



weekend

resource guide

for the week of 11 March

You have forsaken your first love. (Revelation 2.4)

The apostle John is inspired, by Jesus Himself, to write a letter to Christians in Ephesus who are facing turbulent times and are making compromises with their culture (Revelation 2). They thought they were waging a zealous culture war defending God's truth and advocating His righteousness amidst a culture that had lost its moral and theological compass. Nevertheless their passion for Jesus was in jeopardy and they were exhorted to return to their first love. Followers of Jesus Christ pay attention: There is one thing and one thing only that God is looking for— an abiding and lifelong passion for Jesus Christ. In God's eyes there are no excuses. War, persecution, success, illness, family strife, personal "woundedness," ministry, and/or laboring for national righteousness are inadequate reasons for allowing our hearts to wane in our affection for Jesus Christ. God is responsible for your salvation. You are responsible to maintain your passion, love, and affection for Jesus.

It is so easy to be taken up with other things, even Christian things, but nothing is more important than Jesus. We need to keep our first love for Him kindled, vibrant, and responsive. After fourteen years of suffering under the Communist regime of Romania, pastor Richard Wurmbrand wrote, "There exists only one method of resisting brain-washing and that is heart-washing. If the heart is cleansed by the love of Jesus, if the heart loves Him, you can resist all tortures" or successes or cultural shifts.

How do we maintain our first love? Indeed, some of us may need to ask a more painful question first: has Jesus Christ ever been my first love?

Revelation 2.4 shows us the way: we must always be ready to "repent and do the things you did at first." Repenting means turning away from and confessing anything wrong in our lives, including a waning love for Jesus.

What sort of things did the Ephesian Christians do at first?

They came to the cross—is there ever a time when we do not need to call on God's grace?

They were filled with the Spirit—is there ever a time when we don't need the Holy Spirit flooding our hearts with the love of God and God's love for us?

They gave serious attention to God's Word—is there ever a time when we don't need the clear, challenging, and compelling revelation of Scripture to encourage, to teach, to remind, and to discipline us?

They burned their books on the occult and got rid of anything that displeased Him—is there ever a time when God is not calling us to take concrete action that expresses our commitment to Him?

What did the Ephesians do? They put Him first! Do you think that God expects us to do anything less? As we journey towards the Cross and the Tomb would you join me in purposefully fixing our thoughts upon Jesus? This season let us fix our thoughts upon Jesus (Hebrews 13.4) who is

God's last word...

the Heir of all things...

the creator of the universe...

the reflection of God's glory...

the great High Priest...

the supreme and final atonement for sin and
the great Pastor who understands us completely.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

Getting to know one another better...

What was the first warning you remember receiving? How was the warning communicated? What would have been the consequences if you ignored it?

2 John: a loving pastor's warning...

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. 5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.

13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

What? (does the Bible say)

What is John's apparent attitude toward the recipients of his letter?

Who is the "Chosen Lady and her children"? Why do you think John address them using this phrase?

What are John's hopes for "the Chosen Lady and her children"?

In verses 1–3, John mentions truth no fewer than four times. What are the different dimensions of truth that John refers to?

What are the “His commandments” John is referring to in v6?

Why do they need to be warned about deception if they are already walking in truth (vs 7-13)?

Now what? (how will I think based on what this passage says)

How do you define love?

John equates love with behaving in accordance with God's commandments (vv. 4–6). How is that similar to or different than your definition of love?

In verses 10–11 John issues harsh warnings. How do you reconcile his earlier words about love (vv. 5–6) with his directive to refuse to welcome or even greet false teachers?

The deception John warns against is that Jesus has not come in the flesh. What variations of this and other deceptive views of Jesus are being presented today?

So what? (difference will this passage make in how I live)

John prefers to communicate “face-to-face” rather than keep writing (v12). Do you think there is value of face-to-face relationships in a world of emojis, text messages, instagram, Skype, FaceTime, and Facebook?

Is there anyone that comes to mind that you should arrange to meet face-to-face? If so, why?

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