First Love



Workbook

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What's in this workbook…

Welcome to "First Love"	5
Celebrating 20 Years!	7
Keeping Our First Love	11
Fellowship Denver's First Loves	12
A Two-Year Discipleship Journey	22
The Next Version of Fellowship Denver	24
A Season of Acceleration	26
How to Engage	27
One Mission. One Fund.	28
Giving Discipleship Journey	30
Family Involvement	34
Discussion Guides	37
FAQ's	62
Commitment Card & Gift Chart	64



Welcome to FIRST LOVE!

Origin stories are powerful because they remind us who we are.

I often think back to the dinner conversation in 2003 that led to Fellowship Denver. My friends, Dave and Renee Morlan, invited me over to their apartment for pizza. We were nearing the end of grad school, trying to figure out where we'd all go next. Renee looked around the table and said, "I've been thinking that we should plant a church together one day." "I know the place!" I replied. Then I started describing Denver.

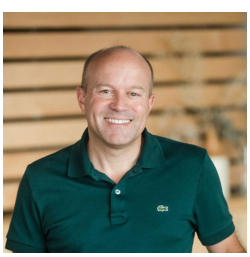
That began a few months of talks and daydreaming sessions. Why is a new church in Denver needed? What would it look like? What would be our core commitments and values?

Over the next three years, we got some "church planting" training, recruited partners to support this new initiative, moved our lives to Denver, networked the city, hosted open forums, and eventually gathered 35 people who started Fellowship Denver in 2006 - 20 years ago!

I'm happy to say that Fellowship Denver looks today like what we talked about back then, not necessarily in the physical or numerical sense, but in its heart and soul.

I often tell myself that story because it reminds me who we are as a church. It also tells me where to go next - because "next" is always the next version of our original vision, our first love for Jesus and for Denver.

That's what this season is about. I can't wait to share it with you!



With love,
Hunter Beaumont | *Lead Pastor*

Our Origin Story



Celebrating 20 Years!

Fellowship Denver turns 20 this fall! Here's a look back at significant milestones along the way…

2006

Worship services launch at Space Gallery on Santa Fe Boulevard. 75 people attend the first service. 35 come back.

Our "strategy" is simple: host a weekly ultimate frisbee game at City Park + invite people to church + connect them to a fellowship group (we had *three*) + train people to start new groups.

By the end of our first year, we have grown to 100 people.



2007-2017

Over the next 10 years, we gather in three temporary locations near downtown Denver: Space Gallery, Colorado History Museum, and Sherman Street Events Center.

In 2015, we start giving and praying toward a full-time home. And in 2016, we purchase the 1990 S Broadway building.



2018

South Broadway building opens! The church continues to grow.



2019-2021

In response to both growth at South Broadway and a large group of members living in Wheat Ridge, Arvada, and Broomfield, we begin praying about planting a second congregation.

Our First to the Lord season covers 2020-2021. Through it, our generosity doubles, giving us the resources to sustain growth and prepare to launch our North Metro congregation.

2022

Fellowship Denver North Metro launches at Arvada High School!

Everyone is called to either GO (by joining the North Metro launch team) or SEND (by backfilling ministry gaps at South Broadway). This season stretches us as a church. By the end of 2022, the Lord has refilled the gaps at South Broadway while the North Metro congregation is experiencing its first growth spurt.



2025

North Metro moves into their first full-time home near Olde Town Arvada.

This opportunity opens up through our friendship with Arvada Vineyard who approach us about taking over the building they had outgrown.



2026

We send out another group of committed members + pastors to start Fellow Citizens Church in downtown Denver.

Everyone is called to GO or SEND again.

Fellow Citizens holds their first worship service on Palm Sunday.

Fellowship Denver turns 20 years old in September, and we begin preparing for what the Lord has next…



Keeping Our First Love

Remembering our origin story is the way forward.

In Revelation 2:1-7, Jesus commends the Ephesian church for their faithfulness to the truth of the gospel. But he also challenges them for abandoning the love they had at first.

> *To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*
>
> *"The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*
>
> *"'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and **do the works you did at first**. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."*

Although this letter carries a strong rebuke for Ephesus, it teaches a principle that ALL CHURCHES, even vibrant ones, need to remember:

Our origin story contains seeds of affection for Jesus that are meant to grow and mature for eternity.

If we keep these seeds alive, we will have a fruitful church for many generations to come, and eternal joy!

Fellowship Denver's First Loves

"First Love" means: identifying our original loves as a church and fanning them into flame in an updated, "2026 and beyond" version.

What are our first loves?





Bridging Culture Gaps

A "culture gap" happens when the main thing that separates people is culture, not proximity.

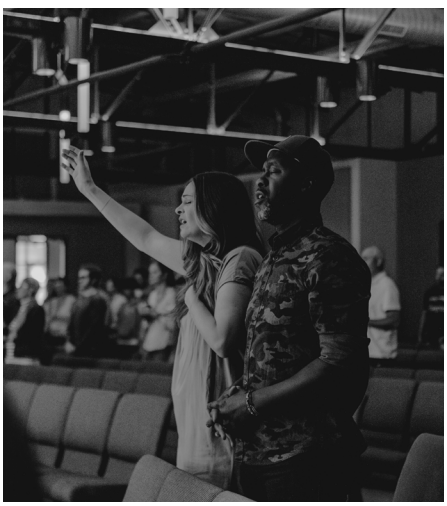
In America, and Denver, the church must overcome a significant culture gap if it wants to help people discover and follow the original Jesus:

Gospel-believing Christianity usually sits inside a thick *evangelical subculture* that is foreign to its non-Christian neighbors. This subculture has its own jargon, art, institutions, celebrities, and history. Like all subcultures, it often gets wrapped up in its own internal politics.

But most of the people who need Jesus are not inside the subculture!

To help them encounter Jesus, the church must:

- Live as disciples of Jesus in public - not just inside the church
- Preach the gospel in a way that is intelligible to outsiders - not just to people who already know the lingo
- Break down barriers by inviting non-Christian friends into its life





The Emerging Generation

We've always been committed to reaching younger adults because our 20s + 30s are disproportionately influential decades of life.

The decisions, relationships, and changes we make in these decades become who we are in our 40s, 50s, and beyond.

This includes our faith! Many people make life-changing decisions about whether or not to follow Jesus in these years.

When FDC started in 2006, the Millennial generation was coming of age and moving to Denver. We reached hundreds of this generation, and today they are the leadership core of our church.

But now we must ask: what are the discipleship needs of the next generation? What questions do they have? Where do they need the wisdom of the body of Christ?

This will require every generation of the church living on mission!



Biblically Robust Mission

The gospel is a message for both non-Christians and Christians. Therefore a gospel church should never choose between "reaching the lost" and "discipling the reached."

The gospel is simple enough that anyone can encounter Jesus and begin a relationship with him.

The gospel is also deep enough to sustain a lifetime of discipleship. We never outgrow the gospel; we discover new dimensions of God's grace through it.

Therefore, our way of helping people discover and follow Jesus has always been to put the Scriptures front-and-center and draw out all they have to give us.



Multiplying Gospel Communities

Community creates the container for discipleship.

"Mission" is not just what the church does overseas but also how it relates to the city in which it lives. Therefore, we asked, "What practices or habits are *essential* to reaching people here?"

In a city where many don't have deep roots and family history, creating community is essential to mission. The best things Jesus does in us *take time*, and aren't accomplished quickly. Community creates the context in which people can belong and grow over the long haul.

Therefore we've always been focused on multiplying leaders throughout the body who can create community for others.



Taking Risks and Getting Our Hands Dirty

Jesus called his disciples to invest and multiply their "talents" (Matt. 25:14-30). This requires taking risks in order to make a return.

Jesus also calls us to help people discover and follow him, and all people are sinners. All of us need God's grace because there's no such thing as clean, sinless people.

Therefore a church that wants to follow Jesus will always be marked by taking risks and getting involved with real people, sinners like us.



The Love of Christ

“The love of Christ” is Christ’s love for us, then our reciprocal love for him.

Fellowship Denver began because a few people had experienced this love of Christ in a fresh way. It was so transformative that we wanted all people to have this experience.

This is sometimes called “gospel renewal,” and Romans 5 describes how it happens, often through great struggle…

> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:1-5)*

As we enter a new season as a church, let’s seek him for this again!





Renewing Our First Loves




pedaltrain
Fender
pedaltrain
Eventide
Get Lost

A Two-Year Discipleship Journey

FIRST LOVE is a 2-year season of reinvesting in our original loves.

We are seeking God's work IN us, then THROUGH us.

God's work IN us

Every person who calls Fellowship Denver home will consider their personal origin story with Jesus and their original loves.

Together, as a body, we'll seek the Lord for a fresh work of grace in our hearts to help us know and experience the love of Christ.

God's work THROUGH us

God's work in us always overflows to others. Together we'll ask, "What does God want to do THROUGH us by renewing our *First Love* for Jesus?"

Primary Goal

100% Engagement

Our primary goal is that everyone who calls Fellowship Denver home will take a discipleship journey of discovering and renewing their first love for Jesus.

Then, consider how that first love gets expressed through your generosity.

This will fuel God's work IN us.

Secondary Goal

$11 million over two years

This will fuel God's work THROUGH us to multiply our first loves.



The next version of Fellowship Denver…

$11m breakdown

Keep helping people discover and follow the ORIGINAL JESUS [$7.5m]

First Love includes all of our current generosity at its historic pace. We are grateful for all who are *already* living generously and your faithfulness is celebrated as part of this season!

This allows us to continue doing all the good works the Lord has already entrusted to us. This sustains all current ministry at its current level.

Aggressively pursue a churchwide culture of ONE MORE [$750k]

We want to reach more people, but this is not growth for growth's sake. It's *one person, one invitation* at a time. "Lord, use me to reach one more" should become our churchwide prayer and culture.

Investing in ONE MORE includes:

- Turning marriage and recovery ministries outward, for our friends and neighbors, not just FDC attenders
- Enhancing our communications to foster a culture of invitation
- More consistently telling stories of what God is doing IN and THROUGH the body, so that the Spirit can multiply it
- Scaling operations to unleash the potential of a larger body

Reach and multiply the NEXT GENERATION of the church [$750k]

We need to make a substantial investment in growing younger so we continue reaching this wide-open mission field in Denver. This will require *every member, every generation* participating.

Reaching the NEXT GENERATION includes:

- Investing in churchwide 20s-30s ministry
- Starting a new ministry and church planting residency program to identify the next wave of church leaders
- Growing our preaching team younger
- Creating a coaching program that activates the wisdom and gifts of midlife and beyond

Make PHYSICAL ROOM for one more [$1m]

We'll start making physical space for *one more* by creating a future facilities fund.

This fund will help us:

- Purchase our North Metro building (currently leased)
- Plan for South Broadway children, student, and worship expansion
- Invest in deferred maintenance to keep both of our buildings warm and welcoming

Multiply GOSPEL MOVEMENT in Denver and beyond [$1m]

It takes more than one church to reach Denver. It takes the whole church to reach the world. Therefore, we will keep being generous as a body by investing in gospel ministry outside of FDC.

Investing in gospel movement includes:

- Continuing to partner with Serve Denver ministries
- Investing in local and global church planting
- Supporting FDC members serving in the global mission field
- Making room for new, prophetic, Spirit-given direction for serving the vulnerable in Denver, planting churches, and sending to the nations

A Season of Acceleration

First Love is a season of acceleration. We are asking the Lord to do in 2-3 years what would otherwise take 7-8 years.

The alternative to an accelerated approach is an "incremental approach." An incremental approach says, "Just keep doing what we're doing and eventually we'll get there."

Incremental progress is not bad. In fact, it's our normal habit as a church!

But every few years, we want to ask, "What fresh works of God would it require IN us in order to accelerate his work THROUGH us?"

Acceleration seasons are good for us because…

- They help us not to coast or put our faith on autopilot
- They make us dependent on God
- They call us to prayer and new steps of faith
- We get new, fresh stories of seeing God work

How to Engage

Pray first. Start by asking the Lord to prepare your heart to hear from him. Then, pray for our whole church to experience God's leading during this season.

Take stock of your "first loves." What originally drew you to Jesus? What have been the significant moments in your life and journey of faith? What do you look like when your heart is alive to the Lord?

Take stock of where you are today. What is the condition of your heart today? How is your love for Jesus? Be open to what the Lord would show you, whether encouragement, wisdom, compassion, or correction.

Connect your heart to your giving. Part of the *First Love* journey is asking the Lord to show us what giving out of a cheerful heart of love looks like. As you consider that, take stock your current giving. Then ask, "What would growth look like for me?" As you pray and engage with the Scriptures in our First Love series, pay attention to specific things the Spirit brings to mind.

Make a "First Love" commitment. Pray step-by-step through the Commitment Card to arrive at your two-year commitment to "First Love." Make sure you understand the "One Fund. One Mission." approach outlined on the next page.

Give generously. For the next two years, live in a way that stretches you and increases your faith in all areas of life: relationally, financially, and spiritually.

Share your journey. Share with others what the Lord is teaching you in this season. Talk about it in Fellowship Groups and casual conversations.

One Mission. One Fund.

For many years, Fellowship Denver has practiced a unified approach to generosity through our general fund called “Generosity at Fellowship Denver.” Rather than asking people to designate each gift to a particular ministry, congregation, or area of the church, we give together and steward those resources through an annual budget that supports the full ministry of FDC.

First Love builds on that same approach.

In the past, churches have sometimes funded ongoing ministry through a general budget while creating separate giving campaigns for things like new facilities, campus expansion, or special missions opportunities. During First Love, we are bringing those priorities together. Our regular ministry, future opportunities, capital projects, and expanded outreach efforts will be stewarded as part of one unified plan.

This does not change our normal accountability and budgeting processes. Each year, a budget is reviewed and approved by our Elders and presented in member meetings. Then, our church staff manages ministries and budgets within that approved framework. Financial results are reviewed by the Elders as the ministry year unfolds, and adjustments are made as necessary to stay on track.

Why does this matter?

Because we do not see the ministry happening today and the opportunities in front of us tomorrow as competing priorities. They are all part of the same mission: Helping people discover and follow the original Jesus.

That is why First Love is not simply a giving campaign. It is a discipleship initiative calling each of us to examine our first love and respond faithfully to God's leadership in every area of our lives, including our generosity.

Throughout these two years, every gift to Fellowship Denver will help advance that one mission through one fund: making disciples, creating room for more people to experience the gospel, and expanding our impact throughout Denver and beyond.

One mission. One fund. One church faithfully stewarding what God provides as we return to our First Love.

Giving Discipleship Journey

As you seek the Lord's leading for your generosity, use this giver discipleship journey to chart where you are and how you might experience new joy in growing.

An **INITIAL GIVER** is someone who decides to give for the first time, out of a response to God's Word about giving. This is someone who decides to give something and trust God and the church with this gift. They experience the initial joy of putting Jesus' words into action (Matthew 7:24).

A **CONSISTENT GIVER** is someone who decides to give a certain amount on a consistent basis to exercise the discipline of giving as a disciple of Jesus. Often, someone who decides to make their gift an online recurring gift is learning the joy of consistency. Non-online givers can be consistent givers as well of course; it just requires discipline. They experience the consistent joy of putting Jesus' words into action (Matthew 7:24).

A **PRIORITY GIVER** is someone who sees the pre-eminence of Christ and that He is before all things – that all things were created by Him, for Him, through Him, and to Him. This giver places such a significant priority on their giving that it drives their spending and their saving, as opposed to their spending and saving driving their giving. They experience the freedom of serving "one master." (Matthew 6:19-24).

A **SURRENDERED GIVER** is someone who recognizes that Christ surrendered his whole self for us, and therefore we can safely surrender our whole selves to him, in love (Ephesians 5:1-2). They would say, "My giving is not just changing my spending and saving. It's also changing me!" They also look at what they're not giving away and ask, "Is it surrendered too?" This informs how they use everything they've been blessed and entrusted with, whether that be through direct monetary giving or a God-honoring use of an existing resource.

An **ETERNAL GIVER** is someone who sees the eternal impact of their giving, on them and on others, not just the immediate programs and ministries it

helps accomplish. They have been captivated by the knowledge that the more they are led to "do good, to be generous and ready to share," the more they "take hold of that which is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:19). This encourages them to keep growing! They make all decisions (big purchases, savings, giving, relationships, areas of service) in light of how it will affect their eternal impact.






Columbia

Family Involvement



Family Involvement

First Love is an invitation for everyone who calls Fellowship Denver home, including our kids and students, to take a step of faith.

As our church enters a season of considering our "first love," our entire church family, ages 3 and older, will study the same Bible passages and apply them in unique ways according to each season of life. While the adults are considering what it means to return to their "first love," we want our children and students to begin with this beautiful truth:

Jesus loved us first. We respond by loving and obeying him.

Jesus loved us so much that he humbled himself, came to live among us, and gave himself for us. Because Jesus loved us first, we can put him first in every part of our lives.

When we love Jesus first, we…

JOIN HIS MISSION

Revelation 2:1–7

Jesus calls his people to join him in helping others discover and follow him.

HELP OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

1 Thessalonians 2:1–12

In the family of God, we have wise guides, and we can help our younger brothers and sisters grow in faith.

BRING OUR FRIENDS TO JESUS

Mark 2:1–12

The best kind of friend is one who helps others encounter Jesus.

GIVE GLADLY

2 Corinthians 9:6–12

Everything we have is a gift from God. Because we love Jesus, we can give generously and joyfully.

GIVE GOD OUR FIRST AND BEST

Deuteronomy 26:1–11
God has been faithful to us. We respond by remembering what he has done and giving him our first and best.

A Family Of Disciples

Kids and students aren't watching from the sidelines during First Love. **They are part of the family of God at Fellowship Denver.**

Throughout this season, we will encourage them to pray, serve, invite friends, give generously, and put Jesus first. We will also invite families to talk together about what it means to love Jesus first and to consider how God might be calling each of us to take a step of faith.

Our prayer is that this season would plant seeds of love for Jesus that grow throughout a lifetime and that God would use the faith of our children and students as part of a rising generation of disciples.

Jesus loved us first. As his disciples, we follow his example by loving and obeying him.

Discussion Guides



First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Week One

Introduction

Our series opens by tracing the remarkable story of the church in Ephesus. From its earliest days, this church was marked by love for Jesus and missionary zeal. Through them, the gospel spread throughout all Asia, and Jews and Gentiles were brought together as one people in Christ (Acts 19:8–10, 20; Eph 2:11–22). In the years that followed, the church faced fierce opposition and false teaching, yet decades later Jesus still commended them for their perseverance and commitment to the truth (Acts 20:28–31; 1 Tim 1:3–7; Rev 2:2–3, 6).

But for all their faithfulness, Jesus had one thing against them: "You have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

It is possible that "the love they had at first" refers to their original affection for Jesus that overflowed in powerful missionary zeal. After decades of battling false teaching, it is possible that this church became so inwardly focused on guarding the gospel that they gradually lost their zeal for spreading it (Acts 20:28–31; 1 Tim. 1:3–7). Which could explain why Jesus reminds them that they are a "lampstand," called to shine the light Christ into a dark world (Rev. 1:20; 2:5; cf. Matt. 5:14–16). They were faithfully guarding the light, but they were no longer shining it as they once had. So in this passage, Jesus calls them to remember from where they had fallen, repent, and return to their first love, allowing renewed love for Jesus to propel them outward in his mission (Rev. 2:5; Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:18–20).

Read Revelation 2:1-7 & Pray Discussion Questions

1. Jesus tells the Ephesians to remember the love that characterized their relationship with Jesus at first (Rev. 2:5). Think back to a season when your love for Jesus was especially alive. What did that look like?

2. The Ephesian church was once at the center of an extraordinary spread of the gospel throughout Asia, but over time their missionary zeal seems to have grown cold (Acts 19:10, 20; Rev 2:4). As you compare your life today with your earlier years of following Jesus, has your burden for people who don't know Jesus grown or diminished? Why?

3. After years of battling false teaching, the Ephesian church had become vigilant about protecting the gospel, but lost some of its zeal for spreading it (Acts 20:28–31; Rev. 2:2–5). As a lampstand, we might say they were more focused on "guarding" the light than on "shining" the light. Where do you see this same tendency in your own life? What can cause you to become more focused on protecting the faith than sharing it with others?

4. By calling the church a lampstand, Jesus reminds us that his church is called to shine the light of the gospel in the world (Rev. 2:5; cf. Matt. 5:14–16). In other words, lampstand imagery is missional in nature. Where is God inviting you to participate more fully in his mission, whether through relationships, hospitality, serving, leadership, generosity, or sharing the gospel?

5. Jesus doesn't simply tell the Ephesians to feel differently; he tells them to repent and "do the works you did at first" (Rev. 2:5). In what specific ways do you sense Jesus inviting you to return to your first love and do the works you did at first?

Live It Out

This week, don't just think about Jesus' invitation; take steps to live it out in your life.

Remember Your Story

Take 10–15 minutes this week to write out your story of coming to faith in Christ.

- Who first shared the gospel with you?
- What circumstances did God use to draw you to himself?
- What first captured your heart about Jesus?
- How has God been faithful to you since then?

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, write about your spiritual journey so far. What experiences, people, or questions have most shaped the way you think about God?

Pray Through Revelation 2

Set aside at least fifteen uninterrupted minutes this week to slowly read Revelation 2:1–7. Ask Jesus:

- Is there anything competing for first place in my heart?
- Where has my love for you cooled?
- What are you inviting me to remember?
- What is one "first work" you want me to return to?

Write down anything the Lord impresses on your heart.

Take One Step of Faith

Prayerfully choose one specific step you will take this week to cultivate your love for Jesus.

- ☐ Spend the first fifteen minutes of each day in prayer and Scripture before looking at your phone.
- ☐ Share your testimony with someone.
- ☐ Invite someone who doesn't know Jesus to coffee or a meal.
- ☐ Reach out to someone you've been avoiding and pursue reconciliation.
- ☐ Spend an hour alone with God in prayer and worship.
- ☐ Another step of faith:

_____

_____

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you for loving us first. Forgive us for the ways our hearts drift from you. Renew our love for Jesus, and let that love overflow into joyful obedience, genuine love for others, and a renewed passion to help more people discover and follow Christ. Amen.

Next Generation

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Week Two

Introduction

One of the ways our "first love" for Jesus has always expressed itself is through reaching and discipling the next generation of adults in Denver. When Fellowship Denver began in 2006, much of the church was made up of young adults in their 20s and 30s. Over the years, many of them have matured as disciples and leaders, and some were even sent out in 2022 to help plant Fellowship Denver North Metro.

As we look toward the future, we want to continue that legacy by intentionally investing in the next generation, not simply by getting younger people into the church, but by helping them become lifelong disciples of Jesus who will carry the gospel into the generations that follow (Ps. 78:4–7; 2 Tim. 2:2).

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Paul gives us a beautiful picture of how this kind of discipleship happens. Looking back on his ministry in Thessalonica, he says, *"We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children"* (v. 7). He later describes his ministry like that of a father who exhorts, encourages, and charges his children to walk faithfully with God (vv. 11–12). Paul and his companions did not merely deliver a message to the Thessalonians; they also opened their lives to them. Here's how Paul described it, *"We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us"* (v. 8).

This teaches us something important about reaching and discipling the next generation: the gospel is passed from one generation to another through both faithful teaching and faithful relationships. At FDC, we have spiritual mothers and fathers with decades of wisdom and faithfulness to pass on, as well as a new generation ready to step into that role. And God has brought a growing number of younger adults into our church who need spiritual mothers and fathers—people willing to know them, love them, welcome them into their

lives, and help them follow Jesus. Becoming a truly multigenerational church will require all of us to resist the tendency to remain primarily with people like ourselves and instead open our lives to one another for the sake of the gospel (Titus 2:1–8; 1 Thess. 2:8; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12 & Pray
Discussion Questions

1. Paul describes his ministry among the Thessalonians in deeply relational terms: *"We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves"* (v. 8). Who are some of the people God used to help you grow in your faith? What did they give you beyond biblical teaching or advice? In other words, how did they share their lives with you?

Paul compares his ministry to both a nursing mother caring for her children and a father encouraging and exhorting them (vv. 7–12). What do these images teach us about the kind of relationships through which discipleship happens? How is this different from simply attending church programs together?

2. One of the ways our "first love" for Jesus has always expressed itself is through reaching and discipling young adults in Denver. Why do you think investing in people during their 20s and 30s can have such a significant impact, not only on the trajectory of their lives, but also on the health and vitality of the church as a whole? What particular opportunities and challenges do you see for reaching this generation today?

3. Becoming a multigenerational church requires us to build meaningful relationships with people outside our own age and stage of life. How much does your life currently overlap with people from another generation? What tends to make those relationships difficult or keep us primarily surrounded by people like ourselves?

4. Paul did not simply preach the gospel to the Thessalonians; he opened

his life to them because they had become "very dear" to him (v. 8). What is one step you could take in the coming weeks to open your life to the emerging generation among us?

Live It Out

This week, don't just think about the next generation; take a step toward becoming the kind of church where one generation intentionally invests in another.

Remember Who Invested in You

Take 10–15 minutes this week to think about the people God has used to shape your faith.

- Who welcomed you, encouraged you, or helped you follow Jesus?
- What did you learn by watching their life?
- How did they make time and space for you?
- What did they give you that you could now give to someone else?

If you are newer to Christianity and haven't had someone like this in your life, consider who you would like to learn from. What qualities would you hope to see in a spiritual mentor?

Pray for the Next Generation

Set aside fifteen minutes this week to pray specifically for the next generation in our church and city. As you do, ask God:

- Who have you already placed in my life that I could encourage or disciple?
- Where am I tempted to stay only with people in my own age and stage of life?

- What experiences or wisdom have you given me that I could pass onto someone younger?
- Who could I begin intentionally praying for and investing in?

Write down any names that come to mind and pray for them throughout the week.

Take One Step of Faith

Prayerfully consider one step you would like to take to share the gospel and your own life with someone from the next generation:

- ☐ Invite someone younger or older than you to coffee or a meal.
- ☐ Invite a younger believer into something you are already doing (dinner, a hobby, a project, or time with your family).
- ☐ Ask someone you respect from another generation to coffee and learn from their story.
- ☐ Reach out to a younger believer and ask how you can pray for and encourage them.
- ☐ Explore a place in our church where you could invest in the next generation through serving or leadership.
- ☐ Another step of faith:

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you for the people you have used to help us know and follow Jesus. Make us a church where the gospel is faithfully passed from one generation to another. Give us the courage to open our lives, the humility to learn from one another, and the love to share not only the gospel but our very selves. Use us to raise up generations of faithful disciples who will love Jesus and make him known in Denver and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.

One More

Mark 2:1-12

Week Three

Introduction

One of the clearest expressions of our "first love" for Jesus is a heart that remains passionate about reaching people who are far from him. In the gospels, Jesus notices and engages individuals, not just crowds, and is always drawn toward "one more" who needs him.

In Mark 1, for example, when his ministry in Capernaum was exploding and everyone was looking for him, Jesus chose to move on to other towns so that he could reach those who had not yet heard (Mark 1:35–39). As a church, we want that same heart. We want to embrace growth and even the challenges that come with it, not because we simply want a bigger church, but because we want to see one more person experience the life-changing grace of Jesus.

Mark 2:1–12 gives us a beautiful picture of what that kind of heart looks like. As Jesus is teaching in a house, four men show up with a paralyzed friend, carrying him to Jesus to be healed. But the house is so crowded they can't even stand in the doorway. Instead of giving up, they climb onto the roof, tear it open, and then lower their friend down in front of Jesus. These are the kinds of friends we want to be: people who care enough about others to carry them to Jesus, even when doing so comes with great difficulty.

But the story doesn't end there. Remember, this man is brought to Jesus because he cannot walk, and Jesus does eventually heal him! But before he brings healing to his body, Jesus says, *"Son, your sins are forgiven"* (v. 5). The man came to Jesus with an obvious physical need, but Jesus saw and addressed an even deeper spiritual need: his need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God (vv. 5–12).

This teaches something important about reaching people with the gospel.

People may first come looking for friendship, help with a marriage, hope in suffering, or some other need they can immediately feel. And Jesus cares about those needs! But beneath them lies an even deeper need that we all share: reconciliation with God through Christ. This is how we want to reach our city. We love people where they are, help carry the burdens they cannot carry themselves, and bring them to Jesus, trusting him to meet them with the grace they ultimately need. We do this one person at a time.

Read Mark 2:1–12 & Pray
Discussion Questions

1. Before the four friends ever bring the paralyzed man to Jesus, Mark shows us Jesus intentionally moving toward people who still need to hear the gospel (Mark 1:35–39). When you think about living with a continual desire to reach "one more" person, what does that stir up in you? Where do you feel excited, resistant, overwhelmed, or challenged?

2. These four men were willing to carry their friend, fight through a crowd, climb onto a roof, and tear it open because they believed getting him to Jesus was worth it (vv. 3–4). This is a beautiful picture of grit, determination, and creativity in the cause of Christ. What might this look like in your own life? What would it look like as a whole church?

3. This paralyzed man could not get to Jesus on his own, so his friends carried him. Reflect on your own story. Who did God use in your own life to "carry you to Jesus?" What did that look like?

4. The man comes to Jesus because of an obvious physical need, and Jesus not only meets his physical need, but also his deepest spiritual need (v. 5). What are some of the greatest "felt needs" people in Denver have? And how do you think we as a church can create space to love them in those places of need and introduce them to Jesus?

5. Reaching our city happens one person at a time. Who is one person

God has already placed in your life who needs Jesus? What might it look like for you to genuinely befriend, serve, pray for, or invite that person toward Jesus over the next year?

Live It Out

This week, don't just think generally about reaching people far from Jesus. Ask God to put one person on your heart and begin intentionally carrying them toward Jesus through prayer, friendship, and invitation.

Identify Your "One More"

Take 10–15 minutes this week to think about the people God has already placed around you.

- Who in your life seems far from Jesus right now?
- Who has opened up to you about a need, struggle, or burden they are carrying?
- Who might be more spiritually open than you have realized?
- Is there someone you have felt prompted to move toward but haven't yet?

Write down one name. Rather than thinking about everyone you could reach, begin by asking God how you might faithfully love this one person.

Pray for Your One

Set aside fifteen minutes this week to pray specifically for the person God has put on your heart. As you pray, ask God:

- How can I become a better friend to this person?

- What needs or burdens are they carrying right now?
- Where might you already be at work in their life?
- What fears or excuses keep me from moving toward them?
- Would you give me an opportunity to help them take one step closer to Jesus?

Continue praying for this person throughout the week, trusting that Jesus desires to meet people with his grace even more than we desire to bring them to him.

Take One Step of Fatih

Prayerfully consider one step you could take this week to move toward your "one more":

- ☐ Invite them to coffee, lunch, or dinner.
- ☐ Ask a meaningful question about something they are walking through and take time to really listen.
- ☐ Look for a practical way to help carry a burden they are facing. Share something Jesus has done in your own life.
- ☐ Invite them to church, your Fellowship Group, or another place where they could encounter Christian community.
- ☐ Ask if there is something you could pray about for them.
- ☐ Another step of faith:

Closing Prayer

Father, thank you that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Give us his heart for those who do not yet know him. Open our eyes to the people you have already placed around us, and give us the faith to move toward them with love. Make us the kind of friends who are willing to carry others to Jesus when they cannot carry themselves, and give us courage to do whatever love requires to help one more person encounter Jesus. Use us to make your grace known in Denver and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.

First to the Lord

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

Week Four

Introduction

2 Corinthians 8–9 has played an important role in the story of Fellowship Denver. In 2019, our whole church studied these chapters together as we considered where God might be calling us next. The generosity that flowed from that season helped open the door for much of what we see today, including the planting of Fellowship Denver North Metro. If you have found a home at FDC in the last seven years, you have experienced some of the fruit of the generosity of those who came before you. As we continue our "First Love" journey this week, we want to consider how renewed love for Jesus overflows into joyful generosity toward his mission in the world.

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul is coordinating an offering to help Christians in Jerusalem during a time of severe need. Though the Corinthians had initially expressed a desire to participate, they had become reluctant to follow through. Yet instead of playing the "You made a commitment, so you have to follow through" card, Paul tells them about the churches in Macedonia: *"Their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity…For they gave according to their means…and beyond their means, of their own accord"* (2 Cor. 8:2–3).

What was the key to such joyful and extravagant generosity? Paul tells us, *"They gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us"* (v. 5). In other words, their giving was not fundamentally about supporting Paul's project. Instead, they saw it first and foremost as a way of giving themselves to Jesus, the one who became poor for their sake so that through his poverty they might become eternally rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

Paul then develops this further through the image of sowing and reaping: *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully"* (9:6). This means that generosity is one way we sow

what God has given us into his kingdom, trusting him to produce a "harvest of righteousness" through it (9:10). The reward is not simply receiving more for ourselves, but seeing our generosity bear fruit in the lives of others and enjoying the privilege of participating in God's redemptive mission. In the end, Paul issues no commands, nor does he mandate how much every Christian should give. Rather, he says that all Christian generosity should be a free and glad response to the gospel, flowing from hearts that have first given themselves to the Lord.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–12 & Pray
Discussion Questions

1. In 2019, the generosity of people at FDC helped make possible much of the ministry we are benefiting from today. Where are you personally experiencing the fruit of that generosity through the ministries of Fellowship Denver? How does remembering what others invested before you shape your desire to invest in what God might do through FDC in the future?

2. Paul says that the Macedonians *"gave themselves first to the Lord"* before giving anything financially (2 Cor. 8:5). This means, before they said, "My money is yours," they said, "My whole life is yours. Do with it what you will." If you were to pray honestly, "Jesus, my whole life is yours. Do with it what you will," what part of that prayer would be hardest for you to mean? Why? What fears, desires, or assumptions about money might you need to surrender to God in order to genuinely give Him full control of that part of your life?

3. Paul uses the image of sowing and reaping to teach that what we generously invest in God's kingdom produces a "harvest of righteousness" in the lives of others (vv. 6, 10–12). Where have you experienced the joy of seeing your generosity bear fruit in someone else's life? How does the promise that God can use what you give to produce lasting spiritual fruit affect your desire to be generous?

4. Paul grounds our generosity in the generosity of Jesus: *"Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). When you think about what Jesus gave up in order to make you eternally rich, what does that stir in you personally? What would your life look like if your generosity started to look more like Jesus' generosity?

5. Paul is remarkably careful not to manipulate the Corinthians into giving. Instead, he says that each person should decide in their own heart what to give, *"not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"* (9:7). How have you historically decided how much to give for the cause of Christ? Has that giving felt free and joyful, or under compulsion? Why? As you imagine the years ahead, what would you love to see God do through your generosity?

Live It Out

This week, before thinking about the specifics of giving, begin where the Macedonians began: give yourself first to the Lord. Ask God to shape not only the amount you give, but the heart from which your generosity flows.

Remember the Fruit of Generosity

Take 10–15 minutes this week to think about the ways you have benefited from the generosity of others.

- Who has invested financially or sacrificially in something that has shaped your life?
- What ministries, churches, or opportunities exist because someone else was willing to give?
- Where have you seen generosity produce a "harvest of righteousness" in the lives of others?
- What kind of fruit would you love to see God produce through your own generosity?

Take a moment to thank God for those who sowed before you and for the opportunity to do the same for others.

Give Yourself First to the Lord

Spend fifteen minutes placing what God has given you back into his hands. You might pray through questions like:

- Lord, where am I tempted to view my money primarily as mine rather than yours?
- What fears make generosity difficult for me?
- What have you entrusted to me that could be used for your kingdom?
- Where are you inviting me to trust you more deeply?
- What would joyful, willing generosity look like for me in this season?

Ask God to give you a heart that is fully surrendered to him.

Take One Step of Faith

Paul tells each person to give *"as he has decided in his heart"* (9:7). As you consider how your love for Jesus might overflow in generosity:

- Pray specifically about what God would have you give.
- Talk and pray with your spouse or family, if appropriate.
- Consider whether this reflects both generosity and trust in God.

- Ask whether fear, comfort, guilt, or comparison is shaping your decision.
- Choose an amount you can give willingly and joyfully to the Lord.
- Thank God for the opportunity to participate in what he is doing through our church.

Closing Prayer

Father, everything we have comes from you. Thank you for the generosity of those who have gone before us and for the fruit we enjoy because they were willing to sow into your kingdom. Teach us to give ourselves first to you. Free us from fear, guilt, comparison, and compulsion, and make us joyful and willing givers. Show each of us what generosity looks like in this season, and use what we give to produce a harvest of righteousness in Denver and beyond. In Jesus' name, Amen.

First Fruits

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Week Five

Introduction

First Love is a season of renewing our love for Jesus and for the people Jesus loves. As part of that renewal, we are asking an important question: *What does our giving reveal about what we love first?* In Deuteronomy 26:1–11, as Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land, God teaches them the principle of firstfruits giving. When they enter the land and begin enjoying its harvest, they are to take some of the first of its fruit and bring it to the Lord in worship. This is how they are to live as God's people in God's land. And because Israel's entry into the Promised Land prefigures our entry into the Kingdom of God through Jesus, the true and better Joshua, firstfruits gives us a principle for how we are to live as citizens of his kingdom.

When Israel brought their firstfruits, they were also commanded to rehearse the story of God's grace: *"A wandering Aramean was my father"* (v. 5). They remembered God's calling of Abraham, their growth and suffering in Egypt, their cries for help, and God's mighty deliverance in the exodus (vv. 5–9). Interestingly, the generation entering the land was not the generation that had come out of Egypt. Most had been born in the wilderness or were too young to remember the exodus. Yet they were taught to remember God's faithfulness not only to them, but also to the generations that came before them. Their whole story, from Abraham to the land beneath their feet, was a story of God's action and God's grace. Their firstfruits were simply a glad response to what God had already done.

That is why the firstfruits offering was ultimately an act of rejoicing and worship (vv. 10–11). This principle continues to echo throughout Scripture. Proverbs instructs us to *"honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce"* (Prov. 3:9–10). And in the New Testament, Paul picks up the same themes of harvest and rejoicing when he describes Christian generosity as joyful sowing into God's kingdom: *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.... for*

God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6–7).

Ultimately, the firstfruits principle finds its fulfillment in Jesus. God did not give us his leftovers, but gladly and freely gave his first and best for us. And through his resurrection, Jesus became *"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,"* guaranteeing a much greater resurrection harvest still to come (1 Cor. 15:20–23). When we joyfully give the firstfruits of our work and wealth, we are responding to the grace we have already received and anticipating the kingdom still to come. We give God our first and best because he has given his first and best to us, trusting that what we sow into his kingdom will be part of a harvest that lasts forever.

Read Deuteronomy 26:1–11 & Pray
Discussion Questions

1. God called Israel to give him the *firstfruits* of their harvest, not simply whatever happened to be left over (vv. 1–4). When you look honestly at the way you use your money, time, and resources, what tends to get your "first and best"? What does that reveal about what you love, value, or trust most?

2. Before presenting their firstfruits, the Israelites rehearsed the story of God's grace toward them (vv. 5–10). Take a moment to think about your own story. Where can you see God's grace and provision most clearly? How does remembering those things affect the way you feel about trusting God with the resources he has entrusted to you?

3. The generation entering the Promised Land was benefiting from things God had done long before many of them were born. How have you benefited from the faith and generosity of those who came before you? What do you hope those who come after you will receive because of the way you live and give today?

4. Israel's firstfruits offering ended with *rejoicing* before the Lord (vv. 10–11), and Paul later says that *"God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Cor. 9:7). Think

about a time when giving or generosity brought you genuine joy. What made it joyful? What fears, desires, or assumptions about money tend to make that kind of joyful generosity difficult for you?

5. Firstfruits meant deciding ahead of time that God would receive the first and best rather than whatever happened to remain. As you consider your own generosity, what would it look like for you to give in a way that genuinely expresses, **"Jesus comes first"**? Is there anything you sense you need to surrender, change, or trust God with in order to do that?

Live It Out

This week, take time to consider what your giving says about what you love first. Rather than beginning with what you can spare, begin by remembering God's grace and asking what it would look like to honor him with your firstfruits.

Remember Your Story of Grace

Israel brought their firstfruits while rehearsing the story of what God had done for them. Take 10–15 minutes this week to do something similar.

- Where can you see God's grace at work in bringing you to himself?
- What has God provided for you that you could never have produced on your own?
- Who came before you and faithfully invested in your life?
- Where have you experienced God's provision or faithfulness in difficult seasons?
- What has God given you in Jesus that outweighs everything else?

Write down a few specific ways God has been faithful and spend some time simply thanking him.

_____

_____

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Consider What Comes First

Take an honest look at how you currently use your money, time, and resources. Ask God:

- What does my current generosity reveal about what I truly treasure?
- Do I tend to give you my first and best or what remains after everything else?
- Where does fear about having enough make it difficult for me to give?
- What would it look like for generosity to become an act of worship rather than an obligation?
- Is there anything you are asking me to reorder so that my priorities more clearly reflect yours?

Ask God to show you where he may be inviting you to trust him more deeply.

Give Your First and Best

As you consider how you might want to grow in generosity, prayerfully choose one step toward practicing the principle of firstfruits:

- Review my current giving and consider whether it reflects the priority I want God to have in my life.
- Decide what I will give before deciding what I will spend on myself.
- Talk and pray with my spouse or family about what firstfruits generosity could look like for us.

- Identify something I could give up or reorder in order to give more generously.
- Establish or increase a regular pattern of giving as an act of worship.
- Another step of faith:

Closing Prayer

Father, everything we have is a gift of your grace. You have been faithful to us and to generations before us, and ultimately you have given us your own Son. Help us remember your grace and respond with joyful worship. Teach us to honor you with the first and best of what you have entrusted to us rather than simply giving you what is left over. Free us from fear and give us confidence in your provision. And as we give, remind us that Jesus has risen as the firstfruits of a greater harvest still to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Frequently Asked Questions

Go to fellowshipdenver.org/firstlove-whatsnext for all FAQ's



Commitment Card

Ready to commit to your first love? Use the physical commitment card or visit fellowshipdenver.org/firstlove-commit



“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will grant to ear of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” Rev 2:7

