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Rockingtheboat

Welcome to “Rocking the boat” part 2.

Last week we looked at the story of Jesus walking on water and how Peter, after having gotten over the shock of seeing a ghost, and having Jesus confirming that it was in fact, He, that was coming towards them, got up on his own, in spite of the crowd cowering with him, Asked Jesus to call him, Peter, onto the water with Him, Which Jesus did, And then Peter got out and waked on water, Rocking the boat in more ways than one.

We looked at how we as people, like to make Jesus predictable in our lives, We like to make Christianity a habit, A check box that consoles us that we are in fact living the life that Christianity calls for. And yet when we read the Bible and look at stories like these we realize the reality that nothing could be further from the truth and that Jesus in fact calls us out of our comfortability and check box Christianity to do the seemingly impossible and that is to do things that stretch our faith and in this case, calling Peter to walk on water.

Today I want to do what one could call a prequel, a look at what came before this particular moment.

In many ways, our relationship with God is similar to the dating, engaged, married, honeymoon, getting old together cycle that married couples go through. I know that when I started studying the Bible it was new and exciting and fresh and everyday I read something that I did not know, all the while coming to the conviction that I was far from God and needing a closer relationship with Him. Similar to the **getting to know someone** phase of a relationship, it was an exciting time.

As we discussed last week however, eventually repetitive actions become habit, also described as routine. And putting the words ‘God’ and ‘routine’ in the same sentence is where the whole problem begins.

This is the start of the real battle because connecting with God can never be a routine. Once it is a routine, are you still connecting?

I need to ask my marriage the same question. If our relationship has become all routine, are we still connecting?

Usually at this point in the service I ask you to turn your Bibles to a particular passage but today we are going to do it backwards. We are going to look at the analysis first and look at the Scriptures later.

I want to look at two churches today.

Let's say I need to make a decision to go to one of them and to do that I want to draw up a list of Pros and Cons.

Someone came to me and told me what they have learned about the churches.

{Slide: Church Pros} - First Church 1 and then both

<u>Church1-Pros</u>	<u>Church2-Pros</u>
Hard workers	Hard workers
Cannot tolerate wicked people	Some don't hold to false teachings
Test people who claim to be apostles	
They have persevered	
They have endured hardships	
They have not grown weary	
Hate heretical practices	

{Slide: Church Cons} - First Church 1 and then both

<u>Church1-Cons</u>	<u>Church2-Cons</u>
Forsaken their first love	Tolerate a wicked woman in the church

I still like the first church because they wouldn't have tolerated this wicked woman that seems to be a problem in the second church.

Having forsaken their first love is surely something that we can talk and teach about.

However, the clever people among you would have realised that I am talking about two churches in the Book of Revelations and the someone who came to me, through the medium of the Scriptures was Jesus.

Here is the apparently difficult to come to terms with result of His evaluation of these two churches.

{Slide: Church Evaluation} - First Church 1 and then both

<u>Church1-Evaluation</u>	<u>Church2-Evaluation</u>
Consider how far you have fallen	I will impose no other burden on you
Repent and do the things you did at first	Hold on to what you have
ELSE	You are doing more than you did at first
I will remove your lamp stand	

Now **if I had to make a call** on where these two churches were going, I would be hard pressed to be that severe on the church I was leaning towards going to.

When I read the evaluation Jesus gave them I'm a little puzzled.

I can't see it, not that that means much, so what am I missing?

Turn your Bibles to Rev 2.

Let's read what Jesus actually said to the churches

{Slide: Rev 2v1-7}

Rev 2v1-7

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

*These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²**I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.** I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴**Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.** ⁵**Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.** If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

Now compare that to Rev 2v18-29

{Slide: Rev 2v18-29}

¹⁸*"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:*

*These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹**I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.** ²⁰Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²²So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. ²⁴**Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, ²⁵except to hold on to what you have until I come.'** ²⁶To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—²⁷that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'^z—just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸I will also give that one the morning star. ²⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Did you pick up the difference between how Jesus views these two churches?

{Slide: What Jesus sees} - First Ephesus and then both

<u>Ephesus-WhatJesussees</u>	<u>Thyatira-WhatJesussees</u>
I know your deeds	I know your deeds
Your hard work	Your love and faith
Your perseverance	Your service
	Your perseverance

The only difference in the eyes of Jesus is Love and Faith.

The church in Ephesus does not have that anymore, leading to them losing their first love, the reason they used to do things when they first became Christians.

Those two words are the difference between the church in Ephesus being warned that they may have their lamp stand removed, remember the lamp stand represents the church at Ephesus, in spite of the fact that they were hard workers, and the church in Thyatira being commended for who they were.

Jesus saw that the church in Thyatira had a heart of love and faith and when He evaluated them, they were doing MORE than they did at first.

Were they more busy?

I don't think that's the more He is talking about.

He has already commended their doing stuff.

They were more LOVING and more FAITHFUL now than then.

The church in Ephesus is warned that they have forsaken their first love.

The church in Thyatira is commended for having grown

The first church was relying on themselves and what they were used to doing

The second church trusted God and reached out beyond themselves.

Reminds us of our core Scripture last week.

Peter stepped out in faith doing more than he thought was possible.

The rest stayed in the boat, playing it safe.

I had to try and understand this difference.

Let's get back to the marriage analogy.

In a new relationship, everything is an adventure because you are not sure where it's going.

If I say this what will she say.

If I do that, react in this way, how will she react.

I don't know, I have to go out on a limb, take a step of faith, test the waters, ask questions, pay attention, spend time.

And that describes the first few years because everything is new.

And there is wind and there are waves and in the process I keep learning about my spouse and about myself.

Let's take a silly example, don't laugh.

My wife has what we call a 'thumb thing'.

I learned early on in our relationship that her thumb has claustrophobia.

It does not like spending time in an enclosed space, like in the palm of my hand for example.

It's a funny thing, for me anyway.

I thought it was funny at first and so as a mischievous husband I would play around a bit with this discovery and guess what, it didn't go down well because for her it wasn't funny. I learned quickly that to protect this strangeness got me a lot further in our relationship than if I ignored it.

Another simple example.

I discovered a week ago that Joan does not like too much lemon juice in her avo and so from now on when I prepare our breakfast and we have avo, I put in the amount that she likes.

Now imagine, that sometime between these two examples, in our relationship, **I stopped changing**

I kept learning because we do notice things and we do talk to each other, because relationships don't stop growing

But

I just steadfastly kept on doing what I had learned up to that point.

I protected the thumb thing with a passion

but

Even though I knew she doesn't like too much lemon in her avo

I didn't make the change and she just had to put up with me.

Don't you think she has the right to come to me and say,

"I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance, what you learned at the beginning of our relationship you are doing very well, with persistence and diligence".

(The habits are in place, I don't have to think too much)

"however somewhere along the line you stopped growing in that relationship, in spite of learning more, therefore, Repent and do the things you did at first".

And we do the same with God.

At first we grow and change and adjust and make mistakes and life is exciting as we start this new relationship with a God we had not known.

We read the Bible and learn that to **love** God is to obey him

And to have **faith** in Him is to believe Him in spite of what we think

And then at some stage we reach a fork in the road

And one path leads to Ephesus and the other to Thyatira.

On the one path we work hard for God, we learn new things about Him BUT at some stage we keep learning but stop changing and stay frozen in the past.

On the other path we work hard for God, we learn new things about Him AND through our LOVE for Him and our FAITH in Him we keep changing in our relationship.

Our default nature points us towards Ephesus.

How do you know that you are still in Ephesus?

- When you hear calls to BE THE CHURCH and you are not moved
- When your times with God are a routine and not a life changing event
- When you're busy for God but not connected to God
- When someone points something out in you and your first reaction is a defence

- When you don't want hear another sermon on money because you think that as a church we have had enough, but the main reason is, you're not tithing
- When getting with somebody to talk about your life seems controlling and yet the real reason is because there are dark areas that you don't want to discuss

It's time to leave the church in Ephesus and rather join the church in Thyatira.

However that means that the way we approached our relationship with God needs to change.

Time to focus again on love and faith and not base our confidence on deeds, service and perseverance.

Our new confidence comes from obedience and faithful steps towards Jesus.

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Last week we looked at the boat scene.

I think the disciples climbed into the boat, members of the Ephesian church.

They had been watching and walking around with Jesus and learning from Him and they thought that was where the relationship ended.

And then suddenly He approached them walking on water.

And He tested them with a love and faith test.

He said to Peter, "Come", what is love if not obedience to Jesus.

He expected the seemingly impossible for Peter to walk on water, what is faith if not doing the seemingly impossible.

And so Peter obeyed and stepped out and made the transition to the church in Thyatira, because love and faith is how they rolled.

And so we come to the end of the 'Rocking the boat' series.

Last week we looked at breaking those spiritual habits, the ones that check our box but don't change our hearts.

This week we learned that although Jesus notices our hard work, that alone is not enough in our relationship with Him, He insists on "*love and faith*" as the road we need to take if we want to eat from the tree of life.