

You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling

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***But I have this against you,
that you have left your first love.
~Revelation 2:4 (NASB)***

1) Historical Background of Ephesus

- A) 550BC: The earliest Ephesus we know of was a smaller city on the slopes of Pion hill. Conquered by Croesus of Lydia, the city was moved around the ancient temple to Artemis already in the flat valley below.
- B) 375BC: An Aegean Sea harbor is built near Ephesus, and the city moves again to center around it. The Artemision (temple to their fertility goddess) burns down, but is rebuilt to become one of the “seven wonders of the ancient world.” She is symbolized with bees, stags, and a life-giving tree.
- C) 133BC: Ephesus added to the Roman Empire. The two great landmarks of Ephesus (harbor and temple) grow, causing it to become the richest, most influential city in Asia (modern day Turkey). It's now the most prominent seaport and trade route hub in all Asia. The temple adds a “paradise”-style garden full of lush plants, trees, and animals.

- D) 52AD: Paul brings Christianity to Ephesus. Also involved in the next 40 years: Priscilla, Aquila, Apollos, Tychicus, Timothy. The Apostle John was an Elder here before his Patmos exile.

2) The Letter to Ephesus

- A) Jesus Christ is its author. He is the caretaker of His lampstands (the churches), with knowledge and authority (Rev 1:12-18).
- B) Jesus commends their great deeds, great doctrine, and great history (v.2-3). The common itinerant, heretical “apostles” (v.6) will not swindle or lead astray this church! They are a busy, powerful, and influential church.
- C) “But...” Jesus calls out their loss of love for Him (and, as a result, others). Deeds, doctrine, and lineage are great... but meaningless when love for Jesus has grown cold (1Cor 13:1-2). The consequence is removal of their lampstand/church (v.5b).
- D) However, Jesus gives hope (v.5a). He calls Ephesians to remember, repent, and return to “deeds they did at first.” Sympathizing with their hate of Nicolaitan heresy (v.6) encourages them to not abandon deeds or doctrine entirely, but to have their love for Him be foundational first.
- E) After another prophetic call to listen (ref. Is 6:10, Mk 8:18), the “overcomers” (Christians who remain faithful to the end) are promised a reward: enjoying the Tree of Life in Paradise (Rev 22:1-2). To Ephesians, familiar with Artemis tree symbols and the Artemis paradise garden in town, these metaphors would hit hearts in uniquely deep ways.

3) From Ephesus to Today

- A) Sometimes we do too much and it gets in the way of our loving. Do you love Jesus first? What are you doing to invest in your relationship with him? However you serve, whatever good deeds you do, whoever you minister to, or wherever you go for the gospel, remember to “love Jesus first!”



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Growth Group Homework



Powering Up

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message on "*Transcendent Vision*" did you find to be the most helpful, surprising, or challenging? Explain your answer.
2. ***My Story:*** everyone in the group share briefly about the time they first "accepted Christ" into their life. How old were you? Where did it take place? Why did you decide to follow him? Have fun learning about the diverse encounters you all had!



Digging In

- 1) **Christianity comes to Ephesus:** The "mother of the churches of Asia" and the key port city and trade route hub, Ephesus has a rich history with the early Christian church. Read Acts 18:18-21. How did "the Way" come to this crucial ancient metropolis? Who really stayed to start the church in Ephesus?
- 2) **The New Testament History of Ephesus:** With many well-known biblical personalities at Ephesus, there are many passages in other New Testament verses outside of Revelation that illuminate what the city and church were like. Read each of the following passages and describe what they tell us about the church and its surroundings: (Acts 18:24-28, 19:11-20, 19:21-20:1)



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3) **The Doctrine of Ephesus:** Other New Testament passages give light to the Ephesian love of right doctrine and also forgetfulness of their “first love” described in Revelation 2:1-7. Read each of these passages (Acts 19:1-10, Acts 20:15-38, 1 Tim 1:3-7, 1 Tim 4:1-8, 2 Tim 3:10-17), place them in the best of the two columns below, and include a summary of what it is saying. Note: we’ll look at a few passages from 1st and 2nd Timothy, as Timothy was an “intern” of Paul’s who eventually was dispatched to be the pastor of the Ephesus church.

About maintaining love for God/others

About loving correct doctrine



Connecting To Life

There were many cultural pressures in Ephesus fighting against the Ephesian Christian: demonic oppression, the practice of magical arts, false religions (Artemis), government pressure (Emperor worship), etc. What are the cultural pressures to abandon our correct, pure relationship with Christ today? In Southern California? In Long Beach? At your job? In your family?

Jesus’ admonition to remember, repent, and return to “your first love”, loving Him, to Ephesus in Rev 2:4 rings true for many of us today? What can you do to return to your first love of Jesus? What did you use to do back when you felt most closely in love with Him?