

Small Group Leaders' Guide

Revelation 2:1-7 - Return to Your First Love

Main Idea

Jesus commends what is faithful, confronts what is failing, and commands us to return to our first love.



Warm Up

Most things do not grow cold all at once; they cool gradually.

What is something in life that must be regularly maintained or it will slowly deteriorate?

Examples might include a marriage, friendship, physical health, home, or vehicle



Know It

Ask someone to read **Revelation 2:1–7** aloud.

As the passage is read, listen for: What Jesus commends, confronts, and commands.

1. Jesus Commends the Church - Revelation 2:1–3

“I know your works, your labor, and your endurance.”

Jesus knew everything about the church at Ephesus. He saw their hard work, perseverance, and commitment to biblical truth.

The word translated “**labor**” is *kopos*. It describes difficult and exhausting work.

The word translated “**endurance**” is *hypomonē*. It means remaining faithful under pressure.

The Ephesians served Jesus when ministry was difficult. They also tested those who claimed to be apostles and rejected false teaching.

Their service may not always have been recognized by people, but it was recognized by Jesus.

- Begin with encouragement. Help members recognize where they are faithfully serving, persevering, and standing for biblical truth.
- Emphasize that Jesus sees their faithfulness, even when their work feels unnoticed or unappreciated.
- Encourage honest reflection: Are we serving Jesus from genuine love, or are we merely fulfilling responsibilities and maintaining routines?

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Discussion Questions

1. What specific qualities did Jesus commend in the Ephesian church?
2. Which is most difficult for you: serving when you are tired, remaining faithful under pressure, or standing for truth when it is unpopular? Why?
3. How does knowing that Jesus sees your faithfulness encourage you when other people do not recognize it?

Key Truth

Our faithful service may be overlooked by people, but it is never overlooked by Jesus.

2. Jesus Confronts the Church - Revelation 2:4

“But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.”

The church at Ephesus appeared strong from the outside. They were working, persevering, and defending the truth. However, Jesus saw that their hearts had drifted.

The Greek word translated “**abandoned**” is *aphiēmi*. It means to leave, forsake, or walk away.

They were still working for Jesus, but they were no longer walking closely with Jesus. They had maintained their ministry while losing their intimacy with Him.

It is possible to attend church, serve faithfully, and believe the right things while our love for Jesus gradually grows cold.

- Create a gracious atmosphere for self-examination. Jesus’ confrontation is meant to restore us, not simply condemn us.
- Help members distinguish between outward activity and inward affection. A person can be busy doing good things while slowly drifting from a close relationship with Jesus.
- Encourage each person to consider what may have weakened their love for Christ—busyness, disappointment, distraction, sin, or spiritual complacency.

Discussion Questions

1. How can someone remain busy working for Jesus while slowly drifting away from Jesus?
2. What warning signs might reveal that our love for Jesus is beginning to grow cold?
3. Is there anything in your life that may be competing with Jesus for first place in your heart?

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Key Truth

Jesus does not merely want our religious activity; He wants our hearts.

3. Jesus Commands the Church - Revelation 2:5–7

“Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

Jesus did not merely identify the problem. He told the Ephesian church how to respond.

Remember

Remember God's grace and what your relationship with Jesus was like when your love for Him was fresh.

Repent

The Greek word *metanoeō* means to change your mind in a way that produces a change of direction. Repentance means agreeing with Jesus about our spiritual condition, turning from what has taken His place, and turning back to Him.

Return

Jesus said, “Do the works you did at first.”

Return to prayer, Scripture, worship, obedience, gratitude, and serving others from a heart of love. Jesus also warned that He would remove their lampstand if they refused to repent. A church can maintain its activities while losing its spiritual light and influence.

But Jesus promises eternal life to those who overcome and remain faithful to Him.

- Focus on Jesus' three-part command: **remember, repent, and return**. Encourage members to remember when their relationship with Christ was vibrant and what practices helped cultivate that love.
- Present repentance as a hopeful change of direction. It means turning away from whatever has replaced Jesus and returning Him to the center of life.
- End with a practical response. Ask each person to identify one action they will take this week to renew their love for Jesus—prayer, Scripture, worship, confession, obedience, or serving someone from the heart.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you remember about a time when your relationship with Jesus felt especially close and personal?
2. Why should repentance be understood as an invitation to restoration rather than merely a reason to feel guilty?
3. What is one “first work” Jesus may be commanding you to begin doing again?

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Key Truth

We do not have to remain spiritually cold. Jesus invites us to remember, repent, and return.



Live It

Personal Application and Prayer

Complete the following statement:

“This week, I will return to my first love by _____.”

Possible responses include:

- Reestablishing a daily prayer time
- Reading Scripture for personal growth
- Confessing an unresolved sin
- Removing a spiritual distraction
- Worshiping with greater gratitude
- Serving someone from a heart of love



Prayer

Closing Prayer

“Jesus, thank You for seeing our service, knowing our struggles, and loving us enough to confront our hearts. Show us where our love has grown cold. Help us remember Your grace, repent of anything that has taken Your place, and return to our first love. Rekindle our desire for Your Word, Your presence, and Your purposes. May everything we do flow from hearts that truly love You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Take-Home Truth

Jesus commends what is faithful, confronts what is failing, and commands us to return to our first love.