

Avoiding the Drudgery of Ministry

Our lives are littered with abandoned interests and hobbies. What's yours?

- I've got a small library of books in which each one was a "*Ooo, I must read this*" book. But that first must-read book was postponed and replaced by another must-read book, and that book was replaced by another ... and on and on.
- Gym owners love January. They sell a lot of new memberships to those intent on getting healthy in the new year. That passion for their health dissipates within six weeks for half of them.
- If you're interested in a new hobby, visit garage sales. You'll find all sorts of equipment and crafts being discarded by people just like you—people once interested in a new hobby.



We see this in the church too. Summer can be a rich experience for teenagers going to camp. They return from a week of worship, study, and shaving cream games with a passion for Christ that would put Billy Graham to shame. Unfortunately, six weeks into the new school year, many of them returned to old habits and the self-centered behavior of the average teenager.

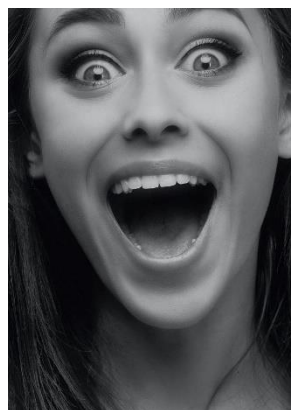
Adults see this and shake their heads. They knew this would happen. Why? Because they did it themselves—and many of them still exhibit that behavior. How many of us buy a new devotional book or jump on a Bible reading plan in January only to have it collecting dust by Groundhog Day?

We say we love Jesus, but our passion for Him and for the things of Christ are things in our past. Listen next time someone shares a testimony at church. Does he only talk about a decision he made at

Vacation Bible School 30 years ago, or does he tell what God is doing in his life right now?

Following Jesus is not a hobby or something we just sheepishly admit we don't pursue like we used to. A passion for Jesus should not wane; it should be just the opposite. Our love for Jesus should be on a trajectory of deepening love and growth.

"Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord" (Rev. 12:11).



I'm not saying every day needs to be an overwhelming ecstatic spiritual experience. I have days—many days—that are quite routine. But I choose to express my love to Jesus every day. I keep my nose in God's Word, which reminds me to see life from God's eternal and grace-filled perspective. I may not be bubbling over with excitement like an eight-year-old tanked up on Skittles and Red Bull, but I have joy and contentment.

Without that perspective, ministry becomes just a task. And if I let that mindset stick around, that task morphs into drudgery. And Jesus' words to the church of Ephesus come shouting at me:

"You have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

I need that reminder quite regularly. With a full-time job, a church to pastor, and a blog to write twice a week, my week quickly becomes a running list of tasks to accomplish. For that reason, I have determined to remind myself *daily* of the love and grace of Christ. I want that to fuel my work—and when His love for me fuels my work, it's far easier to do that work out of love for Him.