

Losing Your First Love (Part 2)

“There was an elderly lady who was well known for her faith and for her boldness in talking about it. She would stand on her front porch and shout, ‘PRAISE THE LORD!’

Well, next door to her lived an atheist who would get so angry at her proclamations he would shout back, ‘There ain’t no Lord!’

One day, hard times set in on the elderly lady and she prayed for God to send her some assistance. So she stood on her porch and shouted, ‘PRAISE THE LORD. GOD I NEED FOOD! I’M HAVING A HARD TIME. PLEASE LORD SEND ME SOME GROCERIES!’

And sure enough, the next morning the lady went out on her porch and noticed a large bag of groceries and shouted, ‘PRAISE THE LORD!’

But just then the neighbor jumped from behind a bush and said, ‘Ha ha! I told you there ain’t no Lord. I bought those groceries. God didn’t.’

And at this the lady started jumping up and down and clapping her hands and saying, ‘PRAISE THE LORD! He not only sent me groceries, but HE made the devil pay for them. PRAISE THE LORD!’”

Now that lady’s faith in God paid off big time, didn’t it? So much so that she saw with her own eyes how God will use even an atheist to do His bidding, didn’t she? But folks, did you know that for many Christians, **just the opposite** is true. You see, many Christians have **stopped** having faith in God and are now doing the devil’s bidding. How? By acting like atheists themselves. And if that wasn’t bad enough, because many Christians refuse

to **study the Bible**, it's also producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He's not there. And this not only keeps us from growing in our own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we're going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, "**Who Is God?**"

We've already seen that the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. The **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And the last five times we saw that the **fourth thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Powerful**. And last week we began to explore the question, "Okay, I understand what God's Power is like and I even understand what it can do for me. But **why don't I experience it?**" And there we saw the **main reason** why we don't experience God's Power in our lives is **Because We Don't Love God Like We Used To** or in other words, we've lost our first love. And there we saw **two reasons** why Christians lose their first love for God and that was when **We No Longer Have Faith In God** and when **We No longer Pray To God**.

But unfortunately folks, that's not all. The **third sign** to indicate that we've lost our first love is that **We No Longer Read the Word of God**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Now folks, according to our text, if you and I want to live a life that is **pleasing to God** and even know what His will is, what do we need to do? We're to no longer be conformed to this world, but **renew our minds**, right? And can anyone guess what we're to renew our minds with? The Word of God, right? In fact, the picture that's used here is that when you and I read the Word of God, we are **un-brainwashing** ourselves from the brainwashing of this world. And once we do that, we clearly understand God's will for our lives. And how many of you would like to know the will of God for your life?

But here's our problem. We all talk about the Bible, we believe in the Bible, we own several Bibles, but do we ever get around to reading the Bible? No! And here's what happens. **Over time**, instead of starting the day off with the Word of God, we immerse ourselves in the word of man.

Instead of spiritual exercise, **we do physical exercise!** And pretty soon we

come up with the all time biggest excuse of all, “**I Don’t Have Time To Read the Bible.**” How many of you guys heard that one before? But people, I’m telling you this is one of the biggest lies from the pit of hell.

You see, I’ve learned over the years that it’s not that we don’t have time to read the Bible. No! It’s that we don’t take the time to read the Bible. How do I know? Because we don’t seem to have a problem **finding time** for all sorts of **other things**. For instance, how about the morning ritual of watching the **news** or reading the **newspaper**? Oh, it might be worldly informative but it not spiritually inspiring. And this is what the Apostle Paul warned us about.

Philippians 4:8,9 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Now folks let me ask you, is the news true? Is it pure and lovely? Is it excellent and praiseworthy? Then why in the world would we spend the majority of our time with Dan Blather instead of the Bible? **Is he where we get our peace from?** People, is the weather report more important than the Weather Maker? Is Oprah Winfrey more important than the Word of God? Just who’s the real source of power here?

Oh, but that’s not the only distraction. Whether its **physical exercise** or the latest **food diet**, we don’t even bat an eye at spending hours

doing whatever it takes to whip our bodies into shape. In fact, Barna Research shows that 91% of adults consider good physical health as their top priority in life, making it the highest-rated priority of all. Now don't get me wrong. I believe in a well-balanced diet. To me a well-balanced diet is a cheeseburger in both hands. But the point is, I think we're starting to get just a little bit **off-balanced** when it comes to physical care. Once again, Paul warns us about this.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 "Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next."

And folks, this is precisely your problem. We have allowed ourselves to become more consumed with **external care instead of internal care**. And people, don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with exercising and trying to eat healthy. Please be responsible. But our problem is that even these healthy things can quickly become **unhealthy** if they steal away our time with the Lord. That's why we need to ask ourselves. Is a **low-fat bagel** more important than the **Bible**? Is **Richard Simmons** more important than the **Savior**? Then why in the world would we spend the majority of our time on physical exercise instead of spiritual exercise? Who's the real source of power here?

People, it's not that we don't have time to read the Bible. It's that we don't take the time to read the Bible. We waste our time on non-spiritual things! And just to make sure we realize just how powerful Bible reading can be, let's take a look at what it's done for some folks in the past.

Abraham Lincoln: "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."

W.E. Gladstone: "I have known ninety-five of the world's great men in my time, and of these eighty-seven were followers of the Bible."

George Washington: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

Daniel Webster: "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

John Ruskin: "Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart."

W.H. Seward: "The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever growing influence of the Bible."

Patrick Henry: "The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed."

Horace Greeley: "It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom."

Andrew Jackson: "That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests."

Robert E. Lee: “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.”

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say those people benefited just a little bit from reading the Bible how about you? In fact, they not only got the power to form our great country the USA, but they got the power to transform their lives each and every day. And people, this is the great news. Reading the Bible doesn't work just for those people in the past. **It works for you and I today!** But I'm telling you, as long as you and I refuse to read the Bible, we're going to cause ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain and fear. Therefore, reading the Bible **has to become a daily precedent** in our lives like it was with this guy.

“Once, there was a man in Kansas City who was severely injured in an explosion. His face was badly disfigured, and he lost his eyesight as well as both hands.

What made it worse was that he just became a new Christian, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he could no longer read the Bible.

Then he heard about a lady in England who read Braille with her lips. And so hoping to do the same, he sent for some books of the Bible in Braille. But much to his dismay, he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips had also been destroyed by the explosion.

So one day as he brought one of the Braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them.

Then in a flash he realized, “I can read the Bible using my tongue.” And in just a short amount of time, the man had already read through the Bible four times...with his tongue!”

Now folks, if anybody has some great excuses for not reading the Bible, it's this guy. Yet, what did he do? He hungered for the Word of God so much so that he figured out how to do it with his tongue. So the question we need to ask ourselves is this. How about you and I? Do we long to read the Word of God that much? **No?** Well folks, if we don't, we better! **Why? Because stop and think about it.** How are we ever going to know if we are being lied to if we never get acquainted with the truth? How are we ever going to be protected from the liars and false teachers out there who only desire to **rip you off or lead you to hell**, unless we know what the Bible says? People, when are we going to realize that the only way to fight truth decay is to brush up on the Bible each and every day. And if you see a Bible that is falling apart, it probably belongs to someone who isn't.

People, it's not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to read the words of a supernatural God then don't expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It's that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you're losing your first love!

Oh, but that's not all. The **fourth sign** to indicate that we've lost our first love is that **We're No Longer Obedient to God.**

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 "Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad."

Now folks, if you've ever wondered what the Christian life is all about, it's right here in our text. You don't need to go to a seminar or even buy a book. In fact, God's made it simple for us. He's narrowed it down to **two things**. And that is, **fear God** and **obey His commands**, right? And why do we need to do that? Because God's going to judge everything we do whether good or bad. There are no secrets with Him.

But here's our problem. We all talk about obedience, we believe in obedience, and we encourage each other to be obedient, but do we ever get around to being obedient to God? No! And here's what happens. **Over time**, we lose our fear of God. We're more afraid of man than our Maker. We're afraid of what our friends might think. We're afraid of what our family might say. In fact, we're more afraid of our employer instead of our Creator. And when the fear of man supersedes the fear of God, guess what happens? We're no longer obedient to God! Or in other words, **we start to backslide**. And people, the problem with backsliding is it's not only going to be judged in the future, but it's got **serious consequences** for today, like these guys learned!

“One winter a ski resort in Breckenridge, Colorado, posted signs instructing skiers to keep off a certain slope. The signs were very large and distinct and said, ‘DANGER! OUT OF BOUNDS!’

But in spite of the warnings, several skiers went into the area. The result? A half-mile-wide avalanche buried 4 of the trespassers beneath tons of snow and rock. And the tragedy never would have happened if the signs had been heeded.”

And people, it’s the same thing with God’s commands. He asks us to be obedient not because He’s trying to ruin our fun. He’s not being a Big Ol’ Meany. No! His commands are for our own good and protection. And how sad it is that many Christians are walking around in life suffering an avalanche of problems and are buried under a ton of pain, **especially** when they don’t have to! **Why?** Because they’ve been tricked and seduced into losing the fear of God and they no longer obey Him.

People, when are we going to learn that the cost of obedience is nothing compared with the cost of disobedience. **You cannot backslide without suffering.** Therefore, obedience **has to become a daily precedent** in our lives! **Why? Because backsliding begins when obedience stops!**

People, it’s not that hard to figure out. If you refuse to obey a supernatural God then don’t expect to experience His Supernatural Power. It’s that simple. But not only that. It might also be a sign you’re losing your first love!

And people, this is the great news. As soon as we turn away from these temptations and get back to reading the Word of God and being obedient to God **like we used to when we first fell in love with Him**, then

guess what? We're going to experience the same power and passion like we did before. It's really that easy! Why? Because when we **truly believe** that our Heavenly Father is watching over us, it'll **empower you** to live a life beyond your wildest dreams, like it did with this boy.

“Some years ago, Columbia University had a great football coach by the name of Lou Little. One day Lou had a boy try out for the varsity team who wasn't really very good. But Lou noticed that there was something unique about him.

While he wasn't nearly good enough to make the team, he had such contagious enthusiasm that Lou thought, *He'll never be able to play, but I'll leave him on the team to encourage the others.*

Well, as the season went on, Lou began to develop a tremendous admiration and love for this boy. One of the things that especially impressed him was the manner with which the boy obviously cared for his father.

Whenever the father would come for a visit, the boy and his father would always be seen walking together, arm in arm, an obvious indication of an exceptional bond of love between them. They could always be seen on Sunday going to and from the university chapel. It was obvious that theirs was a deep and mutually shared Christian faith.

Then, one day, a telephone call came to Coach Little. He was informed that the boy's father had just died – would he be the one to tell the boy? With a heavy heart Lou informed the boy of his father's death, and he immediately left to go home for the funeral.

A few days later though, the boy returned to the campus, only two days before the biggest game of the season. Lou went to him and said, ‘Is there anything I can do for you? Anything at all?’

And to the coach's astonishment the boy said, ‘Let me start the game on Saturday!’ Lou was taken aback. He thought, *I can't let him start – he's not good enough.* But he remembered his promise to help and said, ‘All right –

you can start the game,’ but he thought to himself, *I’ll leave him in for a few plays and then take him out.*

Well, the day of the big game arrived and to everyone’s surprise the coach started this boy who had never played in a game in the whole season. But imagine even the coach’s surprise when, on the very first play from scrimmage, that boy was the one who single-handedly made a tackle that threw the opposing team for a loss.

In fact, he played so good that Lou left him in for the entire game and the boy eventually led his team to victory and he was voted the outstanding player of the game.

And when the game was finally over Lou approached the boy and said, ‘Son, what got into you today?’ And the boy replied, ‘Do you remember when my father would visit me here at school and we would spend a lot of time together walking arm in arm around the campus?’

And Lou replied, ‘Yes, I remember.’

And the boy continued, ‘Well, you see, my father and I shared a secret that nobody around here knew anything about. You see, my father was blind – and today was the first time he ever saw me play.’”

People of God, this is the great news. Even if you’ve been tricked into living like a practical atheist, **you don’t have to stay that way.** Sometimes you just need to go back to **reading the Word of God** and **being obedient to God** like when you first got saved. **Why?** Because it shows that you **truly believe** your Heavenly Father’s there watching over you. You’re not acting like an atheist. And folks, once you do that, then you’ll discover just like that boy **overnight** you’ve just been empowered to run the game of life beyond your wildest dreams! **Why?** Because God **is watching over you** and He

loves you and He doesn't want you to lose your love for Him. That's how powerful He is!

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, "God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe **before it's too late!**" But people, I'm telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we've got to stop acting like practical atheists. We've got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that God is not just **Real**, He's not just **Personal**, He's not just **Wise**, but **God is Powerful!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to receive the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."
