



## “More Than Motions”

— Dear Church—

### Small Group Plan

The church in Ephesus has sometimes been called “the careless church.” They didn’t intend to travel the route of pride and arrogance. But this is the reason so many Christians find themselves caught in a web of their own making. I’ve heard it said that a “weakness” is a “strength” that has been over-played. A strong personality can become overbearing. A sensitive personality might remain silent when he needs to confront.

The church in Ephesus had a great beginning. But, as Jesus says, “you have fallen.” Think through their story and look for your own.

### Acts 19:17-20

<sup>17</sup> When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. <sup>18</sup> Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. <sup>19</sup> A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. <sup>20</sup> In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

### Revelation 2:1-7

<sup>1</sup> “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: <sup>2</sup> I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. <sup>3</sup> You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. <sup>4</sup> Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember the height from which 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. <sup>6</sup> But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. <sup>7</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who

*overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- How can even the most enthusiastic love grow cold over time?
- Can you think of something that you cherished as a child, but eventually outgrew?

### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

## **COMMENDED**

**Vs. 2-3, 6**

<sup>2</sup> *I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.* <sup>3</sup> *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ...*

<sup>6</sup> *But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

- For what were the Ephesian Christians commended?
- How would you describe their staying power?
- How could their strength become the cause of their failure?
- How can religious strength today lead to pride and arrogance?

## **CHARGED**

**Vs. 4**

<sup>4</sup> *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*

- What is the “love” that the Ephesian Christians have given up?
- How would you describe the commitment level of Ephesian sorcerers who burned their scrolls when they became Christians (Acts 19:19)?
- What were they actually giving up?
- How can that level of faith and commitment be “forsaken” ?

## **COUNSELED**

**Vs. 5**

<sup>5</sup> *Remember the height from which 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.*

- I underlined three words in my Bible:
- “Remember” – What are some of your early positive memories of faith and Christian relationships?
- “Repent” – Why does change almost always begin with turmoil or a personal crisis?
- “Do” – Why are early faith experiences so powerful that, when reengaged, they can revive a cold faith?

## **CHALLENGED**

### **Vs. 7**

<sup>7</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

- The gospels often report Jesus using the phrase “ears to hear.” What does it mean to really hear God?
- Why is “self-appraisal” so difficult?

## **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- The chosen vision for Prestoncrest comes from Matthew 22:37-40

<sup>37</sup> *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* <sup>38</sup> *This is the first and greatest commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”* <sup>40</sup> *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*

- Why must love for God always precede love for people?
- What happens to our love for God if it never extends to love for people?
- How can we connect the fire of our early faith journey to the maturity of our current faith journey?
- What is one step you can take this week to recapture the enthusiasm of your earliest faith experience?
- Close by thanking God for the strengths He has entrusted to each of us. And ask for a growing awareness of His love, that will keep our strengths from changing to weaknesses.