

DEAR CHURCH - *Ephesus*

May 8, 2022 *Revelation 2; Acts 19:20; Ephesians 2*

OPENING QUESTION

In Revelation 2:2-5, the church in Ephesus is challenged to remember their first love. What do you think that means? Are there things about God, your identity, or the Church that you can easily forget? Sometimes faithfulness requires us to remember.

REMEMBER GOD'S STORY - *Acts 20:28-31*

- In a pagan society - with many other religions and "gods" - it was imperative the church of Ephesus remembered the truth of the Gospel story.
- The silversmiths in Ephesus were outraged because people stopped buying the statues of Artemis they made and sold. Men and women who practiced the dark arts began burning their books of magic. The story of God was turning the world upside down!
- When we fall into the mindset that "things are getting worse," or "it's just so evil everywhere," we can forget that God has called us (the body of Christ) to be the ones who are salt and light in those dark places.

What messages or false teachings pervade our world today? What are practical ways that you live out remembering God's story in your life? Have you seen the story of God impact whole communities like we see in Ephesus?

REMEMBER THE WEAK - *Acts 20:35*

- Jesus' words, "It is better to give than receive," that Paul quotes are not actually found in any of the Gospel accounts. However, his life was an example of this message.
- The church in Ephesus, surrounded by sorcery and pagan temples, could have been very tempted to resort to a Christian bubble, but instead they lived out what it truly means to live in the world and not of it.
- They also knew that in order to persevere, they had to live out John 13:35: "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Could you describe your life as being in a Christian bubble? We are called to serve, love, and remember people in need, whether they are inside or outside the church. Do you find one more challenging than the other? Why?

REMEMBER YOUR STORY - *Ephesians 2:11-13*

- Paul reminds the Gentiles that they were once aliens and strangers, having no hope and without God in the world.
- We are meant to remember our past, that at one time we were "far off". However, this does not mean that we are still living in the past; the blood of Christ changed our identity to sons and daughters, and we are new creations (2 Cor 5:17)!
- Remembering our stories creates a humility that recognizes the power of Christ's death and resurrection. We are now all welcome to join the family!

Do you struggle with remembering your story without being in bondage to it? How comfortable are you with sharing your own story of how Christ transformed your life? When was the last time you asked someone their story?



CLOSING QUESTIONS

Hear

What can you learn from the church in Ephesus? What are some things that stood out to you in this week's sermon and Scriptures?

Obey

What have you forgotten? Are there areas of your life where you have forsaken your first love? Like the Ephesians, we are called to repent and remember!

Pray

Pray that God will remind you of what you have forgotten - whether it's His story, the weak, or your story. Then, ask for opportunities to put that into practice as you go about your week.