**Opening Scripture**

*Galatians 3:27-29 NLT*

*[27] And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. [28] There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.*

**Communion Verse**

*1 Peter 1:18-19 NLT*

*For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. [19] It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.*

*Luke 22:19-20 NLT*

*He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [20] After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.*

**Don't Forget Your First Love**

**Intro:** Who remembers what they would consider their “First Love”?

* Expound on this, providing detail about what it felt like to first experience love (emphasize that what a lot of us would consider our first love, was really an infatuation).
* Infatuation-an intense but short-lived passion or admiration for someone or something (Jesus desires more than an infatuation with Him)
* Jesus, when speaking to the church of Ephesus, rebuked them for Forgetting their first love.
* The aim of this message is to identify safeguards that we can embrace in order to keep our love for Christ burning strong

*Main Text: Revelation 2:1-7 NLT*

*“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands: [2] “I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. [3] You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.* ***[4] “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! [5] Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.***

**(Expound briefly on first three verses-point Jesus’ call to repentance in verses 4 -5)**

**Safeguard One: Limit Your Exposure To Lawlessness and Overall Negativity**

*Matthew 24:10-12 AMPC*

*And then many will be offended and repelled and will begin to distrust and desert [Him Whom they ought to trust and obey] and will stumble and fall away and betray one another and pursue one another with hatred.*

 *[11] And many false prophets will rise up and deceive and lead many into error. [12] And the love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness and iniquity,*

How do we practically limit our exposure to sin and lawness in a world that is upside down, without turning into a mock or hermit?

* Illustration of how hard people’s hearts are in society in general- i.e. if you accidentally leave your car door unlocked and something gets stolen and you get fussed out, a woman wears tight clothes and gets groped)
* Assess our free time or entertainment time (are we truly enjoying what we are hearing or watching or is it just noise that we are use to?) **Expound on this**
* Blocking out foolish and idle conversation of those around us (at work, even at church...)
* Verbalizing gratitude for God’s goodness every day, acts as a repellent to negativity

**Safeguard Two: Don’t Forget Where You Came From**

*Luke 7:41-48 NLT*

*Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. [42] But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?” [43] Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.” “That’s right,” Jesus said. [44] Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. [45] You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. [46] You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.*

*[47] “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.”*

(Expound on how this passage illustrates the point that the degree of love that a person demonstrates for Jesus is directly correlated with the level of appreciation that they have for the sacrifice that was made-the reality is that in spite of how moral of a life we have lived we all have been forgiven much, and it is through remaining aware of this reality that will keep our passion for the Lord burning).

Address the awkwardness for a man to say that he is passionately in love with Jesus-use the illustration of a soldier that has a comrade of his take a bullet for him.

**Safeguard Three: Schedule Time With The Lord (Like you would schedule a date night with your spouse)**

A danger that couples get into after they have been married for a while is that they settle into a routine of handling their chores, cooking dinner, taking children to practices and games, and in the midst of all this the couple loses their excitement and curiosity about each other. This is what we see Jesus describing when he corrects the Church at Ephesus. The Church was doing “the work of ministry” well, but they lost their zeal/passion for the Lord Himself. When Jesus was out doing the work of the ministry there times recorded in scripture where he went off to a Solitary Place to prayer, spending time with God The Father (Mark 1:32-35, Mark 6:44-48, Luke 6: 10-14). These times of refreshing are vital in our relationship with the Lord, to recharge our batteries and keep the fire of love burning for the One who loves us so.

**Safeguard Four: Remember Jesus’ Promise**

*Revelation 2:7 NASBS*

*[7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'*

*1 John 5:4-5 AMP*

*For everyone born of God is victorious and overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has conquered and overcome the world—our [continuing, persistent] faith [in Jesus the Son of God]. [5] Who is the one who is victorious and overcomes the world? It is the one who believes and recognizes the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.*

**Expound & Close**