

Leader Guide

Revive: First Love

Spring 2026 | Week 5

Message Date 5/3/2026

THE GOAL

We are continuing in Pastor Craig's new series, "Revive." This week, we take an honest look at the slow drift toward indifference—a shift which can happen in every believer's life if we are not careful. We will be unpacking three different passages on this issue. In the book of Revelation, Jesus' letter to the church in Ephesus warns us of the possibility to be doing what is right on the outside, yet losing our first love on the inside. In the same way, David's life reveals the product of indifference when he leaves himself unchecked; Psalm 51 shows us the road back home. Our goal is simple: recognize where indifference may be creeping in, and respond the way in which Jesus calls---remember, repent, and return.

MY STORY

- 1) What's a hobby, fad, or food obsession you went ALL IN on at the beginning – and then completely lost interest in within a few weeks?
- 2) You have to plan a picnic for 20 people using only items currently in your kitchen right now. What are you bringing, or making?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

Read Revelation 2:1–7 (NLT)

¹Write 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:

²I 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.

³You 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!

⁵Look 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.

⁶But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

⁷“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

- 4) Jesus introduces Himself as the One holding the seven stars in His right hand and walking among the seven gold lampstands. What does this picture of His active presence tell us about how He sees His Church right now?

The first thing we see is that Jesus is walking amongst stars which are symbolic for churches. Seven simply means the completeness or all of the churches. It tells us that He is with us, and that He’s actively working on our behalf; He sees us and knows what we are going through.

- 5) Jesus commends the Ephesians for hard work, patient endurance, and doctrinal discernment — yet still tells them, “You don’t love me or each other as you did at first.” How is it possible to be doing all the right things on the outside and still have lost your first love?

I think this is one of the greatest challenges believers face; we could do all the right things on the outside, and still get it wrong. We often use the term “mission drift” to explain our fixation on getting everything right: “I go to church, I tithe, I read my Bible... but I don’t talk to Jesus the same way I did, with the passion I once did.” Be gentle, but honest, with yourselves. This is not an invitation to beat ourselves up, but rather, an invitation for Jesus to realign our priorities and our hearts.

- 6) Jesus’ remedy is straightforward: “Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first.” What do remembering, repenting, and returning practically look like for someone whose love has cooled toward God or toward people?

Remember, repent, return — that’s the rhythm Jesus gives, and it’s not complicated. “Remembering” means going back to the place where your love was alive — the early days of your walk with Christ, the early days of your marriage, the early seasons of serving joyfully. Be honest with yourself, and ask: “What was different then?” The act of repenting is admitting, without excuses, that you’ve drifted; it is refusing to call something “a busy season” when it’s indifference. “Returning” is doing the works you did at first, even before the feelings catch up: reading your Bible like you used to, praying like you used to, pursuing people the way you used to. The way back to your first love is rarely a brand-new spiritual experience--- it is returning to what you already know. Jesus isn’t asking for something new, He is asking for what your heart is already longing for.

- 7) Indifference rarely shows up as one big moment — it shows up as small drift. Where do you see indifference creeping into the lives of believers today, and where might it be quietly creeping into yours?

This will be different for everyone. But for me (Justin) I become indifferent when I become overstimulated with bad ideas, or I allow the world's negativity to cloud my hope in Jesus. I can become indifferent easily when I let selfishness take hold in my heart.

Read Psalm 51:1-17 (NLT)

“Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner — yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me — now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.”

- 8) When David finally came to his senses, he didn't try to defend himself, blame anyone, or manage his image. What does his prayer teach us about what real repentance actually looks like?

Repentance is not a performance, or a polished apology. David's prayer is raw: he asks for mercy, he asks to be washed, he asks for a clean heart and a loyal spirit. He doesn't blame anyone else. He doesn't pass the buck. David owns his shortcomings and asks for God to do the work that only God can do in him.

- 9) David asks God to “restore to me the joy of your salvation.” What's the connection between honest repentance and the return of joy in our walk with God?

One important note here: David does not ask for his salvation back. He never lost it, he only asked for the joy of it. His connection to his joy is what he asks for; a renewal of connection to his Heavenly Father, because this is where joy comes from. When I'm clean from my mistakes, I feel free. I feel innocent. That's the joy that comes from it--- the truth that the sin is no longer held against me. If we are honest, our emotions will lie to us, and tell us we are still guilty. But that's not the truth.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS

- 1) Where in your life is indifference quietly winning right now — with God, with a person close to you, or with the church? What would the very first small step of “turning back” look like this week?
- 2) Take a few minutes alone with God and ask the Holy Spirit, “What about my first love am I missing right now?” Sit quietly, long enough to actually hear an answer, and write down what comes to mind.
- 3) Pray Psalm 51:10-12 over yourself every day this week as a personal prayer of return, rather than a one-time ask. Watch what God does with a heart that keeps coming back.