



STUDENT NOTES

Two Sessions





STUDENT NOTES

(TWO SESSIONS ONLY)

Throughout our time together, Revelation 2:1-7 will be our primary focus.

Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus:

Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars. I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. **Remember** then how far you have fallen; **repent**, and **do the works you did at first**. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Jesus shares these words with John the apostle for the church at Ephesus. The “angel” He references is likely the pastor of the church. In this letter for the church, and in all subsequent letters in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, Christ follows a similar format. He introduces Himself; commends the church on some things, critiques them on others, and then offers a solution for their situation. He closes by challenging them to truly hear what the Spirit is saying to them and offers them a promise, if they follow through in obedience.

The critical part of this letter is the reality they “abandoned the love you had at first.”

It is here that we start our workshop today.

SESSION 1: REMEMBER and REPENT

Think about your “best” love in your life (person).

What got your attention?

What kept your attention?

Why did you choose this person?

How does this love make you want to demonstrate it for him or her? Why?

Share with others at your table.

Here’s a “Jesus Story” video.

Watch and listen.

What's your Jesus Story?

In anticipation of a conversation that is no longer than five minutes in length, write how you came to know and love Jesus in your life.

How did you realize your need for Jesus?

How have you committed your life to following Him?

What difference has following Jesus made in your life? How has He continued to make a difference in your life?

Have you experienced a time when you were closer and more in love with Jesus than you are today?

- ☐ *No, I'm more in love with Jesus today than I've ever been.*
- ☐ *I'm afraid my lack of obedience to Him is an indicator that my heart has departed.*
- ☐ *I confess I've fallen in love with something (a person or activity) so much that I don't love God like He desires.*
- ☐ *When God first saved me from my sinful life, I was deeply grateful and in love with Him, but that love has faded.*
- ☐ *I can't pinpoint the reason, but I know I've drifted. I want to come back to that first love.*
- ☐ *I don't think I've ever had a "first love" for Him as He desires.*

We can all lack first and wholehearted love. Here are some warning signs:

- *Lack of obedience to Christ's commands, sinful disobedience*
- *Lack of love for one another, bitterness, unforgiveness, disunity*
- *Pride, arrogance, selfishness, or other un-Christlike behaviors*
- *Lack of concern for the things God cares about like the poor or the lost*
- *Declining regularity of fellowship (and attendance) with the rest of the body of Christ*
- *Struggle to get volunteers willing to serve in the Lord's work*
- *The absence of joy in public worship*
- *Little desire for corporate communication with God through prayer*
- *Holding on to preferences and personal opinions rather than the priority of God and His purposes for us*

“Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” Matthew 22:36-39.

How do you love the one you love the most?

- ☐ *Always being faithful*
- ☐ *Spending time together*
- ☐ *Caring for and nurturing*
- ☐ *Giving gifts*
- ☐ *Showing affection; intimacy*
- ☐ *Complimenting and encouraging; building up*
- ☐ *Doing acts of service*

If you love Me, keep My commands. (John 14:15)

What are the commands Jesus wants us to keep?

Write out your prayer to Jesus.

Dear Jesus, I want to love You more than...

and I want to love You more by...

Finally, I want to love You more so that...

Jesus wants to be your first (in priority) love in life.

What will it take for that to happen?

This story in Luke 5:1-11 takes place early in Jesus' and Peter's relationship. Jesus finishes teaching a multitude of people and turns His attention to Peter and his associates. In this story, Jesus reveals more of who He is. As a result, Peter is forced into some serious self-examination.

As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, he was standing by Lake Gennesaret. He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then he sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

"Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets."

When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear.

So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "**Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!**" For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners.

"Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people." Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed him.

Examine what Jesus has done in your life.

What about you is worth loving?

Why do you think Jesus did these things in your life?

Let's think about your Jesus Story again.

How did you respond in the first 24 hours?

How did you respond the following week or month?

Describe your journey with Jesus since then. (There are often steps or stages we go through as His followers.)

What happened in your life? Why do you think you experienced these steps and stages?

What are you going to do next?

What “rivals” your love, affection, and loyalty to Jesus? Where are you vulnerable to love something else more than Him? The Bible calls anything that we value more than God an idol.

- ☐ *Your spouse*
- ☐ *Your family*
- ☐ *Your job*
- ☐ *Your bank accounts*
- ☐ *Your possessions*
- ☐ *Your fun*
- ☐ *Your _____?*

What are you going to do about it?

If Jesus were to write a letter to you and your church (similar to the letters in Revelation 2-3), what would He possibly say?

On the next page, write your assumed letter from Jesus to you and your church. Think from His perspective. What do you think He sees? What does He know? What would He want you to know? How would He suggest you proceed, in order to recapture the love He wants you to have for Him?

- *How He identifies Himself to us*
- *What He compliments*
- *What He seeks to correct*
- *His recommended solution*
- *His promise to those who do as He says*
- *His declaration, “Let anyone who has ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Pray

Confess and repent of what Jesus has shown you.

Declare by faith to be obedient to what He has revealed.

Tell Jesus you love Him and desire that passion to be renewed and to burn brightly.

Put into practice what you have said you will do.

SESSION 2: RENEW

Evaluate your relationship with Jesus in three sentences.

Looking back at what you have written, what did you say about Jesus and who He is?

What did you write about yourself?

What did you write about what Jesus does or what He has done in your relationship with Him?

What did you write about your own role in your relationship with Him?

How does this evaluation of your relationship with Jesus make you feel?

Now, the scene moves to one of Peter's final encounters with Jesus in John 21:15-19.

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs," he told him.

A second time he asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," he said to him, "you know that I love you."

"Shepherd my sheep," he told him.

He asked him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said. "Truly I tell you, when you were younger, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don't want to go." He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After saying this, he told him, "Follow me."

After his denial of Jesus preceding the Savior's crucifixion, Jesus confronts Peter by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. In an attempt to facilitate restoration and a new chapter in Peter's relationship with Jesus, our Lord speaks to the disciple's continued love for Him. Not satisfied with where their relationship is already, Jesus challenges him to a new depth in their relationship. He does this with us, too.

What expectations do we often make that affect the way we relate to Jesus?

What assumptions do we often make that affect the way we relate to Jesus?

What do we need to unlearn or relearn?

How do we respond? What will we do?

Watch the "Get Back to God" video.

TAKE HOME

Think and Apply

Doing the same things in the same way will NOT yield different results.

Changes must be made: What? When? By whom?

How will You make your love for Jesus your first priority?

Who will You allow to hold you accountable?

Write down how you will show your love for Jesus.

-THE (RE)BEGINNING-

We love because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19