



*Return to
Your First
Love*

**A 21-DAY
DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY**

By Kathy Kubiak

Week 2

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

A 21-Day Journey of Exploration

Day 8 – The Way, The Truth & The Life

Jesus, today I am exploring how YOU are my First Love. In John 14:6 you state “I (Jesus) am the Way, the Truth and the Life – no one comes to the Father but by me” (NIV). Father God is Love; but Jesus, you are the way to that unconditional love. When Adam sinned in the garden, man’s intimate connection with the Father was cut off. The rest of the OT portrays a sacrificial system to atone for man’s sin to connect with the Father and serve him. In His unfathomable love, Father sent you Jesus, his only Son, to be the ultimate sacrifice. You came and died a horrific death on the cross to make payment in full for man’s sins, past, present, and future. You sanctified me (made holy by your holiness), justified me (made righteous in the sight of God), and reconciled me to the Father (restored intimate relationship). Without your sacrifice, I would still be cut off from the Father - he cannot have fellowship with sin because He is Holy. You are my First Love because I would not be able to experience the Father’s Love without first acknowledging that your sacrifice restored my relationship with the Father.

You also came to this world to live as a man, and to be the pattern we are meant to follow. John 12:26 says “whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (NIV). In fact, Jesus you told us to follow you more than 20 times in the NT. You left us a pattern of what love embodied looks like and showed us how the Kingdom of God is opposite the kingdom of man. How the last will be first, the weak will be made strong, and true leadership is through serving others. You look beyond the exterior and see the contents of the heart; you call people up and remind them they are created in your image, and they were predestined before the creation of the world. You sent your Holy Spirit as our comforter and to empower us to do even greater works that you did while on this Earth.

Jesus, may I truly meditate today on my relationship with you; have I fully realized the price that was paid to restore my relationship with the Father? Have I valued my relationship with you? How am I honoring or dishonoring you by my attitudes, words, and deeds? Speak to my heart today on what returning to you as my First Love really means.

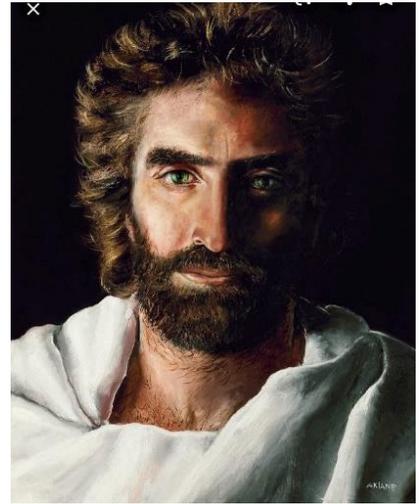
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Day 9 – Gazing into Your Eyes . . .

Jesus, today I want to gaze into your eyes, and explore what that First Love with you looks like.

One of my favorite pictures of you was painted by the child prodigy Akiane; you appeared to her in her dreams numerous times, and she painted what she saw. When I look into your eyes in this painting, they draw me in with such love and compassion. I feel like you are looking deep into my soul and saying to me “I love you and there is nothing you can do to separate you from my love”. When I look into your eyes, I am drawn back to that place of intimacy with you. Your gaze says to me “I want to know you intimately; I want to heal those places in your heart that have been so wounded you thought you could never ever risk exposing them for fear of condemnation. I want to set you free to love others like I love you.”



Jesus by Akiane

When I think of your ministry on this Earth, it was characterized by love and compassion; you were an amazing teacher, but what really characterized your ministry was love and compassion for mankind. You PERSONIFIED love and showed us what love in action looks like. You looked past the person’s exterior and saw their hopelessness & crushed spirit and spoke words of life. You saw pride & rebellion and exposed them as alliances with the kingdom of darkness. Love calls people into relationship and invites them into a dialogue; it is patient, kind, gentle, forgiving, humble, and seeks the best in others.

Love is contagious; it draws us toward the object of our love and requires action on our part. As I gaze into your eyes, I am challenged to be true love for others. I am challenged to consider other’s needs, and place as high value on their needs as I do my own. It gives me the courage to risk exposing my own heart to pain and rejection because I know that as I do, my relationships with others grow and mature. Gazing into your eyes renews my strength and increases my compassion for others. Jesus, may I not undervalue the need to spend time gazing in your eyes and learning to receive your liquid love.

Jesus, I want to gaze into your eyes today and experience your unconditional love; your love is so great that you chose to give yourself as the ultimate sacrifice for not only me, but all mankind. As I gaze into your eyes, may I KNOW to the depths of my being what love looks and feels like. Give me courage to extend that kind of love to those around me, and risk exposing my own heart as your perfect love drives out all fear.

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Day 10 – Jesus, The Spoken Word

Jesus, you are the Word incarnate. How do I return to you as my First Love today as the Word?

John 1:1-2 states “In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (NIV). This tells me that you existed with God the Father since the before the creation of our world as we know it. This also tells me that you ARE God, yet you are also distinctly separate from God the Father. This is part of the mystery of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

John chose to use the Greek word “logos”, which is translated into English as “Word”. Logos specifically means the spoken word or statement. Jesus, you are God’s spoken word.

John 1:3 says, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”. Jesus, this tells me you were an integral part of creating all that we know. The book of Genesis chapter 1 tells me that God spoke the world into existence; Jesus, as the Word of God, I understand that you were involved in this process. In Genesis 1:26 you say, “let US make man in OUR image”. By the very words of you Jesus, mankind was spoken into existence. You also gave mankind dominion over the created world. Since I am made in your image, my spoken word carries power and authority.

Part of returning to you as my First Love involves learning to partner with you in the spoken word. It means using my words to proclaim who you are and what you did for me and all mankind. It means using my words to proclaim who you are and give you honor and praise. It means using my words to build others up rather than tear them down. It means my words are powerful and can tear down strongholds. It means recognizing you have given me authority in the spiritual realm to partner with you in signs and wonders.

May I meditate today on the power of the spoken word; Jesus, you are the source of all creation, and have empowered me to use my spoken words to impact the world around me. Jesus, show me how to use my words to partner with you in bringing your Kingdom to this Earth.

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Day 11 – Jesus, The Living Word

Jesus, again you are speaking to me about being the Word. Beyond being the spoken Word, you are the Living Word.

Again, I am led to look up definition of “living” (dictionary.com) -

1. Having life; being alive, not dead
2. Active or thriving; vigorous, strong

The Bible we have today was written over the course of mankind’s history as the Father spoke to men and they recorded those interactions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, you are the embodiment of the written word; your life on this Earth fulfilled over 100 prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. You came as a man and lived among men on the Earth and spoke the truth of your Kingdom and showed us the way back to the Father. (John 1:14).

The second definition really captures my attention; you say to spend time there. When something is living, it is active and thriving. As I meditate on scriptures, your Holy Spirit brings them to life in my spirit. You reveal to me how the words on the page apply to my life, and how they are still truth today, thousands of years after they were initially recorded. You take lifeless words on a page, and when I am allowing my spirit to connect to your Spirit, you show me truths beyond the obvious interpretation of the time they were written and speak to my heart about how they apply to me today. Your word is living and active as we learn in Hebrews 4:12 “the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (NIV). As I meditate on your word and allow it to go deep into my heart, it reveals to me my thoughts and attitudes that may or may not line up with your heart. As my thoughts and attitudes are exposed as being out of alignment with your heart, you invite me to allow Holy Spirit to change my heart until it is back in sync with you. Your Spirit calls my spirit back to life in areas where it has become deadened. As I yield to you, you bring renewal to my faith, and causes me to grow.

Jesus, open the eyes of my heart today to see what you are speaking to me as I read and meditate on your word. I commit to allowing your Holy Spirit to go to my heart in those areas that I am out of alignment with you. May your word be alive in me today and bring about growth in my spirit as I choose to yield to you. Thank you that each day I am growing in maturity in my faith.

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Day 12 – Love Letters from Jesus

Jesus, how have I strayed from you as my First Love? You are my bridegroom, and as part of your spiritual body the Church I am pledged to you in marriage. Has my love for you grown cold? Jesus, as one betrothed to you, are you the focus of my thoughts? Am I eagerly awaiting, yes looking for your return to consummate our marriage? When I think about you, do I feel excitement in my heart or am I cold and indifferent?

Jesus, your written word is a love letter to me; how much time do I spend reading and reflecting on your love for me? As my beloved, have I hidden your word in my heart? Do I realize that my heart is like a safety deposit box – a place where my most valuable possessions are stored? Have I truly placed a high enough value on your word?

We love you because you first loved us; our love is a response to yours. You were the one who pursued us, who courted us, who wooed us, paid the ultimate price for us, and who left us a love letter to remind us of the depths of your love for us.

Love is not just an intellectual assent; it involves our heart, which is the seat of our desires. Have I meditated on your word enough to move it from understanding it with my intellect, to receiving it with my heart? Or is it just an intellectual exercise for me?

Jesus, you are the Living Word – the truths contained in your written word bring life and growth to those who apply it to their daily life. You gave us a betrothal gift in your Holy Spirit; he quickens our spirit with your truths. Do I spend time searching your written word for the hidden treasures it contains? Have I sat with a passage of your word that you have highlighted to me and mined it for the gemstones it contains? Do I spend time asking you how I apply the truths I discover to my daily life?

Jesus, bring to mind how I looked forward to spending time with you at first; how I loved to read your word, to get to know you, and to spend time just talking to you. Remind me of the passion I felt when I talked about you to others and shared how you had changed my life for the better. Bring to mind your faithfulness over the years, whether that is just a short time or a lifetime. As I reflect on this, fan the flame of my love for you Jesus!

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Day 13 – Love Letters from My Beloved

Jesus, today you are bringing to mind days of old, long before modern communication technologies were available, back to when the written word was a primary means of communication between people. There is no equivalent for face-to-face communication and physical touch, but written communication does have certain advantages; it preserves ones thoughts and words for a later time, and can be reviewed, parsed, meditated on interacted with in our minds.

I think of early in our country's history, back when two people who loved one another might be separated by great distances, and a letter was often the only means of communication. Lovers would wait anxiously to receive a letter from their beloved, and once received, that letter would be read and re-read time after time. It was a treasured possession; you would either keep that letter with you, or protected it in a very safe place, because that letter was the only connection you currently had with your beloved. And when you wrote a letter back, you spent time crafting your response, selecting just the precise words to convey your thoughts and intents of your heart. Although you could not touch your beloved in the flesh, that letter became your lifeline of hope for a future, a promise of things yet to come.

Beloved, do you realize that the creator of your soul left you His love letters for you to read and treasure? He carefully crafted the content to express his heart for you, that you are created in his image, to tell you that you are a much-loved son or daughter, that you are created to rule and reign on this earth, and that you will be spiritually married to him for eternity? In it he lays out his truths for living in this fallen world and gives us a beautiful picture of what life beyond this world looks like. Have you spent time reading and re-reading it until you become one whose heart is tuned to the same frequency as his? He gave you his Holy Spirit as a deposit of his presence until we are reunited with him in eternity, and his Spirit testifies with our spirit to not only bring revelation and convict us of that truth, but also empowers us to become that truth to those around us.

Jesus, as I write this I am convicted that I do not place a high enough value on your written word; when my love was new I spent much time memorizing and internalizing your word, but now I do not spend as much time there. Renew my hunger to consume your word and allow it to nourish my soul. Thank you that you gently correct me and redirect me back to you. Keep my spirit pliable and receptive instead of allowing it to become calloused and indifferent. May I hear your invitation to return to those things I did at first.

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Day 14 – Light the Fire Again

This morning there is another song ringing through my mind “Light the Fire Again”. It is a song about returning to you Jesus, our first love; the lyrics are lifted straight out of Rev 3:14-20 (NIV):

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

The Apostle John penned the book of Revelation because of a vision of Jesus; the section above was a strong rebuke to the Laodicean church because they were lukewarm. I recognize that is where I have been much of my faith walk since my initial encounter with your love Jesus. I have allowed the passion and fire in my soul to become just glowing embers; I am trusting more in my own ability to meet my needs than I am in your ability. But Lord, when I trust in my own abilities rather than in you, I am indeed naked and blind to the state of my own soul; I am covering up my own nakedness with the filthy rags of self-sufficiency and pride. Oh Lord, you are inviting me to come to you and allow the fire of your holiness to burn away the impurities in my heart, to open my eyes to see the current state of my heart, and to put my trust in your sufficiency rather than my own.

Jesus, you are calling me again to get brutally honest with my own assessment of myself and ask the Holy Spirit if it lines up with your word. You rebuke me and discipline me because you love me. But you also expect me to agree with your Holy Spirit and change my thinking and actions when he shows me where I have fallen away.

You lovingly knock on the door of my heart, and patiently wait for me to open the door. But that door must be opened by repentance and returning to you as my First Love. I am the only one that can open that door; you will not force it open.

Lord, I confess that my love has grown cold; I have lost my First Love for you. My soul wants to compare myself to others and say that I am not as bad as they are, but in your sight, I am lukewarm; I am giving lip-service to you, but my actions are not truly lining up with the words I am speaking. I confess that I have become complacent and allowed other things to take higher priorities in my life. Oh Lord, forgive me for trusting in my own works and abilities to meet my own needs rather than looking first to you. I am choosing to repent and change my thinking and agree with you; may my heart be refined by your fire!