



# LETTER TO A FADING CHURCH

*REVELATION 2:1-7*

## SYNOPSIS

In Revelation 2:1–7, Jesus writes to the church in Ephesus, a church marked by strong doctrine, hard work, and faithful endurance. They guarded truth carefully, rejected false teaching, and labored tirelessly for Christ’s name. Yet beneath all their faithfulness, something essential was fading. Jesus confronts them with a sobering charge: they had abandoned the love they had at first. Their orthodoxy remained, but the furnace of love that once fueled it had grown cold. Christ warns that loveless faith, no matter how correct, cannot sustain the church’s witness. He calls them to remember the joy they once had in Him, to repent of neglecting that love, and to return to the simple acts of devotion that once flowed naturally from their hearts. The passage warns against loveless orthodoxy and invites believers back into renewed intimacy with Christ, where truth and love burn together once more.

## SERMON OUTLINE

1. **What was going well:** The Ephesian Church is commended by Christ for their hard work and orthodoxy. They defend truth and do not allow false teachers any room to operate among them. In our day the great risk is both a “loveless orthodoxy” (the main thrust of this passage), but also an “orthodox-less love.”
2. **What was not going well:** The Church in Ephesus has forgotten their first love. Here we consider the great love of God, and what it means to be a Christian who has been immersed in the overwhelming love of God. We will test ourselves to see if we have lost our first love with a few questions.
  - a. Do you walk with a genuine daily joy in Christ?
  - b. Do you have a hunger for corporate worship on Sundays?

- c. Do you truly depend on prayer?
- d. Do you have a burning hope for nonbelievers in your life to know Christ?

3. **How to fix the problem:** Christ gives three clear commands of how to fix the problem. They must remember their first love. They must repent of their error. And they must do those things they did at first that fostered love. The answer is not moralism or greater religious fervor, it is simply returning to Christ, the great lover of our soul.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### LOOKING AT THE TEXT

*These questions are designed to get you looking at the details of the text on your own. Use them only as they help foster skills among your group of seeing and savoring the details within the passage.*

1. Who is the angel in question in verse 1? What clues do we have in the rest of the text?
2. Who is speaking in this section of the text?
3. How does Jesus describe Himself in verse 1, and why is this description important for the church?
4. What problem does Jesus confront the church in Ephesus? What does that refer to in this context?
5. What are three Commands that Jesus gives in verse 5? What warning does he give if they do not repent?
6. How does verse 7 emphasize the relevance of this message beyond Ephesus?

### GROUP REFLECTION & APPLICATION

1. Can you identify a season when your love for Christ felt more alive than it does now? What was different about your desires, habits, prayers, or affections during that time?
2. Have you ever known somebody who had a “loveless orthodoxy” (they knew much about Christ without having a love of Christ). What signs in their life communicated this to you?
3. What are some ways you might be faithfully “doing Christian things” while subtly neglecting intimacy with Christ? How has busyness or duty crowded out delight?

4. Which of the diagnostic questions in the sermon stirred conviction for you most deeply, and why? What did it reveal about the current condition of your heart? The diagnostic questions to check for a fading heart were:
  - a. Do you walk with a genuine daily joy in Christ?
  - b. Do you have a hunger for corporate worship on Sundays?
  - c. Do you truly depend on prayer?
  - d. Do you have a burning hope for nonbelievers in your life to know Christ?
5. What would “remember, repent, and do” look like concretely in your life this week? What is one specific step you could take to return to Christ as your first love rather than merely maintaining religious activity?