read just one scripture that reminds us of the source of the deception and just how deceiving or subtle the deception would be.

2 Cor 11:13-15 NLT

These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

So just like false converts and false teachers, false prophets look, sound and act like the real thing. But guess what, they are sent by Satan and their message is from Satan whose name means “enemy”. Always remember that all Satan wants to do is kill, steal and destroy and he is the father of lies — he wants to trick as many people as he can to spend eternity with him in the Lake of Fire or Hell — that’s his end goal, his purpose in life. If he can’t do that, then he will do his best to destroy the lives of Christians, making them ineffective in sharing the gospel and robbing them of the joy of loving, obeying, and abiding with God.

So if these false prophets and false teachers are so cleverly disguised, how do we know who is a fake and who is true? As we learnt last week, Jesus said that we will know them by their fruit — both the false doctrine they teach and their greedy and evil way of life. Why are they so dangerous? As we learnt last week, even though the false prophets and false teachers talk about God, their lies prevent people from entering the kingdom of God or being saved or born again, and they also hinder or prevent those who are saved from maturing in their faith. It’s no wonder that God is so angry with them.

v 2-3 “I know your works, your labor, your patience, ... and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name’s sake and have not become weary.”

By all outward appearances, this was a solid church that worked hard, had great outreach, and protected the integrity or truth of the gospel.

Keep in mind what was happening to these people — they were being hunted down, killed, and persecuted for their faith as they lived in the very evil Roman Empire which forced people to worship the emperor or king. Yet they were faithful to continue to be obedient to God and the work that He had given them to do, even if it meant death.

It's so easy to give up, to quit, to compromise, to take the easy way out when things get hard. How does this apply to us today, after all we are not being hunted down and thrown into prison just because we are a Christian? Well, today we have our own challenges. We live in an evil world which is always trying to make us turn away from God. Here are two examples:

First, the bible says that Christians should only marry Christians and that we should wait until we are properly married until we have sex. What happens if you are a Christian, and you are friends with someone who isn't a christian. He seems really nice and asks you to sleep with him. Although it is difficult, we must say something like, "no, I can't sleep with you because the bible says that two people must be properly married before they have sex. Also, I can't marry you, because I'm a Christian and I must be obedient to what God wants me to do. The bible clearly commands that a christian must only marry another christian of the opposite sex. Therefore, I can't sleep with you, move in with you, or marry you." Being obedient to God is what it means to be faithful to God, to persevere.

Ladies, will you be faithful to wait and keep yourself for the godly man that God has chosen just for you? Gentlemen, will you be faithful to wait and keep yourself pure for the godly woman that God has chosen just for you? Will you trust God enough to obey Him? Will you persevere in your obedience to Him. Will you be able to say no to the pressure that this world with its evil movies, music, TV and social media places on you to disobey? Will you persevere in your obedience to God or will you quit and go the way of the world? This is one of the greatest challenges for people in this modern age where anything goes.

Second example, what would you do if God called you to go to live in Kalgoorlie and work in a church there, helping feed poor people and giving the homeless somewhere to live. Your unbelieving family thinks you're crazy and gives you a really hard time. They tell you don't care about them and that if you go to Kalgoorlie and work at the church they will cut you off. What will you do? Will you be faithful to what God has called you to do, or will you quit and go back home to your family? Will you demonstrate patience and endurance, being willing to suffer as you continue to do the work that God has called you to? Will you make Jesus more important in your life than your family? Again, being obedient to God is what it means to be faithful to God, to persevere, to not give up, to not quit.

Think about the following verses:

1 Corinthians 15:58 NKJV

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

To abound means to go over and above what we need to do, to do more and more, to have an abundance of good works. We should abound in the work of the Lord because there is great reward if we do not give up. It's never for nothing. Loving and serving God is always worth it, even if it is difficult at the time.

Why Motive Matters

1 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV

... remembering without ceasing your work of **faith**, labor of **love**, and patience of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Compare this to verse Revelation 2:5. The Greek words for each of the words “work, labour and patience” are the same in both verses.

work = deeds, the things we do, e.g. helping someone.

labour = hard, painful work and suffering hardships or hard times

patience = the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty or the act or state of patient waiting for someone (Jesus)

1 Thessalonians 1:3

...work of **faith**, labor of **love**, and patience of **hope**...

Revelation 2:5

“I know your works, your labor, your patience,...

What is missing? **faith, love and hope**.

You can really see how much things had changed in about 50 years. Overall, the church at that time, and especially the church of Ephesus, *were not living by faith, not motivated by love, and had lost their hope of Christ's return and the establishment of His kingdom*. We will see how this can happen shortly.

labor of love (1 Thessalonians 1:3): It's a labour of *love*, keep this in mind as we continue. Love must be what motivates us. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 15:14, “For the love of Christ compels us...” We will come back to this later because this church was labouring, but not out of love. They were not motivated by love.

In the sight of our God and Father (1 Thessalonians 1:3): Remember that God is always watching, and He will never forget the good things you do because of your love for Him — there will be a rich reward for you in heaven, and you will experience an abundant, joy-filled life right now, no matter what your circumstances.

God has done so much for each one of us, demonstrating His love for us when Jesus died on the cross in our place. Jesus willingly suffered for me as He obeyed the Father. Will I be willing to suffer and sacrifice for Him as I obey the Father?

We have read about God's commendation for the good things that the church of Ephesus had done, but now we come to the part where God corrects them for something that they are not doing or are doing wrong.

Revelation 2:4 NKJV

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Here Jesus gives His correction. Notice the language used here. “you have **left** your first love.” **Not**, you have **lost** your first love. It's you have **left** your first love. This describes a choice of the will, a decision we make, to change our focus, to change our priorities. Jesus is no longer number one in our lives, He is no longer our first love, our first priority, what we focus our affections on. When this happens, we lose our proper focus, our compass, our true motivation for doing things.

How do we work up a love for God? We can't. We can only respond to God's love.

1 John 4:9-10, 19 NLT

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. ...

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

As we learn more about who God is and what He has done for us, we will naturally grow to love Him.

Three things to notice:

1. **Left your first love:** What **love** did they leave? As Christians, we are told to love God *and* to love one another. Did they leave their love for God? Did they leave their love for one another? Probably *both* are in mind, because the two loves go together. You can't say you love God and not love His family, and you can't really love His family without loving Him first.

2. **The Ephesian church was a *working* church.**

Sometimes a focus on *working* for Jesus will eclipse a love relationship with Him. We can put *what we do* for Jesus before *who we are* in Him, or in other words, *we can find our identity in what we do rather than who we are.*

3. **The Ephesian church was a *doctrinally pure* church.**

David Guzik says, "Sometimes a focus on *doctrinal purity* will make a congregation cold, suspicious, and intolerant of diversity."

Charles Spurgeon says, "When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart." (Spurgeon)

We should always seek to know what is right and wrong and understand the bible because bad doctrine leads to wrong motives, bad behaviour and stunted spiritual growth. However, without love, that knowledge becomes a weapon to judge others and pull them down. But, ideally, that same knowledge used in love builds people up. We must speak the truth in love, Ephesians 4:15

Application — Leaving our First Love — The Slow Fade

What is described here in the church of Ephesus is slow fade, where they continued to do the right thing, but increasingly with the wrong motive. This can so easily be true for us today as well. We may hardly notice the change, the intrusion of another love. But gradually, our zeal, our enthusiasm wanes or dies. We are motivated less and less by our love and appreciation for what Christ has already done for us. The joy of the Lord has ceased to be our strength. We are no longer walking in the power of the Spirit. Our christian walk becomes a grudging obligation — something we *have* to do instead of something we *want* to do. We only serve because we made a commitment and we don't want to look foolish by quitting, or, others make us feel condemned if we stop.

Here's an example of a marriage relationship that will help us to understand what happens in our relationship with God. Picture a happily married man, we'll call him Henry. Henry loves his wife Jane and is not interested in any other woman. He buys her flowers. He always comes home on time to eat dinner with his wife. He loves talking things over with her, and they have no secrets. But then he is offered a promotion at work. He decides to take the job. But the work is harder, and the boss seems to always ask him to stay back and do more work. At first, Henry only stays

back at work sometimes, maybe once a week. But after a year Henry finds himself staying back at work every night of the week. It started out as one night a week, then two, then three, then four and then every night. Date nights got put off and then cancelled. He and Jane don't eat dinner together much anymore. They don't talk as much. He is always tired, stressed and preoccupied with work. All Henry talks about is his work. All Henry thinks about is his work. He's not interested in how his wife is feeling anymore. Buying flowers for Jane becomes something that he does because he thinks that he should, not because he wants to. He tells her he loves her less and less, and then stops telling her at all. He gradually stops sharing his deepest feelings with her. He continues to grow distant from her.

So far there is nothing externally different in their relationship. He is still faithful to his wife, he still buys her flowers. But the fire in his heart, the love and affection he has for his wife has grown cold. He had slowly been **leaving** his original first love — his wife. Now his heart has now left his first love. His first love is now his work. Work is now more important than his wife — it's what he puts all his time, energy and affections into. His priorities have changed. Slowly but surely Henry's work has replaced his wife as his first love.

Now, this was where the church of Ephesus was at when Jesus gave them this message. They were still acting like they loved God, but their hearts were cold toward Him. Their love had grown cold. Their new first love could have been helping the homeless, or making money, or sports, or family, some sin, or even studying the bible just so that they could learn more about doctrines or teachings — the idol could be anything or anyone. It doesn't matter who or what it is. It could be a good thing or a bad thing. What matters is that they loved someone or something more than they loved God. *The bible says that anything that is more important than God in our lives is an idol.* Someone or something was now more important than God. They had left their first love and were worshipping an idol in their hearts.

Revelation 2:5 NKJV

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent.

This is a serious warning. Jesus is saying to this church that works hard, that doesn't quit, that seeks the truth, that tests the false prophets; that *he will cause them to cease from being a church. This is the most severe consequence that He gives to any of the 7 churches.* The lampstand represents the church as we learned in Chapter 1:20. Again, Jesus is saying that He will cause their church to cease to exist if they don't repent.

Why is Jesus giving such a severe or harsh consequence to this church? Well, to understand, let's go back to Henry.

It's been two years since Henry accepted the promotion and started working back after work more and more. Henry becomes lonely and starts talking to his young single secretary about personal things. He starts to become infatuated with her. It ends in an affair. He separates from his wife. He tells his wife that he just doesn't love her anymore.

Henry's friends and family wonder what could have happened to him? What had changed? How could he have hurt his wife so badly when he used to love her so much? They just can't understand. Everything looked so good and normal from the outside.

Let's analyse this scenario. When Henry first took the promotion, was he thinking, "you know what, I'd really love to have an affair with my secretary and separate from my wife?" No.

Did Henry consciously think, "I would like to grow distant from my wife and become obsessed with work?" No.

Did his love for his wife grow cold in a day, or over months or years? Over months or years.

Do you think that Henry was aware of the growing distance between him and his wife? No. Most people aren't until it's too late.

Do you think Henry's friends and family may have thought something like, "This is incredible, how a man who loved his wife so much could have such a sudden change of heart and leave his wife so easily? Yes, because they could see no change in his **external behaviour**. He still bought his wife flowers and treated her well; nice car, nice clothes and nice house — but his heart was elsewhere - he was loveless.

Let's quickly look at verse 4 again and apply it to ourselves

Revelation 1:4

... Nevertheless I have **this** against you, that you have **left** your first love.

The same is true with our relationship with God. It is so easy for other things to gradually and subtly crowd out our time with God. It doesn't happen all of a sudden. It was never intended. But it happened none-the-less. Our labour of love becomes just labour. We find ourselves just go through the motions with our relationship with God.

Do you know where the slow fade usually starts? Our quiet time, our devotions, the special time of the day that we set aside to spend time with God. It could be I stay up late talking or watching a movie or on my phone, and am then too tired to read the bible the next morning. Or, someone says, let's go to the beach — surf's up — let's catch some waves. Or it could be, "Oh no, I need to prepare that lesson for school today." Or, it could be someone wants to talk to you on the phone. Once you miss reading the bible once, it becomes easier to miss again, and again, just like Henry stayed away from home more and more. Being a disciple or follower of Christ means being disciplined. Our time with God must be the most important part of our day. Remember now that this is not about, tisk, tisk, tisk,... if you want to be a good christian, you must follow these rules... you *must* read your bible for 30 min each day, because if you don't God won't love you anymore and He'll smack you on the bottom with a big stick.... No. It's nothing like that. So what is it like you ask? Well, here's my answer.

My Saviour loves me, died for me, and right now is eagerly waiting for me to talk to Him in prayer and He wants to speak to me as I read His love letter to me, the bible. He wants to fill me with His love, peace and joy as I choose to follow and obey Him. He wants to lead me and guide me into blessings and opportunities that will grow me and help me. He is my best friend. He provides all my needs. He gives me strength to overcome sin. He fills me with hope. He takes away my shame of my past and present. He gives me a future and a hope. He wants me to obey Him so He can share His love with me. In Jesus I experience complete satisfaction. Given all this, why would anyone *not* want to spend time with God every morning, and commune with Him throughout the day? It's not I *got* to, it's wow, I *get* to!

How do we Protect our Love Relationship with God?

First, we need to be aware that Satan will always be trying to distract us and divert our attention from spending time with God in prayer and reading the bible and fellowshiping with other believers. Why? Because Satan wants to steal our affections. We need to be aware of Satan's tactics, his schemes, his ways of keeping us from enjoying our love relationship with God. It's like playing football, the other team will do anything they can to stop you from kicking a goal. You need to be smart and you need to be focused if you are going to win.

Consider the admonition or warning of:

Proverbs 4:23 NLT

Guard your heart above all else,
for it determines the course of your life.

Proverbs 4:23 AMP

Keep and guard your heart with all vigilance and above all that you guard, for out of it flow the springs of life.

What this means is that we need to be aware of who or what we give our affections to. This means what has become our first priority, our focus. Remember, we can only love most one thing or person at a time.

We need to examine ourselves and see where our affections lie, what we are most concerned about. We need to honestly analyse our decisions about how we use the time God has given us. We need to be honest about what is most important in our lives. Consider:

Matthew 6:24 NKJV

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (*riches*).

The key here is that what is most important to us is what we give ourselves to, and we willingly serve that thing or person. If God is most important in my life, then I will *want* to serve Him, I will *want* to obey Him — it will come *naturally*. But, if God is not most important in my life, then other things will be more important, and it will be very difficult to do what God wants because my heart is set on doing something else.

It's all about my affections, who or what I choose to love. You see, love isn't an emotion, it a choice of the will. I can choose to love my phone, my friends, my family, drugs, alcohol, pornography or anything else more than God. However, if I *choose* to love God and make Him number one in my life, then I will make the decision to study the bible to learn more about who God is every day.

Why will I make the decision to read the bible and pray each day?

As I read the bible and pray, I grow in my understanding of how awesome and loving God is as He reveals Himself to me.

Then, as I grow in my understanding of God, I grow in my love for God.

Then, as I love God more I want to obey God more.

Then, as I obey God more I abide with God more. (I'm at home with God and experience His love and peace in my life)

Then, as I abide in Christ, I bear fruit... I experience the glorious work and power of the Holy Spirit living in me and working through me as I love others like I have never been able to before. This brings much glory to God.

So, again, where does it all start? Daily devotions, reading the bible. Why should we have daily devotions? Because God is awesome and He loves us but we won't know how much until we start to read the bible for ourselves.

How does Satan most often attack us? By distracting us and keeping us from reading the bible, prayer and fellowship with other believers. Why? Because if I don't read the bible as much, I won't know God as much, which means I won't love Him as much, which means I won't obey Him as much, which means I won't abide with Him as much, which means I won't bear as much fruit, which means the Holy Spirit is not working in me and through me as much and I won't experience His love, joy and peace in my life like I was before.

Let's come back to our question: why was Jesus was so severe in His consequences for this church.

v 5 **or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place...** Why is leaving your first love so bad that Jesus says that He will remove the lampstand, meaning the church will die or cease to exist as a local body of believers?

Well, you may have lots of programs and lots of activities. You may even have doctrinal purity. But Jesus will not stay in a church where there is not true love because without love, nothing else matters. Listen carefully to the following verses:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NLT

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, **but didn't love others**, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, **but didn't love others, I would be nothing.** ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; **but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.**

The answer is that it's all about love. Why is it all about love? Because it's all about relationship, relationship, and relationship. Jesus had a reason for dying for us and making us perfect again — it was so we could be friends with Him again. It was so we could adopted into His family again. It's all about relationship and friendship which are based on love.

John 15:15 NLT

I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. **Now you are my friends**, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

Here's the bottom line, the most important points to take from today.

If your relationship with God is not based on love or friendship, then you have no relationship at all.

A good measure of your love for God is how much you love His word and how much time you spend reading it or listening to it for yourselves.

This is like our spiritual barometer or temperature gauge.

Why? Because friendship is based on communication, and it's through the bible, God's love letter to us, that He speaks to us. If we are God's friend, then we will want to listen to what He says to us.

How to Restore a Loveless Relationship with God

Now we come to the most important part — *how to fix a broken relationship with God, how to remove those idols that have taken first place*. Remember they can be drugs, alcohol, sex, family, work, sport, Netflix, TV, movies, games, friends and even church activities.

Who has ever left their first love before? I think all of us, probably many times to one extent or the other. Sometimes we may wander away just a little bit, but other times a lot. The reason we struggle is because of the battle we have with our sinful nature, the devil and the world. They all compete for our affections. They all long to take first place in our lives. This is why I'm so grateful that God has graciously shown us the way back home in verse 5.

Revelation 2:5 NKJV

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent** and **do the first works**,

Revelation 2:5a AMP

Remember then from what heights you have fallen. **Repent** (change the inner man to meet God's will) and **do the works you did previously** [when first you knew the Lord]

It's a three step process:

1. **Remember.**
2. **Repent.**
3. **Do again what you did at first.**

1. Remember therefore from where you have fallen

The first step in restoration for the Ephesian church is for them to **remember**. They need to **remember from where you have fallen**. This means remembering *where they used to be in their love for the Lord and for one another*.

A great example to help us understand this is the parable of the prodigal son. The son asks his Father for his inheritance. He then leaves home and travels to a distant land where he wastes his money on alcohol and parties. When his money runs out he gets work for a pig farmer, and he's so hungry that he wants to eat the pig food.

Now remember what happened next. When the Prodigal Son was in the pigpen, the first step in restoration was remembering what life was like back in his father's home (Luke 15:17–19). This is always the first step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord. Keeping a journal helps with this, as we record when Jesus speaks to us through His Word.

Luke 15:17-24 NLT

(1. REMEMBER) "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

(2. REPENT - CHANGE OF DIRECTION) ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

(3. RETURN — DO THE FIRST WORKS) ²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ **And they began to be merry.**

2. Repent

It means to change your direction, to go a different way. Another way of describing repentance is a change of mind and heart that results in a change of behaviour. We turn away from Sin and to God when we agree with God that His ways are right and choose to follow and obey Him.

3. Do the first works

This means that we must go back to the basics, to the very first things we did when we first fell in love with Jesus. These are the things that as Christians we need to do for the rest of our lives — we will never outgrow them or cease to need them.

What are **the first works**?

- Remember how you used to spend time in His Word?
- Remember how you used to pray?
- Remember the joy in getting together with other Christians?
- Remember how excited you were about telling others about Jesus?

Quote from David Guzik:

“We might say that Satan does a masterful job in creating a sense of general dissatisfaction with these **first works**. Christians will run after almost every new, strange method or program for growth and stability. Our shortened attention spans make us easily bored with the truest excitement. Sometimes we will do almost anything *except the first works*.”

If you realise that your love for God is growing cold, or has grown cold, all you have to do is get back to the basics — make time to read the word, pray, fellowship and evangelise.

v 5 **Or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place:** What does this mean for a church? Jesus gave them a stern warning. **Unless they repent**, He will remove *their light* and *His presence*. When their **lampstand** was removed, they could continue as an organisation, but no longer as a true church of Jesus Christ. It would be the church of *Ichabod*, where the glory had departed (1 Samuel 4:21).

What does this mean for us as individuals? We will not experience the presence of God in our lives, nor will we be lights for Christ — we will have no godly influence in this world. We will be someone who calls themselves a Christian, but doesn't love as a Christian. We may still be good people, but will just be another moral person, just like the atheist down the road.