

**GROWTH GROUPS**  
**WEEK 2**  
WEEK OF JANUARY 20TH

# *Dear Church,*

## *The Seven Letters of Revelation*



GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2019 – DEAR CHURCH,  
WEEK 2 – JANUARY 20, 2019 - REVELATION 2:1-7

### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) What did you “love” to do or “enjoy” doing when you were a child? Where did you “love” to go? Do you still do those things or visit those places?

### SETTING THE CONTEXT

This week we take a look at the first of seven letters found in Revelation 2-3. All of the letters follow a similar pattern. They start off with a reminder of something that was said about Jesus in chapter 1. In this instance, it is describing how Jesus holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. The letters then continue to celebrate what the church has done well (with the exception of Laodicea) and then move to what issue needs to be addressed or corrected (except for Philadelphia). Each letter ends with a warning and then a promise.

You can read more about Ephesus in Acts 19 and Acts 20:13-38. Ephesus was a major city and the most important city in this region and also home to the temple of Artemis. On the grounds of the temple was a large garden which contained a “tree” that was used as a shrine, as well as a place of asylum. This literal garden and tree provide the backdrop for a conversation about the “tree of life” and “freedom” found in Christ.

The Ephesians had abandoned the love they had at the beginning of their spiritual lives. Their love for God and for others had begun to diminish. It is likely Jesus was admonishing them for living for themselves and failing to live fully for him. They needed to turn things around and repent and get right with God.

It is not clear exactly who the Nicolaitans were, or what exactly they were teaching. The church was given a warning to guard against the false teachings that did not reflect what Jesus and the other apostles had taught. The young churches were facing the threat of pagan teaching and persecution and they were encouraged to keep the faith and persevere in their love of Jesus.



Verse 7 concludes with a reference looking back and looking forward. Genesis 3:24 reminds us that after Adam and Eve were sent away from the garden, God placed a cherubim on the east side of the garden to keep anyone from accessing the tree of life. And in Revelation 22:2 we read about the tree of life in the new heaven and how the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read Revelation 2:1-7

<sup>1</sup> *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. <sup>3</sup> I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup> But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup> Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. <sup>6</sup> Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup> Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.*

- 2) Verse 1 reminds the church at Ephesus that the one speaking to them was the one who held the seven stars and walked amongst the lampstands. What is the importance of this statement? What does it say about the authority and presence of Jesus?
- 3) We don't face the kind of persecution that the churches of Revelation were facing. Yet we do have trials and struggles. Can you think of a time in your own faith journey when you have felt like you had to persevere or endure hardships? What kept you from growing weary? Who helped to remind you of the promises of God?
- 4) The church in Ephesus was extremely strong after its founding. We are told that Paul spent three years in Ephesus and we also know that he wrote a letter to the congregation at Ephesus. Yet over time the church seemed to lose its way. Jesus tells the church at Ephesus that they have forsaken their first love. What do you think he means by that?
- 5) What do you think of the warning about repentance? How does repentance connect with our faith? What role should it play in our ongoing faith journey?
- 6) In Ephesians 4:14 Paul says, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” Then, in Ephesians 5:6 the apostle Paul warned the church at Ephesus, “Let no one deceive you with empty words.” Obviously, Paul was concerned about the false teachings that might arise in Ephesus. Revelation reveals that some of those things had come to pass. What false teachings or incomplete truths does the church of 2019 need to be aware of? Are these teachings found within the church, or outside of the church, or both?

- 7) In verse 7 Jesus says that the one who overcomes will have the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. We are told in Genesis 3:24 that the way to paradise is guarded by a cherubim with a flaming sword and that no one can enter. Yet now, Jesus tells John that the one who perseveres and overcomes will eat from the tree of life. What is the significance of this? See also Revelation 22:1-2.

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) The concept of first love seems to be connected to actions. Love doesn't appear to just be something that we feel internally, but also something that is expressed externally. Jesus tells the church to do the things they did at first. What sort of things do you think that early church did? What caused them to stop doing those things? In what sort of ways should LJPC express God's love to our community and world?