

HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE?
(WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MY FIRST LOVE?)

(Also under: FIRST LOVE & MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL)

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HONOR to – First Lady, Beth Childers

OPENING REMARKS:

Just by being born –
you are automatically on this journey called LIFE;
& every day,
you are making preparations for your eternal destination.

In this preparatory stage of the journey,
please hear my heart –
DON'T FORGET YOUR FIRST LOVE!

TEXT:

The Lord says: “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed ME (even) in the wilderness” (Jeremiah 2:2).

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37, 38).

Don't forget to –
Include him in the day-to-day decisions;
Spend time conversing w/Him about the journey;

You are supposed to be a reflection
of the King of kings, &, in order to do that,
you will have to love Him with all your heart,
soul, mind and spirit
and allow His love to shine out through you.

The question that needs to be answered before you leave here tonight is –
DO I STILL HAVE MY FIRST LOVE?

PRAY.

I INTRODUCTION

I want to share a story with you from The Song of Solomon.

It's a beautiful love story;
and the main characters are
the Beloved Shepherd and a Shulamite girl.

In chapter 1, verse 6
The Shulamite begins her part of the story
with a sad lament:

**“Look not upon me, because I am (burned and wrinkled), because the sun hath
looked upon me:
my mother’s children were angry with me;
they made me keeper of the vineyard,
but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”**

The text is both a confession and an apology.

Shulamite girl acknowledges that
no matter how fair she may be,
she is not as fair as she might have been; and,
with perhaps tears in her voice,
she tells the secret of her failure.

For whatever reason,
her step brothers and sisters
were angry with her
and they chose to punish her
by forcing her to tend the family vineyards.

She has spent hours
in the hot,
un-forgiving sun of Palestine –
which has done irreparable damage to her skin.

Where once she was beautiful and soft,
she has now become sun-burned and wrinkled.

Her many duties and responsibilities,
have forced her to neglect herself.

Her lament:
**“They made me the keeper of the vineyard;
but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”**

She has spent her days
pruning the vines,
cutting the weeds away,
tilling the soil,
harvesting the grapes, &
chasing the little foxes away.

She has spent her nights
in exhausted sleep,
only to arise at dawn and start another busy day.

There was no time
for personal grooming/pruning
and beautifying.
No time for facials,
massages,
pedicures,
manicures
body wraps, waxes, or peels,
the Spa or
personal trainers.

Let's make a general comparison
between the Shulamite girl and
the modern day woman.

Daily Schedule:

up at 6 a.m.
throw clothes out of washer into drier
re-fill washer
& call the kids!

Open a box and fix breakfast
& call the kids!
(At this point, spilled milk becomes a national disaster.)
straighten house
be at work by 8 or 8:30

leave work 5 p.m.
go by Day Care
rush home, change clothes
take kids here, there, everywhere!

Fix dinner; & remember ...
The clothes!
dryer, washer, dryer, washer!

homework
"quality time" w/family?

spend minutes (?) taking care of husband/s needs
fall asleep exhausted

up again at 6 a.m.
& start another exhausting day

Now, if you throw in regular church attendance,
a couple of committee meetings,
a few ladies' activities,

several hours on the phone listening to the
woes and ills of a friend,
you have to ask the question –

Where does God fit into all of this?

- (1) You might even ask,
“Why am I depressed,
discouraged,
battle-weary?”
- (2) What has caused my personal
spiritual vineyard
to get in this state of neglect and dis-repair?
- (3) Whatever happened
to my FIRST LOVE for the Lord?”
- ... the fire,
... the zeal,
... the excitement!
... the JOY!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Well, you know how to keep house;
you know how to keep your family
moving in the right direction;

you know how to keep to your schedule;
but how well
do you know the Lover of your soul?

Can you even remember
how you felt the moment you were saved?
How “sold out” you were?
How willing you were to
go anywhere,
do anything for love of Him?

IN ORDER TO ANSWER THAT,
we have to go back to the basics
and once again read the “Book”
of love,
acceptance,
and instruction
our Beloved Lord gave us.

**And we hear His words once again
ringing in our ears:**

**“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart, with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind.
This is the first and great commandment.”**

In order to do that
it is imperative that we stay in the Book;

because,

I. WHERE THERE IS NO FUEL THE FIRE OF LOVE BURNS LOW

(See: Proverbs 26:20)

AND THE WORD OF GOD IS LOVE’S FUEL.

Romans 10:17

**“Faith comes by hearing and hearing
by the Word of God.”**

Too many times we’re depending
on what we’ve been told or
what we think we know.

ILLUSTRATION:

Young woman w/ham. Cut end off. Husband asked, “Why?” Didn’t know. Ask Mother.
Didn’t know. Ask Grandmother. “Because I never had a pan big enough to cook the entire
ham at one time.”

Hosea 4:6

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

(1) **Through ... Word we become acquainted w/
our Beloved Lord.**

We see His love,
His compassion,
His tender mercies – new every morning.
We see His glory,

His majesty,

His all-consuming power!

We begin to understand His willingness to
purchase our eternal salvation
through His ultimate sacrifice.

And, as we see Him,

(2) **Thru the Word we see ourselves through His eyes.**

Because according to James 1:22-25
the Word is a mirror.

When we look closely,
we can really see “self” –
what’s in and out of place.

When we get out of step with the Beloved
He gives implicit instructions,
through the Word,
to help us get back in step.

My SS Teacher and Me:

Proverbs 25:17

“Remove thy foot from thy neighbor’s house ...”

And when we,
like Simon Peter,
begin to follow Him afar off
the Word will reel us in with –

Revelation 2:4

**“I have somewhat against you
because you have left your first love.”**

In a natural mirror you can fool yourself:
“Mirror, mirror, on the wall
who’s the fairest of them all?”

“Honey, you are looking good!”
~ or ~

It can go the other way –
& the accuser steps in,

you can hate your body shape,
your hair,
your nose,
& the accuser will be standing by
laughing his head off.

But the Word of God
shows you over and over that

you are loved;
you are chosen;
you are His;
& He will protect you
to the limit of His power!

(3) **Through the Word we become victorious;
BECAUSE –**

B. THE WORD OF GOD IS LOVE'S WEAPONRY

We have voices all around us
trying to put out the fire of first love.

We must have ample ammunition
to combat
every voice,
every temptation,
every distraction.

& when we realize who Jesus is
and who we are in Him,
through the Word –
**that's when we become victors
and not victims!**

**It is important right here to understand
that Satan is not going
to make this journey easy or pleasant.**

**He is a bully;
and like all other bullies,
he loves to use the tool of intimidation
against all of us.**

He knows if we fall victim

to his intimidation that

- (1) INTIMACY W/GOD
is drastically hindered;**
- (2) INTERACTION W/GOD
becomes almost impossible;**
- (3) IMPLEMENTATION
of what God has spoken
into our heart and mind
becomes more challenging;**
- (4) & OUR INTEREST
in pursuing the deeper things of God
is diverted to unspiritual avenues.**

**We, as Christians,
can only be victimized
if we succumb to victim mentality.**

The WORD is clear,

**“We are more than conquerors
through Him who loved us
and gave Himself for us” (Romans 8:37).**

**And Jesus said, in John 10:10,
“The (bully) comes to steal, kill and destroy;
but I have come that you might have
ABUNDANT LIFE!”**

**I am God’s messenger today,
& I’ve come to tell you that
the devil cannot keep you
from your divine destiny.**

**He does not define who you are!
He does not determine your
worth and value!**

**You are a child of the Most High God!
& as a believer in Jesus
you are crowned with favor.**

**Tune out the intimidating
voice of the enemy.**

Say NO to that bully of a devil!

**“Submit yourselves to God,
RESIST THE (BULLY) and
he will flee from you” (James 4:7).**

**Turn your attention to the destiny
God has prepared for you!**

**THE WORD OF GOD
IS YOUR WEAPONRY!
It will cut
right through tangled problems!**

**& w/this Sword of the Spirit
you will be the MASTER
of your circumstances,
triumphant over
every plot and scheme
of the enemy!**

Now he is not afraid
of what mama said,
or what grandma thought,
or Aunt Susie did;
 **but when you say,
 as the Shepherd boy David did,
 “I come against you
 in the Name of the God
 of the armies of Israel
 whom thou hast defied.”**

Or, in New Testament language:
 **“In the Name of Jesus,
 get thee behind me!”**

Or, in present day vernacular:
 **“In the Name of Jesus,
 shut up and get out!**

**That’s when He begins to tremble; and
HE HAS TO FLEE!!**

**The Word teaches you that the Beloved
is taking care of you.**

& that –
**NO WEAPON FORMED AGAINST
YOU SHALL PROSPER!**

Paul – II Timothy 1:12

“(God) is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

IMPORTANT:

**“Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might
not sin against thee.”**

& that brings us to the second area of a
dying love –

II WHERE THERE IS UNCONFESSSED SIN THE FIRE OF LOVE BURNS OUT

Psalms 66:18

**“If I regard iniquity (sin) in my heart,
the Lord will not hear me.”**

If I know that sin is there and encourage it;
if I pretend to be something I'm not;
if I love sin,
 while professing to pray and
 be sorry for my sin;
THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR ME.

There can be no intimate encounter with Jesus,
there can be no reflection of our precious Lord,
when there is sin in your life;

and whatever will keep you out of His Presence
will keep you out of Heaven!

There are outward sins,
easy to detect,
easy to expose;

but what about those “little foxes”,
those inward sins that no one sees
 and no one knows?

You have hidden it from your pastor,
from your best friend,
& from the entire church community –

BUT GOD KNOWS.

AGAIN:

“If I regard iniquity in my heart ...”

YOU ASK: “What can I do?”

Our Beloved Lord says:

“Come let us (talk it over) ...

Scarlet ... white,

Red like crimson ... wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)

& -

III WHERE THERE IS RENEWED RELATIONSHIP THE FIRE OF LOVE IS REKINDLED

There are too many Christians
whose love for the Lord has burned out
because their relationship with Him
has been put on hold.

There seems to be time for everything,
but no time for Him.

No time for
an intimate encounter –
a face to face w/Jesus!

Friend, you can be sleep deprived or
God deprived.
You get to choose.

The Word very plainly states:

Psalm 16:11

“In His Presence there is fullness of joy.”

**The king of all questions is –
DO YOU HAVE JOY?**

How many excuses have we used
to keep us out of His Presence?

JOHN WESLEY:

“God does nothing but in answer to prayer?
Give me ten (women) – only ten –

who fear nothing but God,
love nothing but souls,
hate nothing but sin –
and I'll shake the foundations of hell,
and set up the Kingdom of God in this present world.”

Can you imagine what would happen
in your church,
in your town,
in your homes,
if every woman in this room fell in love with Jesus
all over again,
and spent quality time
in the Presence of the King of kings
and the Lord of lords!

1st of all your pastor would be estatic!

And secondly,
this group of women would shake
the foundations of hell
& set up the Kingdom of God
in the State of Florida!!

If I've learned anything in these 72 years
of serving God, it's this –
You must be passionate about His Presence!

Let's take one last look at the Shulamite Girl

**A. The Shulamite Girl's Decision
(The Song of Solomon 5:2-6)**

It had been one of those days –
long, hard, nerve-wracking.

She came home, took her bath,
changed her clothes
and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The night is totally dark.
A heavy dew has fallen.
And into the garden steps the Beloved Shepherd.
He gently knocks on the door,
but no one comes.
He gently speaks,
seeking entrance from the cold night air.

but there is no answer.

The Shulamite girl awakes.
She is not happy that she has been disturbed.

Petulantly she says,
 “I was asleep!
 I have taken off my coat;
 I do not wish to put it on again.
 I have washed my feet;
 I do not wish to wash them again.”

THINK ABOUT THIS!

The Beloved Shepherd is at her door and
she cares more about her clothes and her feet(!)
than she does her First Love!
 SHE REFUSES TO LET HIM IN!

B. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HER DECISION

There are definitely consequences to her decision;
for finally, the knocking stops.
She feels a tiny stirring in her heart.
She gets up and flies to the door.
But the Beloved is no longer there.
She takes hold of the door's handle
 and her hand drips with the
 sweet-smelling myrrh left by the Beloved.

She seeks him, but can not find Him.
She calls Him, but He gives her no answer.

My dear friends, I truly believe –

A. It is Decision Time in this house.

Tell me –
Whatever happened to your First Love?

How long has it been since someone
 really saw the reflection of Jesus in your life?
How long has it been since someone said,
 “There's something different about you.”

Is it possible that,

like the Shulamite girl,
you have been more concerned
about your clothes,
your feet
and trivial pursuits
than the Beloved Lord?

You say, "My husband must come first."

Listen to this old woman,
married 53 years to the same husband,

IF YOU PUT JESUS FIRST,
THE LOVE YOU HAVE FOR YOUR HUSBAND
AND THE LOVE HE HAS FOR YOU

WILL INTENSIFY
BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS.

JESUS IS LOVE!

AND WHEN HE IS YOUR **FIRST** LOVE,
HE KNOWS HOW TO

MAKE LOVE RICH,
MAKE IT DEEP,
& MAKE IT LAST!

The Word declares that
"The King's daughter is all glorious within!"

That can only happen
when the relationship with the Beloved
is renewed
and He becomes your First Love once more.

IV. FINALLY ...

THE COMMITMENT SERVICE

WRITE on a piece of paper anything you feel
has hindered you in the past
or might hinder you in the future
from knowing Him intimately,
from loving Him passionately,
from hearing Him clearly,
from following Him faithfully.

Write it down;
and come put it under the blood.

Pray this prayer with me and

let's begin with a pure heart

Lord, Jesus, / forgive me for every time

I have ever failed You.

Forgive me for sins / I know I have committed /
and sins I may not even remember.

If I have wounded You /
by neglect and indifference /
forgive me.

If I have been unfaithful to You
/in any area of my life, /
forgive me.

If I have ever /
brought shame and reproach on Your Name,
forgive me.

If I have allowed people or things
to come between
me and my relationship with You,
please forgive me.

There was a time when I longed
for Your Presence;
oh, my Beloved Shepherd,
right here in BARTOW, FLORIDA
and right now, AUGUST 26, 2017
stir that longing in my heart again!

I am here in Your Presence
to renew my pledge of love.

I want to know You intimately.

I want to love You passionately.

I want to hear You clearly.

I want to follow You faithfully.

Amen.

Hear The Voice Of The Beloved

HIS PLEDGE

I love you as no human being could possibly love you.

I give you everything you need.

I do not let your sin stand in the way of My love for you, because I came to set you on the right path.

I tell you My most intimate thoughts, for you are My bride.

When you are joined to me, nothing is too hard for you.

One day I will present you full of beauty before the Father.

HIS PLEA:

Let My love satisfy you.

Give Me your deepest love as you surrender your will to Me.

Let My eyes lead you.

Let all else be silent, so that you may hear Me speak.

Rest in My heart.

Bring Me joy by your adoration.

Proclaim Me in every way you can possibly imagine.

Think of Me often.

Love Me while I am working in you.

Love Me even in times of spiritual dryness; remain faithful to Me especially then.

Love Me by obeying Me in everyday life.

Meditate on My sufferings, and you will enter into My deepest heart.

Give Me your love.

HIS CHALLENGE:

If you wish to possess Me, no longer seek yourself and the fulfillment of your desires,
but rather the fulfillment of My will.

HIS PROMISE:

If you are in the wilderness, I will be your Way, your Truth, your Life.

If you are in darkness, I will be your Light.

If you are bound in sin, I will be your Redeemer.

If you are perplexed, I will be your Counselor.

If you are sad, I will be your laughter.

If you are fearful, I will be your Refuge.

I will carry you through afflictions and tribulations
and present you blameless before the Father which is in Heaven.

Jeremiah 2:2

**The Lord says, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride,
how you followed Me in the wilderness” (Jeremiah 2:2).**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MY FIRST LOVE?

Jesus said,

*“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
This is the first and great commandment”
(Matthew 22:37, 38).*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Shulamite girl's lament in The Song of Solomon 1:6 – *“Look not upon me, because I am (burned and wrinkled), because the sun hath looked upon me; my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyard, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.”*

She has been so busy, there has been no time for personal grooming or beautifying.

There is an arresting comparison between the Shulamite girl and the modern day woman.

THE KING OF ALL QUESTIONS: Where does God fit into all the busy-ness of our everyday schedule; and whatever happened to First Love?

We have to go back to the basics and once again read the “Book” of love, acceptance and instruction God has given to us, because –

II. WHERE THERE IS NO FUEL THE FIRE OF LOVE BURNS LOW

(See: Proverbs 26:20)

A. The Word of God Is Love's Fuel.

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

- (1) Through the Word we become acquainted with the Beloved.
- (2) Through the Word we see ourselves through His eyes.
- (3) Through the Word we become victorious.

B. The Word of God Is Love's Weaponry.

(See: Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)

III. WHERE THERE IS UNCONFESSED SIN THE FIRE OF LOVE BURNS OUT

“If I regard iniquity (sin) in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18).

IV. WHERE THERE IS RENEWED RELATIONSHIP THE FIRE OF LOVE IS REKINDLED

“In thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

A. The Shulamite Girl's Decision (The Song of Solomon 5:2-6)

B. The Decision's Consequences

C. It is Decision Time in Your Personal Life