



## “8 Great Truths: Snapshots From Jesus in The Book of Revelation”



Teacher's Guide

### The Church @ Ephesus - Legalism and Inward Focus Kills Churches & Christians Week 2 – June 13, 2010

#### Opening Events and Prayer:

**Icebreaker:** What does it take to perform CPR and save a life? (*Know what it is, how to do it. Knowing what is wrong with the person could be helpful and you have to actually be willing to do it.*)

**Transition:** The church at Ephesus needs CPR. They have lost their breath. We'll see that Jesus calls it their first love. The first love is the very life of a marriage. It is the commitment, the vision for the future, the depth of love in your soul where you know this is a right relationship and that you can't live without that person.

**Question:** How can churches today lose their first love even while staying busy and possibly even growing? (*Satan loves it when a church grows in size while losing their true purpose. That is a powerful weapon in his arsenal.*)

#### Read Revelation Chapter 2:1-7

- **City Tour** - Using information from Craig Koester's web tour, provide the following information:  
<http://www2.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm>
  - **Culture and Government**
    - 4th Largest in the empire
    - Free City
  - **Commerce and industry**
    - Port city
    - Connected western Roman Empire with eastern trade routes
  - **Religious practices**
    - Temple of Artemis, 7 wonders of the ancient world
    - Prominence of witchcraft and Stoic philosophy
    - Center of Pauline activity for 3 years
  - **Questions for discussion**
    - What parallels are there between Colorado Springs and Ephesus?
    - What are the ruling values in our culture that could be compared to the Ephesians' Artemis, Stoicism, and witchcraft in Ephesus?
- **The Letter**
  - 2:1 - Picture the author - generally drawn from chapter one images
    - Holder of the 7 stars - The seven messengers or representatives of the churches
    - One who walks among the golden lamp stands - the lamp stands are the churches themselves. They hold up the light, Jesus Christ. They are the assembly of saved people. The lamp stand can also represent their salvation and right to be called a church because ceasing to uphold the light of Christ is a denial of his saving work.
  - 2:2 - 3 Archival image - What the church originally looked like
    - Hard workers



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- They had been a very active church.
- It is likely that the message of Salvation had spread across the trade routes to the other cities of the seven churches because of people from Ephesus.
- Perseverant
  - They have kept themselves pure
  - They have endured the tribulations
- Intolerant of wickedness and false doctrine
  - They watch their doctrine like a hawk.
  - They don't allow any departure from sound doctrine
  - They don't allow those in who may not have things right to keep themselves from being polluted
- Tireless
  - **Questions for discussion:**
    - What is the Ephesian church doing well?
    - Do you know any churches like this?
- 2:4 - An image gone fuzzy
  - Loss of first love
    - Recall the way they threw off the shackles of the witchcraft and paganism around them and made the message of freedom in Christ known in Paul's day.
    - They have lost their love for evangelism. They have become an inward focused church. To love Jesus is to love what Jesus loves. Jesus told us that He left heaven to seek and save the lost. That was Jesus' primary mission. How does John 3:16 verify that evangelism of the world is the purpose of His heart?
    - They have right doctrine, but they have become a holy huddle. Their doors are locked from within.
  - A Church of Cold Orthodoxy -- where being right is the most important thing.
    - **Questions for discussion:**
      - What's the danger of in type of church?
      - What would have happened to the other six cities if they had started out this way?
      - How is this type of behavior self-deceptive spiritually?
- 2:5 - 6 - A call to refocus
  - Remember from where you have fallen
    - They have forgotten the experience of radical transformation that Jesus brought to them they need to recover that zeal to tell others.
  - Removal of their lamp stand
    - They are supposed to be a lamp stand holding high the light of Christ. That's what a **CHURCH** does.
    - Jesus promises that they will cease to be a church, i.e. cease to be a part of his body.
    - Jesus is pointing out that living as a citizen of New Jerusalem requires the sharing of the gospel, without it you cease to be a part of his body.
    - This ties the Message of Salvation to Salvation itself.
    - It also destroys the notion of "once saved, always saved."



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- Repent & Return
  - Jesus says the only way to eternal security is to turn back and return to the relationship with him they once had.
  - Our assurance of Salvation is integrated to the maintenance of our relationship with the Savior.
- Reassurance
  - At least they hate the practices of the Nicolaitians
  - Note he doesn't say he hates **Them**
  - ***Questions for discussions:***
    - What does it mean to have their lamp stand removed?
    - What would it mean for this church to repent and return to the things they did at first?
    - What will happen if they remain as they are?
    - Who were the Nicolaitians? -- -- we don't know who they were or what they taught, but Jesus hated it.
    - Why does Jesus reassure them?
- 2:7 - Picture the future
  - Rewarded with access to the Tree of Life
    - The tree of life rarely appears in Scripture.
    - With the exception of Proverbs, it only shows up in Genesis 2, where it was available to Adam and Eve, Genesis 3, where it is put off limits to mankind, and Revelation (here) and in Chapter 22 the final chapter of the Bible as part of the New Jerusalem.
    - The tree of life is the image of immortality (See the teacher's resources)
    - In Revelation the tree of life is the supreme image of future splendor and paradise regained
- ***Summary discussion***
  - What is the church's true role in the Fallen Babylon world?
  - What would conquering/overcoming look like for Pikes Peak? What about for you personally?
  - Do you see evidence of the Ephesus virus in the church today?
- **Peering Deeper**
  - What can you discover about light, lamps, and lamp stands as images in biblical literature?
  - What does the phrase "To him who has ears, let him hear" mean?