



# WEEK 1

A LETTER TO THE  
CHURCH IN EPHESUS

# LOVE CHRIST AND LOVE PEOPLE

Ephesus is probably the most recognizable of the seven churches we will read about in Revelation. Ephesus is an area that played a big part in the New Testament. It's where Paul ministered for three years (Acts 19:1, 19:10, 20:31), Timothy worked there, and Paul wrote a letter to this church that became the book of Ephesians in the New Testament. Ephesus played a big part in the Roman Empire as well.

Ephesus was the Roman capital of Asia Minor. It was a port city that brought in significant goods and boasted over 250,000 people. Ephesus was a hub of business and was home to many diverse religions. It was also the location of the temple of Artemis (also known as the Temple of Diana), which was a significant temple full of thousands of priests, priestesses, and worshipers. The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and was so vital to the area that it was the center for business and commerce.

This was an area with many pagan religions, practices of sorcery, and pressures to worship these pagan gods. More specifically, the emperor, Domitian, had a statue of himself constructed that was roughly 22-25 feet tall to be worshiped. In addition to these regular practices, pressures, and temptations for the church in Ephesus to overcome each day, the area also carried a large Jewish population. This led to much turmoil, arguing, and fighting within the church.

All of these pressures existed daily for the believers and church in Ephesus. This is why Jesus began His encouragement to the Ephesians through John's letter emphasizing overcoming the evil practices and false witnesses surrounding them. He corrects them on the issue they're currently facing—hard hearts toward God and others. They have turned away from their first love. Their daily struggle and stress have led them to lose their heart for God and His people (especially those they disagreed with). In a way, Jesus is calling this church at Ephesus to renew their marriage vows...return to the love you first had when you committed your life fully to me. This is the struggle, encouragement, and challenge for the church in Ephesus and one we can all relate to and take to heart as the 21st-century church today.



## WEEK 1 EPHESUS

### JESUS'S WORD FOR THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS:

I see your hard work and worship in the face of opposition. I see you calling out false teaching and adhering to sound doctrine, but in your pursuit of being right, you have become the wrong kind of people. You have forgotten how to love. Love is what will turn people's hearts to me.

Eugene Peterson says it this way in *This Hallelujah Banquet*:

*They weren't hurting anybody, and they were helping many. But they weren't at their best. In a word, they were lazy. They were working day and night, doing good deeds, teaching the truth, opposing falsehood, impressing themselves and one another with their industriousness— all because they were too lazy to love. Love is not what we do after we get the other things done, if we have any energy left over. Love is what we do, period. I need people who will love— love Christ, be loved by Christ, love your neighbors, be loved by your neighbors.*

# WEEK 1

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## DAY 1 - MONDAY

| *Revelation 1:1-8, Exodus 3:1-15*

**REFLECTION:** Write down Revelation 1:8

Reflect on who God is and His power, strength, knowledge, love, and care to share Himself with us. Let these words permeate through whatever struggles, doubts, or fears you may currently face. Let them be a comfort and take time to pray and thank Him for this.

### I AM WHO I AM

"I Am" statements are essential. "I Am" is used to identify who we are, how we feel, what we represent, what we believe. "I Am" is a personal and identifying statement. These two words are most important when used by God, as in Exodus 3:1-15 and Revelation 1:8. The omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (all-present), and omnipotent (all-powerful) God of the universe loves and cares about us, His creation, enough to disclose to us who He is, what He is for, and what He will always be. This is a revelation that is given throughout the pages of scripture and powerfully in this final book of the Bible. Remember the heart of the book of Revelation. Jesus begins this prophecy by identifying who He is for a reason because the heart of this revelation is for His creation to know Him and follow Him more closely.

# WEEK 1

## DAY 2 - TUESDAY

| *Revelation 1:9-20, John 17*

**REFLECTION:** Reflect on John's description of Jesus in the Revelation passage. What do you observe about John's reaction to Jesus and Jesus' reaction to John?

Reflect on Jesus' Prayer in John 17. Jesus prays this prayer shortly before his crucifixion. Jesus prayed for His disciples who would carry on His ministry on Earth and for all future believers who would continue to spread the message of His love.

What stood out to you in this prayer about Jesus' love for the church?

### A CLEAR VISION OF JESUS

It's interesting how John began Revelation. He gave us his prologue (vv. 1-3), his greeting and doxology (vv. 4-8), and then closed with the apocalyptic vision of a blazing Jesus (vv. 9-20). Chapters 2 and 3 feature the letters to the seven churches. Then in chapter 4, we pick back up with more apocalyptic imagery, this time in the throne room of God.

Consider how encouraged the weary and persecuted churches must have felt after picturing the power and authority of their resurrected Savior. The call to persevere and to be pure is energized by a clear vision of Jesus. If we lose sight of who He is, His power and authority, we may begin to lose the confidence that keeps us moving forward. Sanctification is tied to the Savior. Without a powerful portrait of Jesus, these letters are mere bedtime stories. But with a clear vision of Christ, the church can find the motivation to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27).

Written by Whitney Capps- *We Over Me*

# WEEK 1

## DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

| *Revelation 2:1-7, Acts 19:17-41, 1 Peter 5:10*

**REFLECTION:** Think back to a time when you suffered for Christ. How does suffering offer a more significant opportunity to allow Jesus to be Lord of our life?

### SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

The tension that the Ephesian church experienced is not new (Acts 19:23-41). This was a city full of spiritual, religious, political, and economic tensions. The temptation for the church was to conform or be isolated. They could be kept from buying into the commerce and being a part of the community if they refused to conform to the culture, their gods, and their political worship. The church in Ephesus stayed strong through these challenging circumstances. They rebuked the pagan worship and lifestyle. For that decision, they suffered. Suffering is never easy (it's why we ignore books of the Bible like Job and Lamentations), but it is part of the life of a true Christ-follower.

Walking in step with Christ means stepping out of culture and society; it means standing out, being different, and potentially being ignored, rebuked, judged, and persecuted. The Bible speaks a lot about suffering for the sake of the gospel. It says clearly that suffering builds endurance (Romans 5:3-5), makes us steadfast in our faith (James 1:2-4), and is a means for joy because it means we are following the righteous path. Suffering is a natural result of following Christ in this world and can be a catalyst to growing closer to Christ. Remember His promise to those who suffer and hold close to the encouragement He gave to the Ephesian church for staying steadfast in their suffering.

# WEEK 1

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## DAY 4 - THURSDAY

| *Revelation 2:4-5, Luke 10:27, Matthew 5:43-48, 1 Corinthians 13:13*

**REFLECTION:** Write down your favorite verse from the above reading.

What do you think it means to love?

How can we be known for our love for God and people rather than be known for what we are against?

### LOST LOVE

A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Have I not often reminded you that almost any disease may be hopefully endured except disease of the heart? But when our sickness is a disease of the heart, it is full of danger; and it was so in this case; "Thou hast left thy first love." It is a disease of the heart, a central, fatal disease, unless the great Physician shall interpose to stay its progress, and to deliver us from it. Oh, in any man, in any woman, any child of God here, let alone in the church as a whole, if there be a leaving of the first love, it is a woeful thing! Lord have mercy upon us; Christ have mercy upon us: this should be our solemn litany at once. No peril can be greater than this. Lose love, lose all. Leave our first love, we have left strength, and peace, and joy, and holiness.

Written by C. H. Spurgeon- A Sermon October 24th, 1886

# WEEK 1

## DAY 5 - FRIDAY

| *Revelation 2:7, Genesis 3:22-24, Matthew 5:12, Revelation 22:1-21*

"When we return to loving God and the world for which he died, we return to Eden."  
Eugene Peterson - *This Hallelujah Banquet*

**REFLECTION:** Set an alarm on your phone for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and sit in silence. Simply ask God one thing: "help me hear your Spirit." Write down anything you felt you heard, experienced, or learned about God in this time.

### LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT

I find the most powerful directive that Jesus gives to the church in Ephesus at the beginning of verse seven. "...listen to the Spirit..." Our call as Christians and the church should be to listen to the Spirit in everything. When we listen to the Spirit, we find direction in walking with the Spirit (following the ways and desires of the Lord).

Revelation repeatedly talks about receiving eternal life (the tree of life, the crown of life, the white stone, the morning star, etc.) Eternal life is the believer's reward; it's a life of being able to finally, fully and completely, listen to the Spirit. This is single-handedly, though, the thing we neglect the most as believers, slowing down to be still and listen to the Spirit. As Jesus wraps up His words for the church of Ephesus, He encourages them to listen to His Spirit. Why? Because when we listen to the Spirit, we hear God's wisdom, we learn His plan, we see His love for us and the world, and we can echo these things back to Him and His people.

# WEEK 1

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## DAY 6 - SATURDAY REFLECTION DAY

Revelation 2:1-7

**REFLECTION:** Write down a verse that stands out to you from this week's reading of Revelation 2:1-7. Why did you choose this verse?

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR WEEK 1:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
  - What do you think God is saying to you in this letter? What do you think God is saying to the church?
  - How can you begin to love God and His people more every day?
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## DAY 7 - SUNDAY REST DAY

*Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading that you missed. Use the extra space on this page to journal, write down questions, thoughts, or ideas.*