

REV 2

GUARDIANS OF THE GOSPEL VOL 1 - EPHESUS

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDE
TO BECOMING A
VICTORIOUS CHURCH

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Encourage the group to take turns reading and answering questions.

You will be asked questions on the topic. You can open the question to the group as you reach each question.

TOPIC: GUARDIANS OF THE GOSPEL

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Sermon audio: outlookchurch.co.za/sermons/298

READER 1

Being a guardian of the gospel is to be someone who ensures that the gospel is taught and shared so that its power and radical salvation is felt.

1 Corinthians 1:17

¹⁷For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever

speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

Our job is not to be clever and wise with our words. Our job is to ensure that the word of God remains pure and is from God; without being twisted or changed.

If the word of God is taught incorrectly or it is understood incorrectly, then the power of the cross and what Jesus did for us, loses its power in our lives.

READER 2

The church in Ephesus were the first to receive this letter from Jesus, in Revelation. The letter tells of the wonderful deeds that the church had done. It spoke of them as *patiently enduring*, and *intolerant of evil*, however; God had a warning for them.

Revelation 2:3-4

³You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. ⁴But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

God saw the wonderful deeds that they had done, however; it does not matter how many external signs that you show of doing well and being committed to God. All that matters is that you are still in love with Jesus. The letter mentions that they even suffered for Him, but that did not matter, because they were no longer in love with Him.

READER 3

God places a huge importance on a close intimacy with Him. We worship a God who isn't distant and far from us. God wants to be close to us and have an intimacy with us.

Psalms 73:23

²³Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand.

Psalms 139:7-10

⁷I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! ⁸If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. ⁹If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

The psalmist shows us this closeness that God desires to have with us. God wants to be close to us, and this is what we need to pursue with God.

Question 1: Are you pursuing a close intimacy with God in your life? Is your intimacy with God more important to you than trying to perform good deeds?

In Revelation 1, God gives us a revelation of the seven lamp stands. It says Jesus walks between the lamp stands, and the lamp stands are the churches. This means that Jesus walks among us and is close to us. It also tells us this in Matthew.

Matthew 18:19

²⁰For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

God shows us this intimacy He wants with us. He wants to be close to us and walk among us. This is what Jesus was trying to show to the church in Ephesus, but they had lost that love and intimacy they had with God.

Revelation 2:2

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.

Jesus says that He knew of the church's good deeds. This means that from the outside what people probably would have seen is a church that is doing well, and is faithfully serving God.

But God still tells them that they have fallen because of the love they have lost. This shows us that we can end up acting out *lives of love* for God without actually truly loving Him.

We could even be doing these good deeds for Jesus, which is the right reason, but that still does not necessarily mean that we have that first intimate love for Him.

It is never enough to live a good life for God. The only thing that will ever be enough is to truly love Jesus intimately.

Question 2: Can you identify in your life any times where you have done good deeds for God without necessarily being in love with Jesus still?

READER 6

We need to understand what the first love for God looks like so that we can identify in ourselves if we have fallen away from that first love.

The passionate early church had a few common aspects that showed their love and passion for God. They all wanted to be involved, no one wanted to sit back as a spectator.

Another was that people were generous and opened their homes and finances for the good of

spreading God's word and bringing people the gospel. A third was that the people openly confessed their sins. They were unwilling to let their sins hide in the dark, they brought them into the light so that others could hold them accountable and help them to stop sinning.

They were able to do these things because they were passionately in love with God, and all that mattered to them was the love they had for Jesus.

READER 7

But then Jesus went on in Revelation to give the church of Ephesus a very grave warning. If the church was to not repent of their falling away from God, Jesus said that He would remove their lampstand from its place.

Revelation 2:5

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. God and are called according to his purpose for them.

We need to understand the significance of this statement. Jesus already revealed to us that the lampstands are the churches, but He also told us that He walks among the lampstands. What this means is that if Jesus were to remove the lampstand from its place, what He is telling them is that He will no longer walk among them.

The price for losing your first love for Jesus is that you lose the close intimacy of having His presence near you.

READER 8

Revelation 2:7

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.

Jesus gave a heavy warning to the church about the consequence of losing your intimate love for Him, however; He did give this good news as well.

If we keep ourselves on fire for Jesus and in love with Him, we may eat from the tree of life.

Psalm 1:2-3

²But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.

³They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

Those who eat the fruit of the tree of life will prosper, but to eat, we first have to passionately love Jesus. And for us to eat the fruit of the tree of life, action needs to take place, this psalm tells us to meditate on His word day and night. This is how we can prosper.

SHARE YOUR HIGHLIGHT

Take turns sharing what stood out to you the most from what we read. What stood out to you and *why*?

ACTION STEP

What action step can you take to respond to God's Word?

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