

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of Oct 21, 2018



Pastor Temple 8:15, 10:55am Pastor Hall 9:30

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15-20 min)

- Anything to share about the past week? About follow-ups from last Sunday's message, "A Church For The Ages?"
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

- Opener: Do you remember when you first came to an understanding of what love is? How would you describe it?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture below, Revelation 2:1-7. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

**"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**

**⁴Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.
⁵Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.⁶ But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
⁷Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.**

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?

- In these passages above, John is passing on to the churches the words he received from our resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ. One of the “lampstands” or churches which He walked among, was the church of Ephesus addressed here. What do you interpret to be the positive aspects of the church at Ephesus (verses 2-3, 6)?
- What about the negative qualities of the church (verses 4-5)?
- The scriptures give witness to the troubled covenantal relationship between Israel and their God. For much of the time, it seems God’s primary “love language” was obedience and the people often stumbled in sin. What kind of response is our risen Lord calling for here (verse 4-5)?
- Matthew 24:12-13 says “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” How do these words of Jesus parallel his words in today’s passage? How are you encouraged in this relationship by the final verses of both scriptures?
- Do you make a distinction between something you know in your head and something you know in your heart? What is the difference and how does it affect a relationship?

Another Related Scripture (10 min)

- It is said that King David was “a man after God’s own heart.” David was not perfect, but he loved God and wrote many songs or prayers to God that is recorded in the Psalms. Would a volunteer please read Psalm 63:1-7. Listen for how David describes how he treasures God’s love for him.
- How is love like being thirsty (verse 1)?
- How do verses 2-4 describe his “church” experience and what kind of response is he led to?
- What other metaphors of and responses to God’s love are found in verses 5-8?
- What kind of effect do you believe taking time to remember and express our love for God has on our relationship with God?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (15 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the additional scripture above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- Do you have a regular time of prayer, bible reading, or reading devotional literature in your daily or weekly schedules to help keep a loving relationship with God growing?
- Two resources/opportunities to cultivate more intimacy with God:
 - Free daily devotional- Our Daily Bread, subscribe daily emails at odb.org, app also available.
 - Chapel Prayer Times with Pastor Michelle- Wednesdays 7:30am, Thursdays 6:30pm.
- What fresh expressions of prayer might we try this week? Writing a letter to God? Singing an old favorite song to God? Listening to praise/worship music in the car? Drawing pictures or symbols as a prayer to God? Reciting the Lord’s prayer or other prayers (psalms) of scripture out loud?

Witness & Closing Prayer (5-10 min)

- Pastor Temple said that when he first fell in love with God “He couldn’t make someone else love God but he did arrange a lot of first dates.” How does our love for God affect or influence our Christian witness to others?
- The group leader or another volunteer who took notes on the prayer requests shared earlier in the meeting, may now lead the group in closing prayer.