

Ephesus "The Desired Ones" - Revelation 2:1-7

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[0 : 0 0] Revelation chapter 2. I'm planning to make it through all seven verses for the church of Ephesus, but you know what? No guarantees. All right. So Revelation chapter 2, we're going to be getting into the seven churches.

We kind of had a snapshot that that was coming as John writes or John writes what Jesus says to him back in verse 11. Of chapter 1, where Jesus says, I'm the Alpha and the Omega and the first and the last.

And what you see, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches, which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. We're going to move through those seven churches.

Each of the churches, we'll get into it in a bit, they're going to have the same format. Can you guess how many points there are for each church?

Seven. Revelation is a book of sevens. You probably could break it up into a few other ways, but it seems like seven to me. So quick recap.

[1 : 0 9] Revelation is the laying bare or the disclosing of truth, that God is not trying to hide anything. We saw in verse 19 of chapter 1 that John was told to write the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

And we said that is our outline for the entire book of Revelation. The things that have been is Revelation chapter 1. That would be what he has seen of Jesus. That is now past. He's writing about what's been seen.

The things that are, that's the church. That's what John's living in. It's what the world he was in that he's going to be writing to. The things that shall be, they'll begin in chapter 4. And that fits perfectly with what we've seen over and over of Jesus being described as he which is, which was, and which is to come.

So you have those three things, past, present, future. 1 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 14 says, Paul writes, Man, what a rich verse.

You spent a lot of time there. The church, the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth, the foundation, and then that which stands up solidly proclaiming the truth.

[2 : 3 4] That is what the church is. As we move into this passage in chapter 2, asking the question, what is the church? Well, in verse 20, as we back up in chapter 1, The mystery of the seven stars, which you saw in my right hand, Jesus is saying, and the seven golden candlesticks.

This is what it is. The mystery is just something that's been hidden. But Jesus is revealing that. The seven stars are the angels or the messengers to the seven churches. And the seven candlesticks or lampstands, which you saw, are the seven churches.

And so we said before, this is the local church from heaven's perspective. We wouldn't walk in and be like, my, look at the candlestick here. It doth glow bright. Sorry, talking King James. I read in King James. You know, we wouldn't be like, man, what a great messenger.

You know, that pastor was. He's an angel. You know, we don't say things like that. But essentially, it's how heaven's looking at it. And the angel, not as an angelic with, you know, an angelic being, but the idea of a messenger.

The messenger receives the message. The messenger passes on the message. And we see the messenger is held by Jesus. If you ever end up in a church or a body of believers where the messenger is not receiving a message from Jesus, he's not passing on a message from Jesus, he's not held by Jesus.

[3 : 52] You might not be in a church. You might want to find somewhere else. And the lampstand, as we saw, it represents the church, but it's not so much the church.

It's Jesus's presence in the church, which makes it a church, but it's not exactly the same thing as the church. It's more the life of the church, the presence of the church. If Jesus removes his lampstand, if he removes his presence, well, the church still exists.

And as we go through these seven churches, we're going to see some churches that exist, but they don't have the supply that Jesus, that comes from Jesus. And they're not being lit by Jesus.

But the characteristics of the lampstand we saw, it's placed by Jesus, it's supplied by Jesus, and we're going to find out it can be removed by Jesus. So we want to ask the question as we go into this, what is a church?

What is a church? So as we've been doing a little bit of throwing out some questions, what do you think of when you think of what is a church? I'll say what I think of. I grew up in a church. For me as a kid, if you said, what is a church?

[4 : 54] It's like, well, it's Sunday morning when we have to dress up in our best clothing, and we go to church and we hear the message. I get to see my friends. I try and get as much playtime as I can, and then we go home.

You know, we do this every Sunday. As I got older, it's like, okay, church is what Christians do. This is what you want to do as a Christian. And then as God began to work deeper in my life, it's like, oh, this is where real life happens.

Well, that's where I want to be. So, but when you hear, what is a church? What is it? A gathering? Gathering of the believers?

A body? A building? I mean, that comes to mind, you know, a church? I'm going to put up a very long definition for you.

Church is an assembly. The ekklesia in the Greek. A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place. An assembly. A company of Christians.

[5 : 52] Or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rights, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to the regulations prescribed for the body, for order's sake.

You know what that is? People focused on Jesus. A church is people focused on Jesus. That's what we're here for. As we go through these seven churches, we're going to see in each of the seven letters, we're going to see that there's the name of the church given.

We're going to start here in Ephesus. There's a title of Christ given. So, as we just looked in chapter one at all those characteristics of Jesus, each one of these churches is going to pull something from that picture we were given of Jesus.

There's a commendation. Good job, boys. This is what you've done well. Now, there's a concern where Jesus says, hey, but have you noticed this over here? There's an exhortation or a warning, that which needs to be done now to correct that.

There's a promise to the overcomer. And then each one has a closing. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Now, this is the general pattern.

- [6 : 58] Some of these churches, as we see, are going to lack one or two of these things or add something else in. But this is the general outline for each of the letters to the seven churches. You know, we talked before about the churches.
- They were, it doesn't say in chapter one, verse 11, right unto the church. It says church is, that there is a plurality here. There's an identity that's in the space.
- So identity of the church in Ephesus, the identity of the church in Smyrna. And so each of these letters that are written to the churches, each one's local. It's written to the local church. But it's also universal because he says, write unto the churches.
- This letter is going to all of them. So if you're in Ephesus, you're going to read about Laodicea and Smyrna as well. It's local and it's universal. It's collective. It's not just to, well, this is just to the pastor or this is just to the women's ministry or this isn't for anybody under age 12.
- This is a collective thing. And lastly, it's personal as we're going to see in verse seven of chapter two. To he that has an ear to hear at the end of the close of every single letter to these churches.
- [8 : 08] We find that it's personal. So, I mean, if you reach up and you have an ear, then this is to you as well. Not just to those in that day. So, chapter two, verse one says, So obviously we have to ask ourselves, what is Ephesus?
- Where is Ephesus? Ephesus, the name, nobody knows for sure what the name means, but it's thought to mean desired or the desired ones.
- I've not been there. If you want to get, see some pictures, Don has. And this is the library, I believe, that is still standing there. There's a library. There's a temple to Diana.
- It was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was originally Artemis. Then the Romans came. They made it into Diana. And then there's a lot of other things. There was a major trade port at that time.
- The port that was there at Ephesus. There's no longer a port because the Romans took out so many trees that there was nothing to hold the sediment back. And as the erosion filled in the river delta and the, what's the word?
- [9 : 22] Port. I know I get it. It's moved where now it's miles away from the sea. But at one time, Ephesus was right there on the Mediterranean Sea.
- And there's Ephesus. That was from before when we were looking at Patmos where John is. But you can see the seven churches there. So Ephesus is the desired ones. As we ask ourselves, what is a church?
- Ironically, one of the best places to find out what a church is is to go to Ephesians. If you want, you can turn there. But you don't need to. I'm just going to read some of these verses.
- And just to kind of give an idea, what is the church? Well, Ephesians chapter 4 gives us a great picture of what the church is. Of what Jesus has built into the body.
- But beginning in chapter 1, verse 7, it says, In whom we have redemption. So it's the redeemed ones. Primarily, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.
- [10 : 20] So the church is made up of the redeemed. And then when we get into chapter 4, Paul says, beginning in verse 3, That we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling.
- One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all. Who is above all and through all and in you all. So the church is a place of unity. It's a place of oneness. It's one God, one Father, one spirit, one baptism.

You're not baptized into Christ and baptized into, you know, Muhammad. You're not baptized into Paul. You're not baptized into saints. One God, one Father, one spirit.

One baptism. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he first also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far up above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

[11 : 23] It's in parentheses, Paul's just saying, hey, Jesus ascended, but he first descended into the lower parts of the earth. That just means this plane. There's the higher parts of the earth, which would be like the atmosphere.

And the lower parts is he came to us. And he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastor teachers. And so the church is a place of gifts and of grace.

For the perfecting of the saints. The reason for all of this? For the perfecting, the completing of the saints. For the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith.

And in the knowledge of the son of God. Unto a perfect or complete man. Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So maturity and edification. That we henceforth be no more children.

Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. By the slight of men and cunning craftiness. Whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things.

[12 : 22] Which is the head. Even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together. And compacted by that which every joint supplies. According to the effectual working. And the measure of every part.

That makes intercession of the body. Unto the edifying of itself in love. Part to take note of. As he says that we henceforth be no more children. Tossed to and fro. And carried about with every wind of doctrine.

And slight of men. We're going to see. Kind of this gives a little bit of a flavor. What's going on in Ephesus. Ephesus. We see a little more of that. As Paul if you remember. He was in Ephesus. For over two years.

Teaching God's word. And leading the church. When he's in the school of Tyrannus. There was great repentance. And reform at that time. That people were coming. And they were bringing all of their. Their magical books.

And all of their talismans. And they were burning them. And it says that it was. 50,000 pieces of silver. Or five million dollars. Just bringing it. And burning it. There was also great pushback.

[13 : 19] Because that was when Demetrius. Got so upset. Because people weren't buying. His little talismans. Of Diana. From the temple of Diana. And we know that Paul then. When he is heading to Jerusalem.

He does not go to Ephesus. He's like man. I can't take time. And I just. You know the crowd of people. I'll get stuck there forever. I love those people so much. So he says hey. All the pastors. And all the elders from Ephesus. Meet me on the shore of Miletus.

And we'll talk there. And Paul then says this. In Acts 20. If you remember. He says to the elders. He says take heed therefore unto yourselves.

And to all the flock. Over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. To feed the church of God. Which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this. That after my departing.

What shall happen? There shall be grievous wolves. That enter in among you. Not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves. Shall men arise speaking perverse things. To draw away disciples after them.

[14 : 17] Therefore watch. And remember. That by the space of three years. I cease not to warn every one of you. Night and day. With tears. So there we have again.

Paul saying watch. Be on the watch. Be on the lookout. For those that would rise up from within. That would make disciples. That would be false apostles. And beware of those that come from without.

Those wolves. They may look like sheep. But they're coming in to devour. Now. Let's read these seven verses. In Revelation chapter 2. I think you'll pick up on some of.

What's happening in Ephesus. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus. Write. These things saith he. That holds the seven stars in his right hand. Who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

I know your works. And your labor. And your patience. And how you cannot bear them. Which are evil. And you have tried them. Which say they are apostles. And are not.

[15 : 12] And has found them liars. And is born. And has patience. And for my name's sake. Has labored. And has not fainted. Nevertheless. I do have somewhat against you.

Because you have left your first love. Remember therefore. From whence you are fallen. And repent. And do the first works. Or else I will come unto you quickly. And remove your candlestick.

Out of his place. Except thou repent. But this you have. Literally. This is a possession of yours. That you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Which I also hate.

He that has an ear to hear. Let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcomes. Will I give to eat of the tree of life. Which is in the midst of the paradise. Of God. And there you may have picked up on some of that.

Some of what they were being commended for. Was that they have stood against. These false apostles. Go back now to verse one. And dig into it a little bit.

[16 : 09] Shall we? So unto the angel of the church of Ephesus. Write. Remember we said before. It's write. Not draw. Not take a picture. Not act out. But I think it's interesting here. That he says write and not go.

Why does he say? John. Go to Ephesus. Go to Smyrna. Go to Pergamos. Thyatira. Laodicea. The one I always forget. Sardis. And Philadelphia. Go there John. You're John the apostle.

Imagine the impact that would have. I think it was ten years. John was on Patmos. And then he was supposedly back to Ephesus. To live out his remaining years. Pastoring that church. But go John.

Why didn't he say go? Well the truth of God's word. It stands on its own. It does not need to be attached to a specific messenger. God uses messengers to present his truth.

But any present messenger will do. Right? God uses messengers to present his truth. How shall they hear unless they be sent? Unless they go. And how shall they go unless they be sent? Says Romans. God will use a messenger.

[17 : 06] But he's not looking for special ones. Wasn't like. Believe me. He wasn't like. Well there's Jared. Oh. It was kind of more like. Well there's Jared.

He seems willing. Finally. It took 40 plus years. So it's not that God attaches his word to a specific messenger. God will use any present messenger.

To present his message. And so he says to John. Right? Because truth is conveyed. How? Truth has been conveyed through words. Not. Like I said. Through a picture. Through acting out.

I can't hug you into the gospel. I can't hug the gospel into you. Right? I can't smile the gospel at you. I can't do social justice. And bring you know. Food to the poor.

Have them. It's through words. It's through communication. That the truth is presented. And then we have this picture of Jesus. The thing that's pulled out to Ephesus. Now.

[18:02] If you jump down to verse 4. Ephesus is a church that has lost their focus.

They're very focused on duty. But they've placed duty above devotion. And they've let go of devotion for the sake of duty. And so Jesus.

The picture that he presents to them. He says. These things sayeth he. That holds the seven stars in his right hand. Who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. And so what is Jesus doing?

What are the three things Jesus says there that he does? He holds the seven stars. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. And then what does verse 2. The beginning of verse 2 say.

And I know. Jesus holds. Jesus walks. And Jesus knows. This is the picture he's like. Guys I am focused on you. I'm very focused on you. I'm very present.

[18:57] I'm very in control. I'm very caring. I'm very near. I understand. I know. And Jesus desires. Jesus. Are we. Are you where do you desire to be tonight?

I hope none of you are here. Because like. Well I gotta keep my attendance up. If I wanna get. You know. Good grade for heaven. Man I hope you're here. Because where you wanna be. Remember one.

One pastor told me that. He asked another pastor. He's like. Where is everybody? And he said to him. They're right where they wanna be. Everybody's exactly where they wanna be. And that's not a knock on people.

That don't come to. Wednesday night. Or Sundays. Or whatever. But where's our desire? Jesus' desire. He's in the midst of the church. He's here walking among them. He's holding us. The right hand. We saw last week.

The right hand that is. Full of righteousness. And he holds us. Yeah he lays it on us. And that's where Jesus is. The church of Ephesus. And of Charlotte. That we need to see Jesus as one who walks with us.

[19:53] Holds us. And knows us. And then he commends them. In verse 2. And these are the seven things he commends them with. Verse 2 through 3. One he says I know your works.

I know. It's an experiential thing. It's not just like I've heard about. But I know. Because guess what? I'm in the midst of you. I'm with you. I know your works. And your labor. And your patience.

And how you cannot bear them which are evil. And you have tried them which say they are apostles and are not. And has found them liars. And has borne. And has patience for my name's sake.

And has labored. And has not fainted. I know your works. One. Your labor. Two. Your patience. Three. How you cannot bear them that are evil. Four. Five. You've tried them that are apostles and are not.

And has found them liars. Six. You have borne. And has patience. Those are linked together. You have borne with patience. And for my name's sake. Has labored and not fainted. You go together.

[20 : 51] So you have those seven things. So let's go through them. He says I know your works. So works means business, employment, or occupation. He says I know what you're occupied about.

I know what you're busy about. I know what you're employed about. I know what you find value in. Right? The thing that you are getting value from. That occupation. What was the.

What word did we use? The concern. What was his concern that he had in verse four? That they did what? They left their first love. So all of these things that he's commending them for.

The idea is they're not being done in love. Love is absent. So their business, their employment, their occupation. Can it be done in love? It can. First Corinthians 16, 14 says let all your works be done with love.

When you remove love from your business, your employment, your occupation. Then it just becomes what? Boy, it just becomes something I got to do. I got to get done. And once I'm done, I'm good and I'm satisfied.

[21 : 56] Very rarely are you going to be thinking about anybody else in the midst of that. Because it's a duty now. And duties are meant to be performed. I know your work, Jesus says.

And your labor. Labor means trouble or weariness. I know that you are troubled. I know you are very weary and worn out by your troubles.

Were they bearing that in love? Were they doing that in love? No. Hebrews 6, 10 says, For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love.

Our labors are to be in love. Which you have showed toward his name and that you have ministered to the saints and do minister. Oh, well, there's a key. Isn't there? What is the labor of love that God is not unrighteous to forget?

Which we have showed toward his name. How is that displayed? Well, by golly, I've read my Bible four times. I, you know, I haven't sinned in three weeks. No. You've ministered to the saints and do minister.

[22 : 57] That is not about your duty. It's about your devotion. How devoted are you to the Lord? It's going to reflect where? In the body. And I know your patience. Make sure I get all these right.

Your patience. Patience. Steadfastness. Constancy. Endurance. The Greek word, *hypermonia*. To bear up under. Right? To be very steadfast.

To not give up. This church. If you were to go in this church, you'd be like, these people got it together. If you walked in the door of this church, you'd be like, man, they are. Remember we saw about Ephesus.

This is a rough place. This is a place that's full of false spirituality, false apostles, the occult. And yet this church is bearing up under. You would come in and there'd be, you'd be like, well, I can't believe it.

They're still going after all of this time. Patience is meant to be in love as well. 1 Corinthians 13, 4. Love is patient and is kind.

[23 : 56] The characteristic of love is that it's patient. And I know that you cannot bear with evil. Cannot bear with evil means does not support, not bear up, does not support the thing.

I know that you cannot bear with evil, does not support things that ought not to be. Something that's base, that's wrong, that's wicked. You don't put up with it. We don't put up with that here. Oh, no, no, no.

We don't put up with that. We're not going to support that cause. That's base. That's wrong. That's wicked. I don't care how many people will draw in. I don't care how in vogue it is in the world. That's not what we're going to be doing right now. You go into that church.

You're like, this is a church. For me, man, they don't compromise. 1 Corinthians 13, 6, love rejoices not, takes no pleasure in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

So even as we are saying, we're not going to take part in that, we're going to stand against that. We do it in love. We don't do it in a way that's going to tear someone down or be critical. It can be done in love.

[24 : 56] Remember when Paul was in Caesarea, I think it was Felix. Yeah, Felix. He was the one that was a really bad governor.

And Paul was able to say something positive about Felix. He had nothing positive about him. The Jews come with their lawyer and he just flatters.

Paul then begins to speak and he says, I am thankful that I get to speak before you today, Felix. And I can't remember the thing that he says about him, but it's positive. Like, man, Paul had something positive to say about this guy who was so corrupt.

I usually say negative things about the corrupt people. But love rejoices not. It doesn't take pleasure in iniquity. It rejoices in the truth. You know, I think there's probably a truth that we could rejoice in about most people.

Say, hey, you know what? Good job in that area. And I know that you have exposed false teachers, essentially. I know that you have tried them, which say they are apostles and are not, and has found them liars.

[26 : 01] You've exposed the false teachers. You haven't just let them kind of infiltrate you. You've pointed it out. You've tested. You've proved the false professors of God's authority. Right? That's what an apostle is.

One who comes with God's authority. One who comes in the name of the Lord with the authority to speak on God's behalf. Because you've exposed those false professors of God's authority. Where do we get our authority?

Where do we derive our authority? Where? From God? But where do we have any authority to speak?

Like, is it my words? No. It's the word. All our authority is derived from the word. We have no other authority except God's word. Even Jesus said about the Holy Spirit that when he comes, well, he will speak of me.

He's not speaking of anything else. He's not speaking of things outside of that. So we don't either. Our authority is in God's word. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3, he says, This know also, in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

[27 : 12] They have exposed the false teachers. They prove them false professors of God's authority. But they did devoid of love. That these false men, these traitors, these high-minded, they're lovers of pleasure.

They're very good to point that out. They are not lovers of God. But they did it in a way that was devoid of love. Jesus said, good job. You've also born with patience and has born and had patience.

It means to patiently shoulder a burden. They patiently shouldered this burden. They carried this burden. They born with patience. The burdens they were placed on them, are there burdens? There were. Did they try to get rid of them?

They didn't. They said, you know what? We're going to do this. This is what we're called to do. We're in Ephesus. We're the church in Ephesus. This isn't easy. This isn't always fun. But we're going to bear with patience this burden.

Paul would write in Romans chapter 5, verse 3. He says, not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works patience. And patience experience.

[28 : 17] Experience hope. And hope makes us not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us. Here in the midst of this bearing with patience, the result should be that God's love is shed abroad in their hearts.

We don't bear with our burdens out of duty. We've got a devotion. And then lastly, he says that they've labored and have not fainted.

And again, the idea being that you didn't give up. Wearying oneself to the point of exhaustion without giving up is what they've done. They didn't throw in the towel. They didn't say, this is too much.

Back to 1 Corinthians 13, in verse 7. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails or never faints.

But love does. The point being that all of these things could have been done in love, should have been done in love. And I would say that when they are done in love, they're not a duty.

[29 : 20] It's not something I have to do. It's something I get to do. I get to minister to the saints. I get to minister to God's people. You know, I've been thinking a lot and praying a lot about, like, what is it to minister? And encouraging, how we can encourage one another to minister.

And it's not activity. We can minister through activities. But activity isn't necessarily ministry. So whether that's, you know, oh, I'm doing sound or I'm up here teaching or I'm cleaning the church.

Are we ministering? Well, sure we are. That's ministry. But ministry happens between people. Without people, there's no ministry. If you all leave and I'm sitting up here teaching, yeah, there's some ministry happening to myself as I go through the word and see that, right?

If you're here cleaning the church and it's never used, is ministry happening? Ministry is between people, isn't it? And so the idea being that you can come and you can say, I have no occupation.

I have no activity that I'm doing in this church. And yet you can be one of the greatest ministers in the church and of God's people by ministering to one another, by being willing to go to someone and say, hey, can I pray for you?

[30 : 26] What's going on in your life? Can I talk to you? How are you doing? Just the easiest thing to do is just when you talk to people, say, what can I pray for you for this week? And they'll be, you know, if they're not used to that, they'll be like, ah, ah, ah, ah.

Or sometimes I don't even say that. I just say, hey, can I pray for you? Can I pray God's blessing on your life? And it's so fun. It's a get to because as you do that, God brings things to your mind.

You say things. And then you can see afterwards sometimes when the person goes, how did you know? You're like, I had no idea. And I still don't know. And I don't need to know. But you go and be blessed. So love in all of these things, it's not about the duty.

It's about our devotion. Our devotion, not even to one another, but to Jesus. Jesus is devoted to us. That's the picture we have of him here. And as we are devoted to Jesus, then there's love. So then Jesus says, great job in all these things.

You've done a good job. He's not saying bad job because they've left their first love. He's saying these are good things. You know, I think of where, it's a little further down that I have that scripture.

[31 : 28] Let me see if I can find it. Where Jesus says unto the Pharisees, he says unto them, woe unto you, Pharisees, for you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs. The little herbs, little ounce of herbs, and they take one tenth out of it to tithe.

But you pass over judgment and the love of God. These you ought to have done. In other words, it's fine to do. I'm sorry. These you ought to have done judgment and love and not leave the other undone.

So that's great. That's great to tithe of those things. But, man, you left out the most important thing. Not that we don't do those. Okay? It's not that we don't tithe of our mint and cumin of the smallest things.

It's not that we don't have a duty. But boy, don't leave the most important thing undone. The love and the judgment of God. So let's, where were we?

Nevertheless, we're in verse four. I have somewhat against you because you've left your first love. We're essentially saying, but, boys, there is this one thing.

[32 : 32] You know, it's like when your parents talk to you. You're like, hey, you know, good job over here. Things are going good. But can we talk about this one area? Can we talk about this part of your report card?

Like, oh, great. So we see here it's a concern. He's essentially saying, here's my concern that I have. You've left your first. First doesn't mean necessarily first in line.

Like, ah, I'm the first one here. It's first in place. First in position. First in primacy. It's almost like the idea in a marriage. Your first love. Your primary love. The love of your life, you could say.

What does that look like? What is the first love that we have? What is the first love that we had in our relationship with Jesus? What was that like? What does that mean to leave our primary love? The other thing is, it says left.

So this is an action word. This is not like you lost it. Where did it go? It wasn't taken from you, but it was left. To be left is to send away, to let go, disregard, or to neglect.

[33 : 37] Man, it's easy when I'm doing my duty. And I think I've done my duty. To neglect. Those things like we just read where Jesus said, don't leave the other parts. Undone. You know, that's fine.

That's fine. Do your duty. But don't neglect the primary thing. Well, our first love, what was that? Man, our first love was when God commended his love toward us. And that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

That was a first love. That was the primary thing in life at that time. When Jesus poured his love and his grace upon us, and we received that, and our sin was taken away. That was the primary thing in life.

1 John 4, beginning in verse 9, says, And this was manifest, in this was manifested, the love of God toward us. Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, here in his love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Love originates with God, begins with God. That was the primary thing. But then what did that do? Well, it doesn't mean, not that we love God, that we don't love God, but that God was the one, and he was the initiator, and we're the responder.

[34 : 47] Our primary thing was when God shed his love upon us, and we responded to that. Why would someone leave that? Why would someone neglect that?

Why would someone let that go or disregard it? What do you think? Has anybody ever had hobbies or interests?

Have you ever stopped having a hobby or interest and taken up a new one? But that one at that time, it was like the most amazing thing.

You put so much time and money. Don't talk to my wife about this. This is my hobby now. It's great. I've had way too many.

But why do you leave it? Why do you neglect it? Why does that thing that meant so much to you, all of a sudden, you're putting it up on Craigslist or something? Because you have a new one.

[35 : 50] You have a new desire. You have a new love. Something else has now captured you, right? I think because in this instance with the church, their duty costs a lot less than their devotion.

Duty's easy. Duty's easy. I read a chapter. I prayed for 10 minutes. I did my duty. I went to church on Sunday. Derek and I were at the bank this week.

And there was a lady working there. And she was talking about church. And she said a couple of the last messages, the Sundays she went to, she didn't really like it. And she said, I mean, I'm already giving an hour and a half of my day.

And I was like, oh. I was like, bless me. I mean, look what I'm giving you. And it's like, wow, there's devotion. No, there's duty. You did your duty. And then you can just go live life, right?

But a devoted life. Devoted life is always devoted. That's what it thinks about. That's what it desires. Think back to your first love, your primary love, right? You more newlywed-ish type people, right?

[36 : 55] Your primary. It's like, oh, that's all you could think about. I think about my wife all the time, too. But that's, it is. And it's true. I can't wait to get home. I hate it if I have to stop on the way home from work or if I have to stay later at work.

God, I just want to be home. I just want to be home with my people, with the primary thing, right? So they left it. They neglected it. And I think because duty costs so much less than devotion. And unfortunately, there's relationships like that.

There's marriages like that. There's father and child relationship, mother and daughter relationship, where it's so much easier just to do your duty. So much easier to just, you know, send a card, send some money, do whatever your duty is, than it is to be devoted.

How do you know if someone is about duty or devotion? Devotion always seeks the heart of the person, right? Duty seeks my own end. Duty is for me to be fulfilled with that person.

I've done my duty. Thank you. Devotion seeks you, seeks your fulfillment. Ephesus was too busy about the business of Jesus to take time for Jesus. Way too busy.

[38 : 00] And, you know, true confessions of a pastor here, that's easy to do. When I'm working full time and then it's like repairing messages, sometimes it's like, Lord, that was an amazing time preparing that message with you.

So, boy, that was just kind of like working through that, Lord. And I have to sometimes stop and go back, like, Lord, what do you have for me in that? What is that that you want to draw out? Now, usually it's afterwards.

It's funny, I teach and then it's the week afterward on what I've taught that I end up living through something from it. But God is so faithful to do that. Ephesus was way too busy about the business of Jesus to take time for Jesus.

Devotion became greater than duty. So the problem wasn't that Ephesus couldn't love, but that they wouldn't love. So Jesus says, remember, therefore, from whence you are fallen and repent and do the first works or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove your candlestick or your lampstand out of his place, except you repent.

And so here's the exhortation or the, excuse me, in this instance, it's the correction of what needs to be done. What are the three things we see Jesus there saying? It says, remember, repent, and do.

[39 : 11] Remember from whence you are falling. The word from whence means like from the place, the condition. Also, I love it. It means from the author, giver, or parent. Remember from where you originated.

Remember where you came from. Remember from whence you were fallen. It's to come down from position, place, or power. That position you held, that place you had of power. With who?

Jesus. It was with a person. And now you're satisfied with so much less. You're satisfied with duty instead of devotion. You're satisfied with just going through the motions instead of spending time with Jesus.

So he says, remember. Remember is to call to mind. Then he says, repent. Repent is to change or turn one's mind for the better, the idea here.

And then to do is to spend, to carry out, and to produce. So remember, call to mind, change your mind, and then do. Change what you're doing and do something else.

[40 : 10] He says here, do the first works. That's that same word first that we saw before, your first love. Do the primary thing, the first thing, first in position. Do the first thing that you were employed about.

The first thing that occupied you. What occupied you at first in your relationship with Jesus? What was it? Now that you've fallen from that, what was the thing that was like, oh, I just can't wait to do that with Jesus.

And that'll change. There's times in your life where there's things that are more meaningful to you in that relationship. But if your relationship has just become a duty, there's not a lot of devotion.

Again, how can you tell if it's a duty or if it's a devotion? Well, a big part is how are you relating with God's people? Are you devoted to God's people? You know, Jesus, the scripture says in 1 John, how can we say we love God and hate our brother?

They kind of go together. So the heart you have for God's people, because this is the body of Christ. This is how we see and feel and touch Christ, is kind of a good indication of where you're at in your devotion to Jesus.

[41 : 08] Now, some of us are more extrovert. Some of us are shyer and quieter. It doesn't mean you have to go and talk to everybody. So he says, do again those first works.

And I love here the three things he says. Remember, he said, I am he that was and is and is to come. So we have remember. Remember what once was. He which was.

Repent over what is, over what you're currently doing. And do something different. Do what shall be in the future. There's Jesus. How do we do this?

Jesus is like, I'm right there with you. I got this. Jesus tells us what to do. Remember, repent, and do. And he's like, oh, and by the way, I got this. I am he who is and was and is to come.

Remember, it's all in the mind. Remember is to call to mind. Repent is to change the mind. And to do is to refocus the mind. What was Ephesus? They were a church who's lost their focus in Jesus. They were no longer focused.

[42 : 05] He was no longer the primary thing. Remember, call to mind. Repent, change your mind. And then to do, refocus your mind upon Jesus. Jesus' admonition to Ephesus was to refocus upon who and what.

He once lifted them into the heights of the love of God. What lifted you into the heights of the love of God? Man, it probably wasn't your duty. If it was, I can say it wasn't.

I've been there. Like, oh, man, you just feel that condemnation. You feel that pressure, the need to perform. And then you kind of feel better after you do. But the relationship hasn't gotten any better because you just have to perform again.

But when you're devoted to Jesus and you realize how devoted he is to you, the duty doesn't matter. That's not the focus. In Ephesians, again, chapter 3, Paul would say that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Remember from whence you are fallen. Repent. Change what you're doing. Change your mind. Turn from whatever it is that is your current devotion and refocus upon Jesus.

[43 : 24] Love does not neglect good works, but it establishes them, right? Love doesn't neglect good works. Well, I'm sorry. I'm too devoted to Jesus to help you right now.

Blessed, be filled, and go your way, right? But it establishes them because love allows us to see those good works from an entirely different perspective. That's what the world thinks. They think we're just a bunch of do-gooders trying to earn favor with God or whatever.

But we recognize that it's a response. When we neglect our love for God, we neglect our love for the people of God as well. We love him because he first loved us.

If a man say, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? When we neglect our love for God, we end up inadvertently neglecting our love for God's people.

Now, we don't regain God's love by trying hard to love God's people. No, we go back to the source, right? The first love, the primary thing. Lord, man, I need you to work your love in my life that then responds to you in love, which then results in love for God's people.

[44 : 36] So let's wrap this up. So the Ephesians church, they had lost their focus, they'd lost their love, and they'd lost their way. And then Jesus gives them this little ultimatum where he then says, the verse, or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove your candlestick out of his place except you repent.

And that quickly just means that's that same word like meaning like tachometer, like rev up, like it'll happen fast when it happens. I will come. There'll be no time at that point to be like, oh, shoot, Jesus is here.

Quick. Let's all love each other. I will come unto you quickly and remove your lampstand out of his place except you repent. Jesus personally deals with his church.

He doesn't say, I'm going to send an angel. I'm going to send a messenger to take care of this. Jesus personally deals with his church. He's among his church. He's in the midst of this church. Jesus does not destroy his church. He does not end his church.

He will simply leave the church. He says, hey, I'm going to take my lampstand. I'm going to take my presents. Maybe you've been in one of those churches. You walked in, you're like, boy, they got everything right, but not a lot of love here.

[45 : 45] No, nobody talked to me. Nobody seems to care. They're against false doctrine. They've got good doctrine, but just something missing here. The choice to remain or remove is always in the hands of the church.

No church has ever been removed that did not first choose the path of removal. No church has ever been removed that did not first choose that path. Here we see Jesus faithfully saying, hey, turn.

Don't push me to that point. Don't let it be that I have to remove my presence from there. So what is a church? A church is people focused upon Jesus.

And then Jesus throws into this little like bonus. He says, but what do you have? But this you have that thou has hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. I'm not going to go deep dive on them because we've been going long enough.

We'll look at them later when we get to. To. Pergamos, I think it is. But the Nicolaitans, Nicolaitans means to conquer or to conquer the people, those who lorded over the people.

[46 : 47] So it's kind of like a, you know, a priesthood. Those who think, well, I'm the messenger to the church. I'm leader in this church. I'm the priest. I'm the whatever. He says, I hate that. And you hate that.

Proverbs 6 tells us a few things the Lord hates. Beginning in verse 16. These six things does the Lord hate. Yea, seven are an abomination unto him. A proud look. A lying tongue.

Hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that devises wicked imaginations. Feet that be swift and running to mischief. A false witness that speaks lies. And he that sows discord among brethren. You want to know what a Nicolaitan is?

There it is. That's the characteristics of a Nicolaitan. That which God hates. The problem at Ephesus was not because of what they did not lack. It wasn't because of what they didn't lack.

It wasn't because of their works. There wasn't any issue with their works. They didn't lack any of those. But because of the thing that they did lack. And what they lacked is what makes church a church. The problem wasn't because they didn't have enough works.

[47 : 46] But it was the thing that makes a church a church. That's Jesus' presence and his love. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcomes, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

So the promise to the overcomer. What is the promise to the overcomer? As he closes this out and says, He that has an ear to hear, let him hear. The promise here is, I'll give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Man, position, placement, fruitfulness, fulfillment. That we will get to eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

We will be sweetly satisfied with the presence and life of God at that time. He that overcomes. Now this is not saying, if you don't overcome, you're going to lose your salvation and go to hell. There's nothing in here about salvation.

This is to the church. We're going to see that just because it's a church, doesn't mean everybody is a believer as we go through this. And there are those that they have not. They're just part of the group, but they have not accepted Christ.

[48 : 56] They've not put their faith in him. But this is not dealing with salvation here. What it's talking about when it says that he that overcomes, how do we overcome? What is that that overcomes?

Well, Romans 8, 37 says, In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Well, there's that love again. In Jesus. And first John 5, 4 says, For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world.

And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. So to him that overcomes, well, how do we overcome? By our faith in Christ. By putting our trust in Jesus. Who's the one that overcomes?

It's he who has overcome because our conqueror, our victor is in Christ. That one will be sweetly satisfied with the presence and life of God.

And that which Jesus gives, love it, is always given freely. Do you know there's nothing Jesus gives that's not free? Everything he gives is free. He doesn't, well, you got to pay for that one.

[49 : 55] I mean, grace, mercy, boldness. Oh, I don't know. Patience. I don't make you pay for it. Just, he gives everything free. There's nothing he withholds. All free.

Zephaniah 3 verse 17 says, The Lord your God in the midst of you.

Where's Jesus in his church? In the midst of us. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. I love it. Ephesus, the desired ones.

Ones that Jesus desires. The ones he puts delight in. The church. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing. And that's the church that Jesus wants for his people.

I hope we're the church of Ephesus. No, I hope we're the church of Ephesus with love. Right. I think so. I think there's a lot of love here. I've had a lot of people tell me that.

[50 : 53] New people are like, man, you can just feel the love here. But you know what is the reason of that? For that? It's because we first receive the love of God. Have you received Jesus' love? Have you let him put that hand upon you?

And receive his love? Say, hey, fear not. Fear never. Man, I love you. It's not about duty. It's about devotion. He's devoted to us. Be devoted to him. And then as Jesus loves us and his love flows through us, are you letting God use you to then minister to others?

To be willing to be like, hey, I want this love to be given to someone else. Jesus is in the midst of us. I love that part. He will quiet you with his love. And Lord, we thank you so much that tonight we saw this picture.

Beautiful picture, Lord, of a church that unfortunately they neglected that. They turned away from that. But you didn't tell them it's too late. It's all up. It's all over. On to the next.

You're so faithful to personally warn them. He who has an ear to hear. Personal to each one of us in the church. Say, hey, maybe you're the one. Maybe you're the one.

[51 : 54] If you would just lend your ear. If you would remember. If you'd repent. And if you would do. Maybe you'd change the whole church. Maybe revival is to come through you. Lord, maybe there's somebody who needs to be ministered to.

Who's doing duty. Who's here just out of a routine. Who comes on a Sunday. Because that's what you have to do. And maybe all that they're lacking is someone to minister God's love to them. To go and say, hey, Jesus loves you.

Just be devoted to him as he is to you. Lord, I think of where you were in the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. And Martha was cumbered about much serving. And she came to you and said, don't you care that I'm doing all the work and Mary's sitting at your feet?

And you said to her, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about much serving. But Mary has chosen the greater part. And that shall not be taken away from her. Should we neglect the service?

Absolutely not. But there's a time for duty and there's a time for devotion. Lord, let us make that the primary thing in our lives and in our church. Thank you for this church of Ephesus. Thank you, Lord, for the church in Charlotte, Lord.

[53 : 00] And we pray as we look at each of these churches on Wednesday nights, Lord, that we would reflect on what we're doing well, not in pride, but saying, thank you, Lord. And then those areas that you would speak to us and say, maybe this is an area.

And Lord, I do ask. I ask that you would work in us, Lord, that devotion. Devotion to you and then to one another. That we would be a church, whether it's someone who visits once or a hundred times, Lord. Lord, they will have been ministered to, prayed for, loved, talked to, blessed, whatever they need, Lord.

Thank you that you're in our midst. In Jesus' name, amen.