

Reset

Part 1: Remember and Take Courage

I have a question for each of us today. **How are you and I responding to this opportunity to reset?**

Reset is one of the redemptive assignments for responding to this season when COVID-19, racial unrest and injustice, political divisiveness, fear, and anger have knocked so many people off their center and game.

It is interesting that no one saw this pandemic coming. One of the things that has been a disappointment to me during this season is the lack of unity in the voices of church leaders, apostolic ministries, and prophetic voices in declaring what the Lord is doing and how to respond.

Dean Briggs said it well in his recent book, *Hindsight 2020: What We Should Have Seen, Where We Go from Here*. In his book, Dean Briggs makes the basic point that no one saw this coming crisis coming. And, more disconcerting, our response to this season of pandemic and crisis has been mixed at best (Dean Briggs: *Hindsight 2020: What We Should Have Seen, Where We Go From Here*, pps. 12-13).

When I read those comments from Dean Briggs, it summed up how I felt. **We, the church, are all over the map in our response to the season in which we find ourselves. There are so many divergent opinions, perspectives, and declarations from the body of Christ.**

We hoped this global interruption would be short-lived, like for a few weeks. Now the days have become weeks and the weeks have become months.

However, there is one thing that I have heard consistently in the midst of COVID. Several church leaders, apostolic ministries, and prophetic voices say that this pandemic is an opportunity to reset, to put first things first. This opportunity to reset is one of the redemptive purposes of the Lord in this season.

So, I ask you and me this question again:

How are you and I responding to this opportunity to reset?

And, that brings me to the purpose of this message today.

Friends, the Lord has spoken to our church family. He has been guiding us. He is leading us. And, he will lead us.

Reset is one of the redemptive assignments for responding to this season when COVID-19, racial unrest and injustice, political divisiveness, fear, and anger have knocked so many people off their center and game.

The Lord has spoken to us about pursuing deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus for 2020. Our journey began with a time of returning to our first love from August – December of 2019-- *First Love: Remember. Repent. Renew*. Then, we began 2020 with a *21-Day First Love Fast*. And bam! COVID hit. It was a global reset.

Reset Part 1: Remember and Take Courage (Part 1 of a 5-week sermon series)

Today, let's revisit our journey and what the Lord has been saying and doing here among us at Calvary.

I believe that the Lord has at least 2 purposes in rehearsing our story.

1. May the Lord use this time to release hope and encouragement that we are hearing from God.
2. And, may we refocus on the vision and calling to pursue deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus.

Remembering: Rehearsing our story.

Point 1. The Word for the year for 2019: More

The Lord spoke to us in 2018 about responding more intentionally to the prophetic words which he has given to us. One word for us involved *The More of God* revelation which Pastor Steve shared with us in 2017. In the fall of 2017, Pastor Steve preached a series of messages rooted in the Book of Ephesians on the Spirit and God's promises. Those messages stressed that Paul wanted the church to have more than doctrine; he wanted the people to move into personal experience.

If God is such a powerful promise maker, is not the mature response for us to be promise takers? Have we been promise takers?

We declared at the first of 2019 that “there is more of God for us to experience—our Triune God is the Infinite, Eternal One. **And, God wants more of our lives— all of us**” (heart, mind, soul, and strength; Matthew 22:37-39).

*I pray that the Father of glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, would impart to you the riches of the Spirit of wisdom and the Spirit of revelation **to know him through your deepening intimacy with him**. 18 I pray that the light of God will illuminate the eyes of your imagination, flooding you with light, until you experience the full revelation of the hope of his calling —that is, the wealth of God’s glorious inheritances that he finds in us, his holy ones! 19 I pray that you will continually experience the immeasurable greatness of God’s power made available to you through faith. **Then your lives will be an advertisement of this immense power as it works through you!** This is the mighty power 20 that was released when God raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to the place of highest honor and supreme authority in the heavenly realm! 21 And now he is exalted as first above every ruler, authority, government, and realm of power in existence! He is gloriously enthroned over every name that is ever praised, not only in this age, but in the age that is coming! 22 And he alone is the leader and source of everything needed in the church. God has put everything beneath the authority of Jesus Christ and has given him the highest rank above all others. 23 And now we, his church, are his body on the earth and that which fills him who is being filled by it! (Ephesians 1:17-23 Passion Translation).*

Here is what we said about *The More of God* revelation.

1. *The More of God* revelation was a current word for us, and we wanted to respond accordingly.
2. Our first response to this revelation was to increase our capacity for connecting with the Lord and for living in the awareness of his presence.
 - a. In February 2019, we launched *The More of God Series* and the *60/60 Experiment*.
 - b. We sought to create space for encounter with our Living God.
3. We declared that we wanted to experience more of God, and we especially wanted our children, youth, and young adults to encounter God more deeply.
4. **Celebration:**
 - a. In September 2019, we looked back over the year and celebrated what the Lord was doing to lead us to experience more of God.
 - i. We increased our capacity for connecting with the Lord and for living in the awareness of his presence through the *60/60 Experiment*.
 - ii. The Lord confirmed that he wanted even more of our lives, all of who we are, calling us as a congregation to return to our first

- love (March 29, 2019). We want to “give [the Lord] back that fiery passion which [we] gave to [him] before,” as Apostle Mosy Madugba said at the Propel Apostolic Conference.
- iii. As we processed this word from Apostle Mosy, **it became clear that the Lord was already at work realigning** our hearts, our schedules, our priorities, and our spiritual practices so that we would return to our first love and experience more of God.
 - iv. Through the emphasis on *Returning to Our First Love* from August – December, we were taking the word of the Lord seriously and responding sincerely.
- b. **We looked back over the year and celebrated what the Lord had done in our youth and children.**
- i. Our youth have been on fire and reaching their friends.
 - ii. Our youth caught fire at youth camp in a very significant way this summer. Lives were changed for good.
 - iii. Our children continue to grow in their relationship to Jesus. And, they continue to reach out to friends and share what they have experienced in Jesus through Kids Church and Kids Club.
 - iv. Plus, our kids had an incredible summer of VBS, Summer Blasts, and the Generations Set, which took our children to new levels with the Lord.

Point 2. Declaration: we declared that 2019 was “the year of the Lord”

Back in June 2018, in light of Calvary’s current reality and preferred future, Apostle Mosy and Gloria Madugba, who are the Apostolic Leaders with the Ministers Prayer Network, and his team, joined us in praying and fasting. Apostle Mosy and his team received a prophetic word for us during that time of prayer and fasting. In summary, that word said that we were under attack by spiritual witchcraft and we needed to respond as a congregation.

When we prayed about the prophetic word, it seemed right to us. So, we got in action around the prophetic word. You will remember that we engaged in ***Seven Days of Worship, Prayer, and Warfare***, from July 29 – August 4, 2018. We carried out the prophetic action of the Lord during that time.

There were two other parts to the prophetic word about which got into action.

1. Host a Ministers Prayer Conference [at Calvary] next year (2019).
 - a. The Lord opened the door for Apostle Mosy Madugba to come to Calvary in the Spring of 2019.

- b. That event became our Propel Apostolic Conference for March 29 – 31, 2019.
2. Declare (2019) the year of the Lord.
 - a. And, we felt led to agree with the declaration.
 - b. So, we **declared that 2019 as “the Year of the Lord.”**

What did that mean?

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. 4 They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. 5 Aliens will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. 6 And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. 7 Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs (Isaiah 61:1-7).

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus shares from Isaiah 61 as a description of his ministry. He comes to bring good news to the lowly Jewish and Gentile people of his day, who were living under the oppressive rule of Rome.

What was the Lord saying to us through this declaration?

We have experienced oppression and opposition by spiritual enemies. The Lord declared to us that “this is the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:19).

Both the passage in Isaiah and in Luke have as their background the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-10).

"Count off seven Sabbaths of years—seven times seven years: Seven Sabbaths of years adds up to forty-nine years. 9 Then sound loud blasts on the ram's horn on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. Sound the ram's horn all over the land. 10 Sanctify the fiftieth year; make it a holy year. Proclaim

freedom all over the land to everyone who lives in it—a Jubilee for you: Each person will go back to his family's property and reunite with his extended family” (Leviticus 25:8-10 MSG).

The year of Jubilee is a Sabbath principle. The Lord commanded the Jewish people to declare Jubilee every 50 years. Everyone goes back and gets their land back. Jubilee is a reset. It is about reclaiming what God has given. It involves restoration-- restoring ourselves to the inheritance that God has proclaimed in us. And, it includes renewing our hope in God and celebrating the goodness of God (Steve Meeks, *Year of Jubilee*, sermon, 8’30’15).

Here is what I wrote about my own year of Jubilee in 2011 based on research from the Scriptures. “The year of Jubilee is a season of freedom, a season of restoration, a season of breakthrough, and a season of renewal.”

So, in declaring that this is *the year of the Lord*, we declared 2019 to be a season of freedom, a season of restoration, a season of breakthrough, and a season of renewal.

Now, think about that word, “this is the year of the Lord,” in light of what the Lord said to us about returning to our first love. Both *The More of God* series and the word of the Lord to “return to our first love” are about **freedom** (from cold love, lethargy, and coasting), **restoration** (of fiery passion), **breakthrough** (into new depths of relationship with the Lord), and **renewal** (of our first love, doing or renewing what fuels a loving relationship with the Lord).

I was very encouraged about what the Lord was doing to fulfill his word in us and through us for 2019 and beyond.

Point 3. Return to Our First Love

1. **First Love: Remember. Repent. Renew** (recover) (Revelation 2:1-7).
 - a. The Lord gave us a word on March 29, 2019: return to your first love. We wanted to “give [the Lord] back that fiery passion which [we] gave to [him] before,” as Apostle Mosy Madugba said at the Propel Apostolic Conference.
 - b. We processed that word and believed that God was speaking to us.
 - c. So, we sought to respond to the Lord through the emphasis on *Returning to Our First Love* from August – December 2019. We declared to the Lord and to ourselves that we were taking the word of the Lord very seriously and responding sincerely.

2. **Remember the vision for 2020, the “Why” for the 21-Day First Love Fast and the word for 2020.**
 - a. As we prayed about 2020, we believed that the Lord was asking us to seek him intentionally as a part of our **First Love** emphasis.
 - i. Remember that we had been in a season of returning to our First Love from August – December 2019.
 - ii. The Lord had put in us a hunger to know him deeply and to join him in his mission in this earth.
 - iii. **In truth, we were still in process. None of us have come to the deep intimacy and full partnership with the Lord which God desires and which we long for.**
 - iv. So, we invited you to join us in **kicking off the New Year with a 21-Day First Love Fast.**
 - v. **Our focus in this fast was on Pursing Deep Intimacy and Full Partnership with Jesus.**
 - vi. The dates for our fast were January 6 – 26, 2020.
 - b. We sought **to respond to the invitation of the Lord** by starting the new year with a focus on the Lord and what he has for us as a church.
 - c. **When we fasted one day a week from August to December in 2019, we said that this call was to a season of fasting, where our church would fast and pray; it was more than just an event.**
 - i. We expressed the desire for our weekly fasting to be a kickoff for a lifestyle of seeking the Lord through fasting and prayer.
 - ii. **So, after our 21-Day First Love Fast, I invited you to continue to fast one day a week.**

Returning to our First Love

Text: Revelation 2:1-7

The Lord told us as a congregation to return to our first love. We wanted to “give [the Lord] back that fiery passion which [we] gave to [him] before,” as Rev. Mosy said.

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which 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 (Revelation 2:4-5). 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

1. **Remember:**

- a. **Lord, we remember your love for us and our love for you. Holy Spirit, we ask you to stir up fresh passion in our hearts.**
 - b. Thank you, Lord, for Calvary. For all of our hard work, for this people, for your calling, for you establishing us.
 - c. Lord, help us to spend time with the you and with others. We ask you, Lord, to show us the depth of our passion and hunger for the God in days gone by.
 - d. Lord, help us to remember when our heart burned for you, whether as a new believer or at different times in our spiritual journey with the Lord.
2. **Repent:**
- a. **Father, we embrace your kindness, confess our sins, repent, and receive your forgiveness and mercies.**
3. **Renew (recover):**
- a. **God, we renew our commitment to keep the First Commandment in first place, and to engage in spiritual practices to keep our hearts tender before you.**
 - b. Lord, give us grace and passion to do the spiritual practices and heart activities necessary to renew and rebuild love (time, talk, and touch).
 - c. **Remember: there are personal and corporate spiritual practices which fuel hunger and love.** The word given in Revelation 2 was to the congregation at Ephesus, not just to individuals. We need each other; we cannot return to our first love on our own. It is encouraging to make the journey of returning to our first love together.
 - d. **Lord, help us to step up in prayer and fasting and in corporate intercession and worship.**

Application: We declared to the Lord that were praying for hunger, thirst, and desire for the living God.

Returning to our First Love and our 21-Day First Love Fast were about putting first things first.

Here is what the Lord has been doing in our lives over the past two years. The Lord graciously and strategically positioned us to weather the storm of a pandemic, lockdown, racial unrest, racial injustice, political divisiveness, fear, and hatred... and not just to survive, but to thrive as we pursued deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus. As we followed the Lord and his leadership, none of us imagined what that pursuit would look like in 2020. But, here we are.

Catch this understanding: the Lord was preparing us to see this time of crisis and shaking as an opportunity to continue our reset, to continue returning to our first love,

to continue putting put first things first. We heard from the Lord. In our hearing, God was preparing us for this season.

In this season of reset, we can **be encouraged** because we have been hearing from the Lord. We can **have hope** because our God is leading us into his purposes and future. And, we can **have faith** that we can face anything because of our intimate relationship with God. He is the source of our wisdom, strength, and grace.

Challenge: This week I invite you to spend time reflecting on this question: **How are you responding to this opportunity to reset?**

Closing prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for speaking to us and for leading us. We are so, so grateful. We look back and remember what you have been saying and doing in our midst, and we are so encouraged.

Thank you that we have hope because you are leading us. You are fulfilling your purposes and plans to give us a future and a hope.

Thank you that through you and with you we can face anything. Because of our intimate relationship with you, your pour into us your wisdom, strength, and grace for today and tomorrow. We are so grateful. We give you all the honor, and the praise, and the glory.

Ministry Time: