

CHAPTER 2

Jesus' Evaluation of Ministry: Message to the Seven Churches

Where is the Love: A Message to the Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

Song of Solomon 1:2-4 & 7

2 “May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. **3** “Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, your name is *like* purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you. **4** “Draw me after you *and* let us run *together!* The king has brought me into his chambers.” “We will rejoice in you and be glad; we will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you?”... **7** “Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture *your flock*, where do you make *it* lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?”

At the foundation of every healthy relationship is the assumption of love. Though the word itself is sometimes ambiguous based on the individual's use at the time, it is nonetheless expected to be at the foundation of authentic relationships. So what happens when that love has faded away, when the fire that was once there has been dissolved?

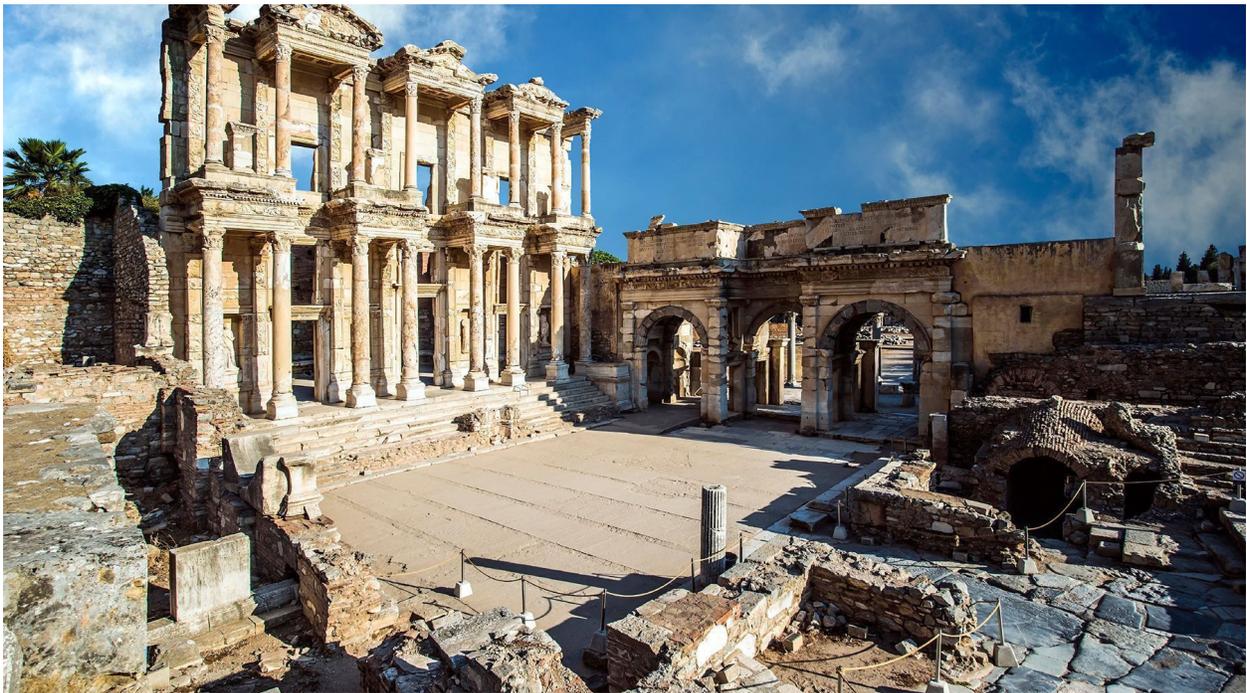
Most people today view Love as a feeling, it is not grounded in anything outside of emotions; therefore, “I love you until I don't love you anymore”, or “I feel for you until I don't feel like it anymore”.

The Church at Ephesus is going to find out from Christ Himself how He views their love for Him. Love is the primary factor in the operation of the church, but this is not just lip service, it actually begins with a genuine love of Christ. When the love for Christ fades, so does the ministry. We are going to see how important love is to the operation of the church based on Jesus' evaluation of the church at Ephesus and through this process we will discover five factors for evaluating this particular church.

The same thing that happened to the church at Ephesus is present in our churches today.

Historical Background

Ephesus was a prominent city in the Roman province of Asia Minor; Mentioned in Acts 19. Paul had visited Ephesus about A.D. 53, approximately 43 years before this letter in Revelation was sent to them. Timothy was overseer for a time; John succeeded Timothy; Onesimus succeeds John.





Revelation 2:1

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

Angel – Angelos: is an angelic being or human messenger.

“This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU’ (Matthew 11:10). As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; (Mark 1:2) The word “messenger” in both context is the word angelos or angel which was referring to John the baptizer (a man).

24. When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24) And He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him (Luke 9:52). In both instances presented the men were called angels or messengers. Therefore it is understood that Angel –in this case is referring to human messengers, most likely pastors or prophets through whom the message was to be delivered.

NOTE:

In this five step evaluation Christ is going to give: 3 *Commendations*, 1 *Indictment* and a *prescription for recovery*. Keep in mind that it is not John giving this assessment, but Christ.

FACTOR #1 (v. 1)***Christ Sovereign Rule and Authority Over the Church***

“The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this.”

Ephesians 5:23–25

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

Christ holds the messengers of these churches in His right hand, a place of sovereign protection as well as divine authority over them. The word “hold” (Gr. *Kraton*) means to “to hold authoritatively.” The messenger (angel), is therefore held in divine protection and under divine control, echoing what John had written earlier about the security of the believer (John 10:28-29).

“And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

FACTOR #2 (vv. 2-3)***Christ Commends the Doctrine and Diligence of the Church***

“I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.”

The Ephesian church is commended by Christ for turning from both moral corruption and theological error. These believers were bearing their burdens and refused to tolerate evil. They were patiently enduring for the sake of Christ.

FACTOR #3 (vv. 4-5)***Christ Indicts the Church for Lack of Devotion***

“But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.”

“You have left your first love” is better translated “the love you had at first.”

Though the Ephesians had not departed completely from their love of Christ, it no longer had intensity or meaning it once had which is a very serious condition. The church’s problem was not a lack of faith or will but a deficiency of the heart; their passion for Christ had grown cold. *How about you? Is it possible to confuse the study of God’s word with obedience to it?

To know of God without an intimacy with Him?

This was not always the case:

Ephesians 1:15–16

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

Paul expresses the importance of fervency and purity.

Ephesians 6:24

Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.

What happens when a church's love for Christ diminishes, then its replacement by a love for the things of the world, resulting in compromise and spiritual corruption, followed by a departure from the faith and loss of effective spiritual testimony. John said "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Jesus stated that, "whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).

1 Timothy 1:1-7

The goal of our instruction is LOVE from a:

- **PURE HEART**
- **GOOD CONSCIENCE**
- **SINCERE FAITH**

FACTOR #4 (v. 6)

Christ Commends the Church for Hating the Enemies of Truth

Whoever these individuals are, for Christ to say that He hated their works speaks strongly as to the nature of what they believed and did.

2 Timothy 4:14–15

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

Psalms 139:21–22

Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies.

FACTOR #5 (v. 7)

Christ Invitation and Promise to the Church

Revelation 2:7

‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’

1 John 5:5

WHO IS THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES THE WORLD, BUT HE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

Application (Christ prescription for recovery)

Love:

- (a) For God
- (b) For others

Read Aloud

1 John 4:19-21