

TO: Whoever has ears,
let them hear...

Letters to the CHURCH

FROM (the):
Book of Revelation

STUDY GUIDE

Week 3

WEEK 3 - EPHESUS

Monday

Read: Revelation 2:1

The church in Ephesus needed reminding that God securely holds the church and its leaders in His hands. God's encouragement to the Ephesians was that He carries the church through the world and that He is sovereign over it all. At the time, Ephesus was the largest city in Roman Asia, a bustling commercial and cultural hub. There would have been any number of idols that the city's inhabitants were not only encouraged to look to but bow to, literally and metaphorically. The church's devotion became divided and distant, going through the motions, out of a place of duty rather than love. Jesus reminds them through this letter that He is a jealous God; He wants all of them, and us to desire all of Him. They were anointed not to look like the world, but live set apart from it, showing the world their love for Him.

What stands out to you about these scriptures?

Where in your life do you need to be reminded that you are called to be set apart? Carried by God?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that You tell us what we need to hear, when we need to hear it. Please continue to remind me of Your goodness, Your grace, and Your power. Amen.



This week in your Discipleship Group discuss a moment where you lost sight of your first love, and that fact that you were anointed and called to live as a light to the world. How did it feel? How did you come back to that first love? What are some of the tells for when you are living out of duty rather than love?

Tuesday

Read: Revelation 2:2, Psalm 139

The second thing that Jesus does in his letter to the church in Ephesus is reassure them that He sees them. That He knows them inside and out. Before He pointed out where they needed correcting, He showed them that He saw the work they'd already done, and that it wasn't in vain. He knew that they needed not just correction, but encouragement. What they were doing was incredibly difficult, and that work did not go unseen by God.

What does this reveal to you about Jesus?

Have you ever felt like your work for the Lord was going unseen? It's important to remember that God sees you, and honours the hidden work, even when it is or feels unseen by others.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that even when I feel unseen, and like my labour might be in vain, You see me and Your eyes are never far from me. You see my hard work, You are proud of my commitment and the seeds sown in hidden places. Please help me to carry that encouragement with me as I continue doing what You've asked, with grit, determination and empowered by Your Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday

Read: Revelation 2:3-4, Mark 12:41-44

If you are treading water, you aren't drowning but are you really swimming? After Jesus encouraged the church, He told them where they'd fallen short - they had lost their zeal, their love for Jesus and His people. They did all the 'right' things theologically and practically, but they did them without passion or tenacity. In this verse, Jesus is reminding the church in Ephesus that it isn't enough to do things out of duty or obligation. When we do things with love, our efforts are multiplied - much like the woman who gave all she had at the temple. How beautiful that we have the power to bless and encourage Jesus' heart by our acts of love.

What stands out to you about these scriptures?

Are there any areas in your life where you can identify that you're going through the motions more than engaging with the heart? Do you read your bible because you genuinely want to invest in your relationship with God or do you do it because you know you should? Do you serve your church with a willing heart or out of obligation? How can you stay encouraged to do these things out of love, not duty?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that You never settle for anything less than my heart. I pray that You would stir in me a renewed fire for You. Help me to do what You've asked with deep love for You and passion for Your people. Amen.

Thursday

Read: Revelation 2:5, John 15:1-17, Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 21:2 & 9

God calls the church His bride (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 21:2,9). He loves the church so deeply as it's the only thing He's coming back for. While Jesus is the perfect head of the church, the rest of the body is made up of imperfect humans, and Jesus says that he will prune any parts that are not healthy so it does not infect the whole vine. In Revelation 2:5, Jesus demonstrates His willingness to prune churches that do not love and serve Him - in this case, if the church in Ephesus does not turn back to Him and 'do the works [they] did at first', He will 'remove your lampstand from its place among the churches'. If the church in Ephesus did not repent for doing its work without love for Christ, there would be devastating consequence. God is so committed to the purity of His bride, that he's willing to sacrifice one part to keep the whole clean and sanctified. And, at the same time he never prunes without first giving us opportunity to turn from our wicked ways and turn back to Him.

What stands out to you about these scriptures?

Where can you identify God's pruning in your own life?

How can you see pruning as something that is for our good, even when it's challenging?

Prayer: Jesus, thank You that You are so committed to my growth that You are willing to prune me. Please help me to be receptive to this sanctification process, knowing it's for my good and Your glory. I repent of where I've got it wrong, and I turn my heart back towards You today. Search my heart, cleanse me afresh. Amen.

Friday

Read: Revelation 2:6, Revelation 2:15, Romans 5:8, Luke 6:31-36, Matthew 23:1-36

The wording in this verse is very particular: 'you hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do'. The Nicolaitans are mentioned twice in Revelation 2:6 and later in 2:15. Some scholarly interpretations suggest that the Nicolaitans may have been associated with a group that desired to create a hierarchy within the Christian community. They may have had elitist or authoritarian ideals in mind, something that Jesus sincerely disliked, as seen in his interactions with the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-36). Jesus actually commends the Ephesians hatred of their practices, however He is very clear that He hates the deeds, not the people. This verse is a powerful reminder: God's justice and His mercy go hand in hand. He hates evil because it hurts people, distorts truth, and divides the Church, but He never stops loving the people caught in it. We are called to do the same: reject what is wrong without rejecting the person.

What stands out to you about these scriptures?

What does it look like to hate someone's evil deeds and see them way Jesus sees them?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that You see me as I am, flaws and all, and love me anyway. Please help me to see others the same way, as You do. Give me grace and strength to encourage them, not condemn them. Amen.

Saturday

Read: Revelation 2:1-7

Overall, Jesus' message to the church in Ephesus is an encouragement to return to a spirit of worship, not a spirit of obligation. To build the church because it is what we are called to do, and our greatest act of worship. The church is full of humans, and humans have a tendency to drift. It's easy to lose momentum over time if it's not intentionally sustained and fanned into flame. Jesus' encouragement to fall flat but to continue to grow, with the excitement and fire that they had when they first began the church is as pertinent for the Ephesians as it is for us today. That we would go after God with all we've got, staying true to the Lord and His ways, no matter what others may do.

What stands out to you about these scriptures?

What can we learn from the church in Ephesus?

How we you apply Jesus' lesson them in our own life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You that though I am human, I can access Your power at any time. Please give me a renewed strength, love for You and desire to build Your kingdom. Amen.