



"DEAR CHURCH", PART 2 EPHESUS: THE PRIORITY OF LOVING JESUS

July 21, 2019
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BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

"The 1st Century church in Ephesus shook the city to its core. People who were making money from sin we're going broke. Imagine the economy of sin crashing while those enslaved by it are set free."

—Pastor Randy

MAIN TEXT:

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far 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. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:1-7)

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. (Acts 19:11-12)

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. (Acts 19:17-20)

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:8-10)

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. (Acts 20:27)

See also:

1 Timothy 1:3, Jeremiah 2:12-13, and Ephesians 4:1-3

MESSAGE SUMMARY

In Revelation 2:1-7, Jesus addresses the church in Ephesus. They are the first of seven churches that Jesus has a message for. First he commends the church for what they are doing. They do many good works, live righteously, condemn false teaching, and stayed faithful in the midst of persecution. Despite all of this, something is still missing. Jesus tells the church that they know longer have the passionate love for him that they had at the beginning.

While Jesus' words might have been addressed to specific people in a specific place and time, they still ring true for us today. Though our lives may look wonderful on the outside, if we don't have a passionate love for Jesus, we will be missing the most important ingredient of the Christian life. But how does one maintain this passionate love? It's not always easy, but it can be done. It's the same way one maintains love in any other relationship: by remembering the past, repenting when you walk away, and resuming the things you did at the beginning when love was fresh.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon?
Why was it significant to you?

Cont.

a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping

2. How do you feel about performance reviews and evaluations? Why do you feel this way?
3. When was the last time you received a personal letter (or card)?
Who was it from and why was it meaningful?
4. What was it like when you first met your spouse or significant other?
What is the craziest thing you did?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Read Acts 19 and/or, if you want to get more in-depth, look in a Bible concordance or do an online search for the word "Ephesus" in the Bible. What does this tell you about the history of the church at Ephesus? How might that history have impacted Jesus' words to the church in Revelation 2:1-7?
2. What positive things does Jesus note about the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7?
3. What does Jesus say is lacking in the church at Ephesus?
4. How does Jesus instruct the church to get back on track?
5. What will the consequences be if they don't heed Jesus' warning? What does Jesus promise will happen if they do?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Jesus says that the church in Ephesus is doing many of the right things, but they've lost the passionate love they used to have for him. Have you seen this same thing happen elsewhere, whether in the lives of individuals or organizations?
2. How have you seen people "return to their first love" after they have drifted? What did they do to get back on track? These examples could be returning to a relationship with Jesus, healing a marriage, repairing a friendship, or any other example where someone has restored a relationship after a hard time.
3. From your knowledge of the Ephesian church through your Bible reading and through Sunday's sermon, how is our current culture similar to the culture of the city of Ephesus? How is it different? How is our church culture the same or different?
4. What do you know about the history of the church in America or the history of our church? How might our history impact us positively? How might it negatively impact what we do today?
5. If Jesus were to write a letter to our church, do you think his message would be similar or different from these words to the Ephesian church? What might be similar? What might be different?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Can you relate to the picture that is painted of the Ephesian church, doing the right things, but losing the love that inspired you in the first place? When/where in your life have you experienced this phenomenon?
2. Jesus tells the Ephesian church that if they want to return to their first love, they need to repent and return to what they did at the beginning. Is there anything that God might be calling you to repent from or return to? What might that be?
3. How do you keep your love fresh in your relationship with God? What practices/routines/books/prayers have you found helpful?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.**

4. What do you personally find challenging as you attempt to maintain passionate love in your relationship with God?
5. If God were to write a letter to you, what do you think he would say you're doing well? What might he say you need to work on?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What can you do this week to maintain your passionate love for God?
How might your group pray for you in the process?
2. What can you do this week to remind yourself of the love you first had for God (or a time when you felt particularly close to God)? How can you continue to incorporate remembrance into the rhythm of your life?
3. Is there something that you feel God is telling you to work on in your relationship with him? What is it? How can your group support you as you seek to do what God is calling you to?

NOTE: On the following page you will find a set of sermon notes created by Charissa Burns, an artist who calls B4 home. We include them purely for your enjoyment and encouragement, courtesy of Charissa. You can follow her on the 'Gram @charissaburnsstudio