

First Love Life... *Loving Jesus first*

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance....But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen from your first love! Turn back to me again and work as you did at first. If you don’t, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.”

(Revelation 2)

The first church in Ephesus was highly commended by Jesus Himself for all the good things they were doing. They were commended for their morality, their accurate handling of truth and their fervent service. However, Jesus seriously warned them that if they didn’t return to their First Love, in spite of their efforts, their light would be taken away.

What would His message be for us today? Have we abandoned our First Love? Or perhaps we never even developed a depth of love for Christ that would illuminate our world. This study hopes to give us a framework on what the Bible says about loving God first and how to put that Biblical command into active practice. The goal is life change and an ever brighter church for HIS glory.

I hope you’ll choose to participate in this study. I pray that it will be life changing (transforming) for all of us! This subject intrigues me so much. I want to know what Jesus is requiring of us regarding loving Him first, and what we will gain as we keep that love in place. I’m also curious as to how we keep that love living in us and how that fervor will impact our world, our neighborhoods, our churches and our homes. Jesus said in Luke 8, “No one would light a lamp and then cover it up or put it under a bed. No, lamps are mounted in the open, where they can be seen by those entering the house.”

“Oh Lord, light our lamps brightly! Relight our dim lights! Revive us Lord! You have been clear in Your Word that You want to give us full life; complete joy and peace beyond our imaginations. I confess that this is not my daily experience. My light is often barely visible! Oh God, I invite you to use Your Sword and go to work on my heart. Make it fully Yours. Transform the way I think, restructure my priorities and draw me close to You in worship in spirit and in truth.”

Is this prayer the cry of your heart as it is mine?

Will you commit 9 weeks to your True Love, Jesus Christ? Will you commit to studying, praying and applying His Word daily? Will you commit to being a part of a small group discussion where you encourage one another and pray for one another? I am asking God for revival in me and you. Please join me in that prayer. I believe He wants to do some great work in and among us. Let’s boldly ask Him to glorify Himself in new, fresh ways as we commit to loving Him first.

For HIS glory and power,

Grace Cabalka

Intro

First Love Life... *Loving Jesus first*

Jesus Give Us Glory

God requires that we love Him first (see Mark 12:30), before and above anyone or anything else in our lives. Is this an unrealistic demand? How is it possible? As you begin this study, ask God to reveal His will to you. Invite Him to speak boldly to you. Humble yourself before Him and declare your desire to learn, to be changed, to be transformed and to live the abundant life He has promised.

This first lesson has a lot of pages because Scripture is written out for you. Don't let that scare you! You should be able to complete each day's lesson in 20-30 minutes. Hopefully, you will be drawn in and spend more time! But, plan on at least that. It is written in a five day format, giving you two extra days to keep up and reflect.

Day One

One of the quickest ways to determine what is in the heart of another is to listen to their prayers. We pray for what concerns us the most deeply, especially when only God is listening. We are going to begin this journey listening to the heart of Jesus as He prays to our Father and on our behalf.

As we enter into this study, slowly and deliberately, each day this week we will take a portion of Jesus' prayer recorded for us in John 17. We will meditate on it, pray it, and embrace His Word into our hearts and lives. On this first day, become very familiar with His prayer. Read it several times. If you have trouble concentrating, it may help to read it out loud.

Opening the Word of God is like starting a conversation with a close friend. Jesus is the Word. So, as you read, keep in mind that His Word is living and active and meant to be interacted with (see Hebrews 4:12). It is God's own Voice spoken to us.

Imagine Jesus, the night He was betrayed, crying out to the Father with this prayer. Keep in mind what lay ahead of Him and how He considers you more important than Himself (see Philippians 2:3) as He prays.

John 17:9-26 (NLT)

⁹“My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. ¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

¹³“Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

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¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

²⁰“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²²“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. ²⁴Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

²⁵“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

Day Two

Even if you have never journaled before, please do so this lesson. Write out the portion of Jesus’ prayer for you each day in your journal, and then answer the contemplative questions provided. Write your name in the blanks. Bring your journal to your small group discussion time. Or, use the back of these pages to record your thoughts.

Read **John 17:9-12**.

Jesus prays this prayer the night He was betrayed right before the soldiers came. Think about all that lay ahead of Him; the betrayal, the trial, the abuse, the cross, death, etc. Even in that time, He was praying for you. Fill in the blank with your name after you have read this prayer through. After you have filled in your name, read the prayer again outloud. Keep in mind that Jesus Himself prayed this prayer with you on His mind and heart.

⁹“My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, [including _____] because they belong to you. ¹⁰All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, [You have given _____ to Me] so they bring me glory. ¹¹Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them [and _____] by the power of your name so that they [including _____] will be united just as we are. ¹²During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.”

1. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus prayed specifically for you? _____

2. Why did He pray for you? _____

3. How did you become His? _____

4. Is it hard for you to comprehend that you bring Jesus glory? _____

One

5. Why do you think Jesus prays for your protection? _____

6. How much power is in His name? _____

7. Why do you think Jesus desires our unity with Him? _____

Life Points

- Take a few moments and meditate on this prayer. You may want to open your Bible and kneel as you meditate.
- Now, take Jesus specific prayer requests and pray them for yourself:
 - Thank Him for receiving you as His own
 - Thank the Father for giving you to Jesus
 - Pray that you would bring Jesus glory
 - Pray for protection over your life in Jesus' name
 - Pray for unity with God and other believers
 - Thank Jesus for His protection
 - Simply talk to Jesus about His prayer for you. Prayer is a conversation with God. Talk and listen!

Day Three

Read **John 17:13-19**.

This passage has been [paraphrased] below to make it personal without affecting its original intent. Read the original version in your Bible. Again, write your names in the blanks.

¹³“Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. ¹⁴I have given [_____] your word. And the world hates [_____] because [_____ does] not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I’m not asking you to take [_____] out of the world, but to keep [_____] safe from the evil one. ¹⁶[_____ does not] belong to this world any more than I do. ¹⁷Make [_____] holy by your truth; teach [_____] your word, which is truth. ¹⁸Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending [_____] into the world. ¹⁹And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for [_____] so [_____] can be made holy by your truth.

Read the prayer again, outloud.

1. Why did Jesus tell us things, or give us His Word? _____

2. Who did He give His Word to? _____

3. How does it make you feel to think that the world will hate you? _____

4. What reason does Jesus give for this? _____

5. How do you feel about Jesus praying for your protection? _____

6. What request does Jesus make for us? _____

7. Part of the meaning of the word *holy* is *to be set apart*. The same word is translated *sanctify*. Jesus knows that our sanctification is accomplished through the power of His Word. His Word, knowing it and applying it, is the laboratory for our transformation. That's why we continue to study it. Has this been a priority for you? How does Jesus' prayer encourage you? _____

8. Who is sending you into the world? _____
9. Jesus chose not to take us straight to heaven once we became His. He left us here for a purpose. In the weeks ahead we will explore that purpose, but for now, talk to Him about being sent into the world by His volition. What do you think about Jesus personally sending you into the world? _____

10. Another part of the meaning of the word *holy* is *perfect, without sin*. What did Jesus do to make sure you are received as holy by God? _____

Life Points

- Meditate on this passage of prayer with your Bible open.
- Read it again, with your name filled in.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to seal these truths in your heart as you discuss it with Him:
 - Jesus gave me His Word so I would be filled with joy.
 - I don't belong to the world, so the world will hate me.
 - I am protected from the evil one by God Himself.
 - I have been left here for a purpose.
 - I am made holy through the power of His Word.
 - Jesus sacrificed His life so that I will be holy.

Read those points again! This is not for someone else, for someone more special or talented than you. This is not for some distant future! This is the living Word of God. It is for here and now and has been prayed by Jesus for you! How does this make you feel?

Day Four

John 17:20-23

²⁰“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

²²“I have given [_____] the glory you gave me, so [_____] may be one as we are one. ²³I am in [_____] and you are in me. May [_____] experience such perfect unity (with Us) that the world will know that you sent me and that you love [_____] as much as you love me.

1. What does Jesus want for His followers? _____

2. Listen to Jesus’ desire for our union with Him: “just as You and I are one—as You are in me, Father, and I am in You.” Listen to the intimacy of this relationship between you and God. According to Jesus’ prayer, is this intimacy meant for this life now, or for when we get to heaven? _____

3. Our oneness with God proves something to the world; what is it? _____

4. Why do you think this is such a powerful witness? _____

5. Jesus then goes on to say that He has given us His glory. What was His purpose in that? _____

6. The word *glory* in the original text means: *splendor or brightness; the absolutely perfect inward or personal excellency of Christ.* ¹ Rewrite what you have been given by Jesus in your own words: _____

7. This is hard for us to see, isn’t it? But, it is truth. Read the definition again. When you think about Christ; what are some of His characteristics that come to mind (i.e., humility)? _____

8. How much does God the Father love you? _____

Life Points

- Repeat these statements regarding your relationship with God (greater understanding of these will become clearer in the weeks ahead):
 - I have been placed in Christ.
 - I am united with Christ in God.
 - I have been given the glory of Christ.
 - The Father loves me just as He does Christ.
- What did you do to deserve any of this treasure?
- Open your Bible and read this passage aloud again. Kneeling as you pray is a symbol of humility and dependence on God. If possible, kneel as you read John 17:20-23.
- Now, *you* talk directly to God, voicing your thoughts and feelings about the incredible power of these requests.

One

¹Strong’s Greek & Hebrew Dictionary

Day Five

One of the ways we are transformed is by meditating on God’s Word. The more we meditate on it, the more it becomes a part of the way we think and will then change the way we view ourselves and others. Fill your name in the blanks below and read the prayer several times.

John 17:24-26

²⁴Father, I want [_____] whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then [_____] can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began! ²⁵“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. ²⁶I have revealed you to [_____], and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in [_____], and I will be in [_____].”

1. How come you belong to Jesus? _____

2. Why does Jesus want you to be with Him? _____

3. Do you remember the definition for glory? Part of it was *splendor* and *brightness*. Jesus wants you to share in all that He has! How do you feel about that? _____

4. All who follow the teachings of Christ are His disciples. You are His disciple if you believe He was sent here by the Father and you have trusted Him to be your Savior. How was this truth revealed to you? _____

5. Jesus promises to keep revealing who God is to us. How has he been doing that for you? _____

6. What is the goal of this revelation according to Jesus? _____

Life Points

- If you are like me, you don’t always *feel* like Jesus is living in you. You don’t always *feel* like you are so completely loved. But, the truth is: He IS, and You ARE. Talk to God about this reality.
- Your future in Christ is very BRIGHT! It’s healthy to spend time thinking about what is ahead for you. It is so easy to get bogged down by life here. Ask God to help you set your mind and heart on what is in store for you (see Colossians 3:2).
- Pay attention to the ways Jesus is revealing the Father to you everyday. He is very creative in the ways He does this! Ask God to make you keenly aware of this process.

