CITYWIDE CHRIST CHURCH

RETURNING TO INTIMACY WITH GOD

A Bible Study on First Love, Fellowship, and Christ-Centred Ministry

DATE	KEY SCRIPTURES
Monday, November 9, 2026	Luke 10:38–42 • Revelation 2:1–7 • Matthew 28:18–20

MAIN TAKEAWAY

The church's first calling is to love Jesus and remain close to Him. Activity, growth, programmes, and service have their proper place, but they must flow from genuine fellowship with Christ—not replace it.

1. Opening Reflection

A church can be busy, organized, growing, and full of activity while quietly losing its closeness with Jesus. The question is not only, "What are we doing for God?" but also, "Are we walking with God, listening to Him, and loving Him?" Christian service is meant to be the fruit of intimacy, not a substitute for it.

Opening prayer: Lord Jesus, draw our hearts near to You. Search our motives, renew our love, and teach us to serve from a place of fellowship with You. Let this study lead us beyond routine into a sincere relationship with You. Amen.

2. Mary and Martha: Choosing the Presence of Jesus

Read: Luke 10:38–42

Martha welcomed Jesus into her home and became occupied with the work of serving. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching. Jesus did not condemn hospitality or practical service. He addressed Martha's anxiety and distraction, and affirmed Mary's choice to give Him her attention.

• **Service is valuable:** Hospitality, preparation, music, teaching, administration, and practical care all matter.

• **Presence is essential:** Our work must never become so consuming that we stop listening to the One we serve.

• **The heart matters:** Prayer, Bible reading, worship, and church attendance should be more than tasks to complete; they are opportunities to meet with God.

Key lesson: Do not become so occupied with doing things for Jesus that you neglect being with Jesus.

3. Service and Intimacy: What Is the Difference?

SERVICE WITHOUT INTIMACY	SERVICE FLOWING FROM INTIMACY
Can become routine, pressure, performance, or a search for recognition.	Grows out of love, gratitude, obedience, and fellowship with Christ.
May focus mainly on tasks, schedules, titles, and visible results.	Keeps Jesus central while carrying out practical responsibilities.
Can leave people spiritually tired, distracted, or resentful.	Seeks the strength and direction that come from walking with God.

The church is described in Scripture as the bride of Christ (see Ephesians 5:25–27; Revelation 19:7–8). This picture reminds us that our relationship with Jesus is founded on covenant love. We are not merely an organization completing religious duties; we are a people called to belong to Him.

4. Fellowship: More Than a Programme

A restaurant may attract people through its food and facilities, but attentive service and genuine welcome can make people feel valued and want to return. In a similar way, a church gathering should not feel like a performance that people simply attend and leave. It should make room for sincere fellowship—with God and with one another.

• Welcome people with warmth and pay attention to those who may feel overlooked.

• Make room to listen, pray, encourage, and care rather than rushing through every moment.

• Let every ministry role support the spiritual purpose of the gathering.

• Serve willingly, without making recognition, status, or personal reward the reason for serving.

A memorable reminder from the discussion:

"We go to church, not to be seen, but to see Him."

Church is not primarily a place to display ourselves, seek applause, or measure success by buildings and numbers. We gather to honour Jesus, hear His Word, worship Him, and become a blessing to others.

5. Keeping Christ at the Centre

Read: Matthew 28:18–20; Colossians 1:15–18; John 2:13–17

The Great Commission calls the church to make disciples. Growth and effective ministry can be good gifts, but numerical size alone does not define faithfulness. Jesus Christ must remain the centre and cornerstone of everything we do.

• **Worship:** Choose songs and expressions that direct hearts toward God and agree with biblical truth.

• **Reverence:** Joy and appropriate humour have a place, but the pulpit, altar, and gathering should never be treated carelessly or made into a platform for self-promotion.

• **Mission:** Welcome people, teach the Word, make disciples, and demonstrate Christ's love in practical ways.

• **Integrity:** Let what happens on the platform reflect a life of devotion away from the platform.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, He challenged the misuse of a place meant for prayer and worship. His action reminds the church to protect the purpose of worship and keep God—not performance—at the centre.

6. Examining Our Motives in Ministry

The Lord is concerned not only with what we do, but also with the condition and intention of our hearts. Take a quiet moment to consider these questions honestly and without judging others.

• When I attend church, am I seeking Jesus—or mainly hoping to be noticed?

• When I give, is it an expression of gratitude and cheerful generosity, or only an obligation?

• When I sing, play an instrument, teach, or serve, is my desire to worship—or to receive recognition?

• When I lead, do I see leadership as a responsibility to serve, or as a position that gives me status?

• When I share church activities or photographs, am I communicating encouragement—or seeking attention?

• Would I continue serving faithfully if nobody praised me or publicly acknowledged my contribution?

7. Returning to Our First Love

Read: Revelation 2:1–7

The church in Ephesus had perseverance and discernment, yet Jesus confronted it because it had abandoned the love it had at first. The warning is serious: it is possible to work hard, endure difficulty, and defend truth while allowing love for Christ to cool. Jesus calls the church to remember, repent, and return to the works that flowed from its first love.

Read also: Revelation 3:20. Jesus' invitation to open the door reminds us to respond to Him personally and sincerely. In its immediate context, the message is addressed to a church; it is also a powerful picture of the fellowship Christ desires with His people.

Returning to first love means:

• Remembering the love, gratitude, and devotion that first drew us to Jesus.

• Repenting of pride, ego, bitterness, spiritual indifference, and self-centred motives.

• Making time to listen to God through Scripture, prayer, worship, and quiet reflection.

• Forgiving one another and choosing love in our words, attitudes, and relationships.

• Showing Christ's love through hospitality, compassion, generosity, and practical care.

8. Group Discussion

1. What are some signs that a Christian or a church may be busy with ministry but drifting from intimacy with Jesus?

2. What can we learn from Mary and Martha about balancing practical service with listening to the Lord?

3. How can Citywide Christ Church build a culture of genuine fellowship and hospitality?

4. How do we keep worship joyful while also honouring the holiness and purpose of our gathering?

5. Which ministry motives are easiest to overlook or justify? How can we allow God to examine our hearts?

6. What practical change could help you return to your first love this week?

9. Personal Reflection and Commitment

Complete these statements privately or share one response with the group:

One area where I have become distracted from intimacy with Jesus is:

_____

One practice I will restore or strengthen this week is:

_____

One person I can encourage, forgive, welcome, or serve in love is:

_____

My prayer of commitment to Jesus:

_____

OUR CHURCH COMMITMENT
At Citywide Christ Church, we desire to be a people who love Jesus first, worship Him sincerely, serve with humility, grow as disciples, and make His love visible through our relationships and our care for others.

10. Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You in the name of Jesus. Forgive us for the times we have allowed activity, routine, pride, recognition, or personal ambition to take the place of loving You. Have mercy on us and restore our first love. Teach us to sit at Your feet, hear Your voice, and remain in fellowship with You. Purify our motives in worship, giving, leadership, and service. Help us to forgive one another, welcome people sincerely, and demonstrate Your love through practical acts of compassion and hospitality. May Citywide Christ Church be centred on Jesus Christ—in our worship, our relationships, our ministry, and our mission. Let everything we do flow from love for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Scriptures for Further Reading

PASSAGE	FOCUS
Luke 10:38–42	Mary and Martha: choosing the presence of Jesus
Revelation 2:1–7	Remember, repent, and return to your first love
Revelation 3:20	Christ's invitation to fellowship
Matthew 28:18–20	The Great Commission
Colossians 1:15–18	Christ pre-eminent in all things
John 2:13–17	Jesus cleanses the temple
Ephesians 5:25–27	Christ and His church

Final thought: Let us not only build a busy church; let us become a church that is deeply in love with Jesus. When intimacy with Christ is restored, service finds its right place and ministry becomes an expression of love.

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