



STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Teaching Title: Restoring First Love

Key Scripture: Revelation 2:1–7

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Deuteronomy 6:1–13

Tuesday: Matthew 22:23–40

Wednesday: 1 John 3:11–24

Thursday: John 13:31–38

Friday: Revelation 2:1–7

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

Greatest Commandment

MEMORY VERSE:

Matthew 22:37–39 NLT

Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

It's easy for Christians to become desensitized to the cultural pressures we face every day. Before we realize it, our love for God and others that once burned brightly can start to fade. This was the experience of the church in Ephesus in the 1st century. In Revelation 2:1–7, Jesus spoke to them through John, praising their hard work and endurance but pointing out that they had lost their "first love" for Him and each other. Just like the church in Ephesus, we must remember the passionate love we once had for Christ, repent for any spiritual neglect, and return to the practices that first nurtured that love. We must invest daily in our walk with God through attention, repentance, and a renewed commitment to the habits that foster spiritual growth. The ultimate reward for those who rekindle their love is the fruit of the tree of life in the paradise of God. First love requires first place.

Questions:

Icebreaker—Can you remember what it was like when you first started following Jesus? What was your relationship with Him like?

1. Does the analogy of a "frog in a kettle" resonate with your relationship with God? Have you slowly adjusted to the cultural influences around you without realizing it?
2. Read Revelation 2:1–7 together as a group (Read Note for historical background info). How is Jesus described in 2:1? What does this word picture reveal to us about Jesus?
3. Read Matthew 22:37–39 and Acts 20:28–38. When Jesus says, "You have forsaken the love you had at first," what do you think He means? (See Digging Deeper for help)
4. What spiritual practices (e.g., prayer, worship, serving others) did you engage in early in your walk with Christ that may have slipped away over time?

5. What does genuine repentance look like in our daily lives? How can we move beyond just feeling sorry for our actions and instead turn back to God with a renewed commitment?
6. Which of the four steps outlined in the sermon—Remember, Repent, Repeat, Results—do you feel God is inviting you to focus on this week? What's one practical step you can take to apply this to your life right now?

Notes | Important background information for Revelation 2:

The apostle John wrote this "Revelation" from Jesus. Here are some things to note about John:

- When he wrote Revelation (95 A.D.) he was the last remaining disciple.
- His enemies wanted to stop him from preaching about Jesus.
- So, they sent him to the Roman emperor for a trial.
- The emperor then sentenced John into exile in Patmos, a Greek island between Greece and Turkey.



Out of these seven churches, Paul speaks first to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:1–7.

Ephesus is a famous city in the ancient world, with an equally famous church. We know that Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years. Aquila and Priscilla, with Apollos, served there. Paul's close associate, Timothy, worked in Ephesus. According to historic tradition, the Apostle John also ministered there.

- Ephesus was also world-famous as a religious, cultural, and economic center of the region. Ephesus had the notable temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with all kinds of immoral sex. This tremendous temple to Diana in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was supported by 127 pillars, each pillar 60 feet tall, and it was adorned with great sculptures.
- Ephesus was also a real fortress of Satan. Lots of evil things, both superstitious and satanic, were practiced here.

Digging Deeper | Structure of each letter in Revelation 2–3:

1. Address to the church's "angel" (= messenger)
2. Description of Christ, drawn largely from the opening vision in Rev. 1:13–18
3. Commendation (in all but Laodicea)
4. Condemnation (in all but Smyrna and Philadelphia)
5. Challenge: exhortation/warning
6. Eschatological promise to those who conquer (are faithful)
7. Invitation to heed the Spirit

—Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*

Question 3—

The Greek text of Rev. 2:4 says, “τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρῶτην ἀφήκες” – “you let go of your first love.” What does this first love refer to? Love of God? Love of others? Both? Here are some thoughts from NT scholar, Dr. Alan Johnson:

“They had ‘forsaken,’ or ‘let go’ (aphiemi), their ‘first love.’ This was a serious defect. If uncorrected, it would result in their loss of light bearing (v. 5). The majority of commentators take the first love to refer to the original Christian love the Ephesians had for one another. Paul’s exhortation for the Ephesian elders to ‘help the weak’ (Acts 20:35) and the warm commendation he gives them in their early years for their fervent love of one another (Eph. 1:15) may lend support to this view.

Other commentators, however, see the ‘first love’ as a reference to their inner devotion to Christ that characterized their earlier commitment, like the love of a newly wedded bride for her husband...This interpretation is supported by the fact that the letters to the other churches reveal problems of inner betrayal to Christ as subjects of his complaint. Neither view necessarily eliminates the other. Loving devotion to Christ can be lost in the midst of active service, and certainly no amount of orthodoxy can be a substitute for a failure to love one another. ‘First’ (protos) love would suggest that they still loved, but with a quality and intensity unlike that of their initial love.”

—*Revelation: The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Dr. Alan Johnson