



## **Frisco First Baptist Church**

7 LETTERS TO THE CHURCH LETTER TO EPHESUS REVELATION 2:1-7 5/4/2025

### **MAIN POINT**

Jesus' love for us leads us to authentic demonstrations of love for Him.

### **INTRODUCTION**

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Spend a few minutes sharing stories about what your “first love” as a child was like, or what you’re watching your own kids experience with their first loves. How young were you? What do you remember most about that person and your “relationship”? Is that person in your life today?**

**Revelation 2:1-7 is the call for the church to return to our “first love,” Jesus Christ. How does your relationship with Christ now compare with what it was like when you first became a Christian? What are the key differences, and what are some of the reasons you can think of for those changes?**

### **UNDERSTANDING**

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 2:1-3.

**Briefly look at Acts 19 and the Book of Ephesians (see specifically Eph. 1:15). What are some of the things we know about the city of Ephesus and the church there?**

**What good things did Jesus say characterized the church at Ephesus in his letter?**

**Why are each of these traits important for a church to model?**

The Lord knows His churches and their pastors personally. He commended this church for its deeds, toil, and perseverance. They were working hard to minister in Jesus' name in a major seaport town. Their fellow citizens no doubt practiced the liberal lifestyles that often characterize tourist and commercial cities. That the believers cannot tolerate evil men shows the contrast of their lifestyles to the surrounding culture and their deep desire for purity. They continued to move forward for Christ and the gospel against the pressures of their culture.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 2:4-7.

**What was the church's main problem? How might its strengths have been the cause of its failure?**

**When our relationships with God and others becomes about duty, rather than love, what are some of the consequences?**

**How could the church restore their love for God? What do we learn from this church's example?**

The church at Ephesus appeared strong and healthy, but it had a heart problem. They abandoned the love they had at first, meaning their love for God (see Eph. 1:15). The remedy came in three commands, recorded in verse 5. First, they were to recall how they as new believers had responded to the love of God. Remembering the beginning of a relationship often revitalizes it. Second, they were to repent. The Greek word for repent means a change of attitude. They were to change their thinking about the way they lived. Finally, they were to do the deeds they did at first. This again calls for a decisive change. Rather than existing in a dreamworld of what used to be, they were to live as fervent Christians. This verse calls for a radical change of mind, heart, and life.

**Read 1 Peter 1:2-7. How does this text help us understand the seriousness of letting our love for God diminish? What instruction does Peter give that will help us know if we have lost our first love?**

**Love summarizes the responsibilities one has toward God and mankind. Read Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus' Great Commandment. What makes loving God the greatest command?**

**The Great Commandment emphasizes loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind (HCSB). What do each of those aspects of a person's being**

**represent? What does it look like in practical terms to love God with your heart, soul, and mind?**

**Based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22, what is the ultimate example of authentic love for God?**

**Is your love for others characterized more by action or inaction? Which one characterizes God's love for us?**

**Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian? Do we tend to think of love as the primary mark of the Christian life? If not, what do we think of as that mark? Why?**

**What most frequently stands in the way of you truly loving others?**

The message to the church of Ephesus has particular importance to the churches of today. Churches today must be theologically vigilant and devoted to holiness. All too easily they slip into the practices of the surrounding cultures and forget the love of God shown them in Christ. The letter to Ephesus stands as a continual warning against such things by reminding us to make nothing as important in our lives as loving God and loving others.

**In Revelation 2:7, Jesus calls us to hear and obey His warning to the church at Ephesus. What is the reward for those who hear and obey Him? How does this reward change the way you live today?**

One of the continual indictments in the Scriptures is that people hear God's Word and see His guidance but disregard what He says and shows them (Isa. 6:9). This text urges Christians to use their spiritual senses lest they also become desensitized. Jesus promised a reward to those who heeded. Using the imagery of Genesis, Jesus promised nourishment that leads to perpetual life. Continuing that imagery, He explained that the tree exists in Paradise, meaning heaven. The promise is the equivalent of saying that the ones who heed will live forever in the happiness of God's presence, enjoying eternal life.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways have you lost your first love for Christ? How has that loss impacted your relationship with Him? Your other relationships? Your day-to-**

**day life?**

**What changes are needed in your to help you better love Christ and others?**

## PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross that made a personal relationship with Him possible. Pray that this week, God will help us pursue a passionate relationship with Jesus above all.

## COMMENTARY

### | REVELATION 2:1-7

2:1. Each of the seven letters is addressed to the angel of the church. Revelation 1:20 first mentions these angels, which are the seven “stars” in Jesus’ hand in 1:16. The Greek word *angelos* is often translated “messenger”—whether heavenly or earthly. This sense is surely in mind here. Each letter traces the following route: Jesus > John > messenger > church. Who were these messengers? The best suggestion is that they were pastors. The responsibility of pastors is to “shepherd the flock” entrusted to their care. What could be more pastoral than to convey safely a direct message from Christ, the great Shepherd?

The risen Lord emphasizes to the Ephesian Christians the characteristic that He holds the seven stars ... and walks among the seven golden lampstands. This is based on the portrait of Jesus in chapter 1—as is the particular characteristic of Christ noted at the beginning of several of the other letters. In this instance, however, the characteristic is strengthened. In Revelation 1:13 Jesus was simply among the lampstands (churches). Now He is walking among them, observing their deeds and their motives. Because He has been observing, He can both compliment and criticize.

2:2-3. The compliment section in each of the seven letters begins with I know. Jesus knows the facts about each of the congregations. The Christians of Ephesus were always busy. They received a triple commendation: deeds ... hard work and ... perseverance. The apostle Paul praised the Thessalonian Christians for exactly these same virtues (1 Thess. 1:3). Deeds is the more general term. Deeds are expressed actively through hard work or passively through putting up with hardship.

The last sentence of verse 2 explains one aspect of the hard work of these believers: they had ejected evildoers from their church, and they had tested and rejected some false

apostles. We do not know who these “apostles” were, but they claimed a great deal of authority for themselves. They were probably from a local sect called “Nicolaitans” that flourished in Ephesus as well as Pergamum (see vv. 6, 15). First John 4:1-3 describes a test for discerning false prophets. In verse 3 Jesus explains the perseverance of the Ephesians: they have endured hardships for My name, and have not grown weary. From their earliest days as a church, these Christians had put up with hostility from those who worshiped other gods (Acts 19:23-41). They had been vigilant over the years in all the persecutions that came their way.

2:4. In their pursuit of truth and their patience in persecution, these Christians had allowed a tragic flaw to infect their fellowship. Christ’s criticism surely stung: You have forsaken your first love. Some interpreters think this refers to the love (Greek *agapé*) they had for Christ when they were new converts. In the context, however, it refers mainly to their love for one another which Christ had said was the hallmark for His disciples (John 13:35). In rooting out error and expelling false teachers, they had grown suspicious of one another. Their good deeds were now motivated by duty rather than love.

2:5-6. Christ’s command to this loveless congregation was a three-pronged remedy. First, they must remember the days of their first love. They were not to live in the past, but to recall past greatness. Some no doubt resented the notion that they had fallen, but Christ considered loss of proper motive in the Christian life to be serious sin indeed. Second, they must repent of their loveless attitudes toward others. Third, they must return to the things you did at first, that is, works motivated by love for others.

This command is accompanied by a serious warning of the consequences the church faced if it did not repent: I will ... remove your lampstand. Although Christ has promised to build His church worldwide (Matt. 16:18), He guarantees permanence to no individual congregation. A loveless church is no longer truly a church, and Christ has the right to extinguish such a congregation. Tragically, the Ephesian church ultimately succumbed, and neither the city nor the church exists today.

Verse 6 seems out of place here as a further compliment to these Christians. Logically it belongs after verse 3. Both the Ephesians and Christ rightly hate the practices of the Nicolaitans. Except for the two references to them in Revelation 2, these evil people are unknown in Scripture.

2:7. The commitment Christ makes at the end of each of the seven letters always includes three elements: the one who overcomes is praised; he who has an ear is addressed; and the message is commended as one that the Spirit says to the churches. To overcome is

more literally “to conquer,” a reminder that the original recipients of Revelation were in spiritual combat. Such overcoming is defined in John’s first epistle: “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:4-5).

The one “who has an ear” is the church member who both hears and heeds the message as it is read in the congregation. This reference by the risen Jesus is similar to the warning of the earthly Jesus concerning the importance of paying attention to His parables (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35). Whether originating from Galilee or glory, Jesus’ teachings are so important that His followers must “have an ear.” In the Book of Revelation, these teachings are further noted as communicated from the Spirit to the churches. The word of Jesus is the word of the Spirit. The Spirit is a distinct Person from Christ. The inspired words spoken objectively by the Son of God will be communicated to the members of the churches by the subjective personal illumination of the Spirit of God.

Christ’s commitment to the faithful believers in Ephesus—and to all faithful believers—who heed the message is that they will eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. To eat from the Tree of Life symbolizes eternal life with God. Paradise is a rare New Testament synonym for heaven (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), borrowed from a Persian word for “garden.”