



*Return to
Your First
Love*

**A 21-DAY
DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY**

By Kathy Kubiak

Week 1

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Devotional Journey

Foreword by Jim Kubiak

This devotional was in part catalyzed by a couple of prophetic words. One of those words, spoken by Bobby Connor, was “gaze at Jesus and glance at the Enemy”. From this word I realized how much time we spend listening to the media and how little is spent listening to God. So much of what comes through the media is literally poisoning our spiritual ears and our hearts.

My own journey led me to steadily decrease the amount of time I was listening to the media. At the same time, I increasingly turned my attention and my heart toward Him. In doing so, I realized how much the Father is speaking a narrative that is so contrary to the one the media would have us embrace.

God is speaking about increasing our capacity to receive and give love, to live in hope and to recognize that we live in a time of harvest where there is tremendous opportunity for both the gospel of salvation and the Kingdom to go forth. God wants to transform a nation through a transformed people. But we cannot do this if we are not more focused on Jesus, the One who transforms us.

During this journey it was suggested that I call a 21-day media fast. As I sat with this concept, the Father kept saying to me “It is bigger than this Jim”. He then said it is about returning to your First Love (Rev 2:4-5). A few days later I read a prophetic word from Lana Vawser that took this to whole new level in my spirit.

<https://lanavawser.com/2020/08/25/a-prophetic-word-to-those-who-are-burning-with-an-intense-fire-heralding-the-message-return-to-the-first-love/>

The Father then birthed a vision for 21 days of fasting, prayer, and repentance in which we would turn our attention away from the world and to Jesus. A time in which we could reignite or fan our flame for Him. This vision also included a devotional as a tool to help us shift that focus and rekindle or kindle that flame.

I had originally thought there would be multiple authors contributing to the devotional entries. But then my wife experienced a significant breakthrough in hearing from God. As Kathy shared her journal entries with me, I realized that she was writing this devotional. What she wrote has so ministered to my heart. May it do the same for you as you shift your focus and reignite or fan your flame for Jesus. We need a body of Believers who burn for Him.

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Day 1 – What Is First Love?

Rev. 2:4

But I have this [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me]. AMP

What is First Love? Is it a temporary state of existence the first time you encounter something that makes your heart skip a beat? Is it just an experience of newness, freshness and excitement that eventually becomes replaced with familiarity, routine, and obligation? I do not know about you, but in my experience maintaining a state of excitement about something once the newness rubs off can quickly become work and effort.

As I ponder this, I ask myself: why is it easy to do things that I am passionate about while many other things require much effort? What is the key that unlocks me in such a way that what I am putting my hand to becomes effortless? When I think about the things that I love to do, there is an excitement, a fulfillment, a joyful release of my emotions, and a longing to spend time there. I will gladly put other things aside to spend time doing something I absolutely love. It is easy to get lost in that place, to spend hours there and to come back to reality and wonder “where did the time go”?

In contrast, how do I feel about those things I do not enjoy doing? My spirit within sinks, my energy level is low, and it requires much effort to get started. I approach it as something I do not want to do, but I MUST do because it is required or necessary.

I ask myself how I feel about my relationship with you Father, and my savior Jesus? Is spending time with you something my heart looks forward to with excitement? When the alarm clock goes off in the morning, is my first thought “I just want to go back to sleep”, or is it “Father, I am so excited I get to spend time alone with you this morning”? Jesus, it is through you that I found the way back home to the father – you are my big brother, my savior, my redeemer – am I excited to spend time with you since you are the Lover of my Soul?

The Passion Translation renders Rev. 2:4 like this: *But I have this against you: you have abandoned the **passionate love** you had for me at the beginning.* Where is my passion in my relationship with you Father and Jesus? What does that look like? I need to spend some time here and ponder first love some more, I think.

Father speak to my heart today; rekindle the fire in my heart that has grown dim. May it burn with passionate love for you. May I look forward with excitement to spend time with you, to align my priorities so that you receive the first of my day, and not the last! Thank you, Father, for drawing me back to you, and showing me that my priorities have shifted over time. Now is the time to return to my First Love!

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Day 2 – First Love – What Does This Really Mean?

First can indicate something that has never happened before, or it can indicate an order or importance.

When I think of my first boyfriend, there was a desire to spend time together. The excitement was palpable; when I would see him, I would have both a physical response like his touch was electric and an emotional response of what at that time I assumed was love! We desired to spend every waking moment together, to talk and ask questions about one another's past, likes/dislikes, etc. Just staring into his eyes could take me to another place.

Jesus, you are the Lover of my Soul – do I have that same sort of response to you? Can I truly say that I schedule my days around you, that I desire to spend as much time as possible with you, that I desire to have continuous dialogue with you and want to know everything about you? Do I spend time gazing into your eyes, and just taking you in? Do I know you so intimately that I feel like I can read your mind?

In all honesty, the answer is no. I know you do not condemn me for this, but you are asking me to sit with it and allow it to wash over me, flood my being, and go down deep. Why am I not as excited to spend time with you as I was my first boyfriend? Why do I not want to start my day gazing upon you and having ongoing conversation with you? Why do I allow myself to get caught up in the business of life and forget to talk to you about what is important to you? What kind of a relationship do I truly have with you?

As I ponder what Lover of my Soul really means, I discover it means you love me to the core of my being, in those places I have erected walls and barriers of protection so that my heart will not be trampled on or wounded. But in doing so, I have also shut you out of my heart; I have allowed my heart to grow distant in my relationship with you Jesus, and have not allowed you into my brokenness. I have allowed my spirit to be lulled into complacency and to get wrapped up in what is on my to do list for the day rather than fixing my gaze on you.

Jesus, you are my Bridegroom; you are the one I am engaged to be married to. You desire to be my most intimate relationship, the one who knows me like no other. But love is an invitation; it does not force itself on the object of its love. You embody love, but you woo me, you do not force me. You invite me back into that place of First Love where I gaze upon you with starry eyes; you invite me to share my hopes and joys and sorrows. You gently speak to me in the depths of my soul and invite me to disassemble the prison of my own making one brick at a time. As I am willing to trust you, I see that I am the one who kept you away from my heart. Thank you that you are patient with me, and never betray my trust in you. Jesus, I want to return to that First Love with you . . .

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Day 3 – Revival of First Love

Good morning Poppa – I sense you speaking today about Revival. You direct me to look up some words (dictionary.com):

Revival – a renewed attention or interest in something.

Revive – to return to consciousness or life; become active or flourishing again.

To restore from a depressed, inactive, or unused state: bring back.

Revive comes from the Latin roots *re-*, meaning “again” and *vivere*, meaning “to live”;

Revive means to “live again”.

Father, I know you are reviving my spirit and I am getting reacquainted with you and your Holy Spirit. There has been a distance in our relationship, and you are drawing me back to my First Love for you. Lord, reawaken that place of excitement and wonder of who you are as I first came to know you in a personal way. Speak to those tender places in my heart that I have walled off due to woundedness, pain and discouragement. Your voice is soft and tender; you are calling gently, but you wait patiently. You extend an invitation, but it is up to my spirit to respond. Thank you, Lord, for rekindling that desire to meet with you and wait on you. Sensitize my spirit to your Holy Spirit.

Father, this image is speaking to me about restarting my heart. I have not been flatlined, but I have had a low pulse. You are speaking to me again about amplitude; may the amplitude of my heart for you and others be full and strong. May my heart be aligned with yours, and may your heartbeat be mine. May my heart pound with excitement like it did with First Love!



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Poppa, thank you that as I learn to love you more, I also learn to love myself and others more. Teach me to live from my heart first and my mind second, rather than the other way around. Awaken my senses to the fullness of their design; Thank you Father for your Unconditional Love!!

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Day 4 – Preceding All Others . . .

This morning Father you are speaking of the word FIRST again. Merriam Webster dictionary defines first as “preceding all others in time, order, rank or importance”.

Today you have me focused on the latter part of that definition: preceding all others in order, rank, or importance. To return to my First Love, I need to reorder my priorities in life, and place the highest importance on my relationship with you Father.

How do I do that? Setting my alarm to get up earlier in the mornings has been the first step. Instead placing sleep as my highest value, I have chosen to give you that first hour or so of my day, so that I can spend time in your presence, and allow you to speak to my spirit. I find that if I do not meet with you first thing in the morning, by the end of the day I am tired and not able to just sit with you and not have my mind drift. I also tend to fall asleep when I just sit with my eyes closed at the end of the day! If I meet you when I am fresh, I am able to allow your spirit to speak to my spirit, ask you how I should look at my day, ask you what you want to speak to me today, and allow the thoughts to come out to be captured on paper (electronically!).

But you also want to be first beyond just the functional aspects; you want to be FIRST in my heart, above any other desires. When I recognize an area of my heart where my desire is to give that a higher priority than I give to you, you gently speak by your Spirit to say “daughter, are you loving me with your whole heart, or are you giving this more focus in your life right now?”. ANYTHING that captures my attention more than you I have given a place to in my heart that only you should fill. It may be something good, such as my husband, kids, job, church, friends, activities or whatever. But when those things keep me from spending time in your presence, in your word and hearing from you Father, then I have my priorities in the wrong order.

Father, I ask you to renew my passion for YOU as I return to my First Love. As I am faithful to make room for you in my day, I know you are faithful to meet with me. Your promise in Jer. 29:13 says, “you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart”. Thank you, Father, that as I turn my heart towards you, you meet me in that place. Teach me how to practice your presence throughout my day; may I recognize when my focus has shifted and use that as a springboard to bring my thoughts back into alignment with yours. You do not condemn me for it; you are delighted when I recognize what has happened and respond by changing my priorities. Thank you, Poppa, for your grace.

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Day 5 – Repent and Do the Works You Did at First

Father, today you are directing me back to look at Revelation 2:5. The Passion Translation renders this verse as:

Think about how far you have fallen! Repent and do the works *of love* you did at first. I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place *of influence* if you do not repent.

A common definition of repent is “to feel remorse, contrition or self-reproach for what you have done (or failed to do)”. But the Greek word translated as repent in the passage is *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind”. This is a much different idea than being sorry for something; it means to examine your thinking and change your thought process.

The Bible calls me to examine my thoughts and align them with yours Father. Any thought that does not line up with your truth is something I need to repent of, i.e. change my mind about.

When I first came to know you as my heavenly Father, and Jesus as my Savior, I made a conscious decision to believe your truths. I spent time reading your word and allowing it to show me where my thinking needed to change. Everything was fresh and new; I delighted in your written word, meditated on it, memorized it, and changed my pattern of living because I recognized your truths as superior to what I had previously known. I asked you to reveal to me areas of my life that did not line up with your truths and asked your Holy Spirit to help me to change. At that time, I changed my mind and allowed your word to transform me.

Over time, I have lost that first passion, that first love for your word. I have allowed other things to take the place in my heart and mind that you were intended to occupy. A change of mind is closely tied to a change of heart. When I return to my First Love, it is not only my mind that needs to change, it is my heart. If I look at it as only an intellectual exercise, I will fail. My heart must be turned toward you; I must allow your Holy Spirit to convict me of those areas that are not in alignment with you and your truths. Once he does, I need to partner with that in changing my mind and how I think. As I do that, true transformation occurs.

Father, thank you for showing me the importance of both my heart and my mind being turned toward you in pursuit of you as I did at first; may the passion of returning to my First Love spark a flame in others as well. Examine my thoughts and attitudes; show me where I am out of alignment with your truths. May I truly repent of those that are not fully in alignment and change my thinking and actions to partner with your truth in the matter. Fan the flame of First Love in my heart again!

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Day 6 – Who Am I Agreeing With?

Father, what exactly do I need to change my mind about? What areas of my thoughts have I allowed to become passionless, or swayed by other worldviews? Do I believe that you are a good Father? Do I truly believe that I am created in your image and are valuable beyond measure? Do I fix my eyes on you and gaze upon your beauty, or am I more drawn to the temporal circumstances around me and the chaos in the world? Am I captivated by your love, or mesmerized by the enemy of my soul? Do I find my value in who you say I am rather than in what the world wants me to believe? Am I agreeing with what your word says about who I am and how I should live?

Whatever we fixate on, that is what forms and transforms us. That is why the Bible has so much to say about what we should fix our eyes upon and what thoughts we allow to take up residence in our mind. We are told to “fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith” (Heb. 12:2), and to “fix your eyes on things above, not on earthly things” (Col 3:2). We read in 2 Cor 4:18 “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” The Bible instructs us to “take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

As I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus and the truth of your word, I am renewing my mind and allowing your Holy Spirit to speak to my spirit. As I do that, I am able to see more clearly what you are doing in my life, and I am able to receive what your word has to say about who I am created to be. I can more clearly recognize your voice, and to also recognize the voice of the enemy of my soul. When I know clearly what you have to say about me, I can discern what lies the enemy is trying to get me to believe. You are calling me to recognize the lies the enemy has placed there and change my mind about what I believe. In doing this, I am partnering with what your word has to say about how you created me and that you indeed created me in your image.

Father, thank you for showing me those areas where I am not in agreement with you; as I gaze on you, may I come into a greater awareness of your love for me. I choose to partner with your words about who I am created to be. My soul thirsts for you; awaken that passion again that I had at first; stoke the fire of my First Love.

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Day 7 – Run to The Father

Father, as I sit in your presence this morning, the words of a worship song are on repeat in my mind.

My heart has been in Your sights	I run to the Father
Long before my first breath	I fall into grace
Running into Your arms	I'm done with the hiding
Is running to life from death	No reason to wait
And I feel this rush deep in my chest	And my heart found a surgeon
Your mercy is calling out	My soul found a friend
Just as I am You pull me in	So I'll run to the Father
And I know I need You now	Again and again and again and again

I have been familiar with this song for a few months, but yesterday it really went into my heart. I really took the time to “hear it” in my heart, and when I woke up a couple of times in the night it was playing through my mind. My heart has been in your sights from the beginning; it is what you are after in our relationship. That is what First Love embodies; it is a heart connection, one that is built on knowing me so intimately that you know the thoughts and intents of my heart.

Heb. 4:12 reads “For whatever God says to us is full of living power: it is sharper than the sharpest dagger, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are” (TLB).

Father, you gave us both the Written Word (Bible) and your Living Word (Jesus); as we come into greater intimacy with you, we find that you are a skilled surgeon, going straight to our hearts and cutting out the parts that are cancerous and diseased as a result of sin. You know precisely what needs to be removed from our hearts for healing to occur. Your Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and shows us what is in our hearts, and often it is not pretty. Pride wants us to think that we can deal with it on our own, or we can keep it hidden and out of sight, but all that does is allow it to continue to grow and fester. You call us to relationship with you and woo us, but we are the ones who make the choice to either continue to hide or run to you and submit ourselves to your scalpel.

But it does not stop there; you are also the closest friend we could ever have. After you have done heart surgery on us, you lovingly tend our wounds and bring us back to wholeness. Human relationships are fallible and will always bring opportunities for disappointment. Father, you created us and know exactly what we need when we need it; you are waiting for us to run back to you, to recognize the love of the Father and return home. This is an ongoing process; your invitation to us is to run to you again and again and again.

Father, you are stirring up First Love passion in my heart. Thank you for showing me that you are indeed a good, good Father, and that you are the one I need to run to for ultimate healing. You know me intimately because you created me, and you invite me to come to you to meet all my needs, whether that be physical, spiritual, or emotional. Father, I still have places in my heart where I am in hiding, and I need to expose my heart to your scalpel. Give me the courage to admit that to myself and others, and to willingly submit myself to your process. I am tired of going around the same mountain again and again. Thank you for putting this song on repeat in my heart and mind – may I run to the Father again and again and again