

## Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

### Revelation 2:1-7

The book of Revelation is probably the most intriguing and least understood book of the Bible. If you'd like a quick way to get a good handle on it, I'd recommend watching the videos provided by The Bible Project (link below...just heads up it's a two-part video, combined lasting around 23 minutes):

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/revelation/>

As we wrap up our Ephesians series, we don't want to miss the input/feedback/evaluation Jesus had for the church in Ephesus, roughly 30 years after Paul wrote the letter we know as Ephesians.

A key word Jesus used in all 7 letters to the 7 churches (Revelation chapters 2-3) is "overcome", as in "...to him who overcomes...". In Greek it is the verb form of the noun "nike" (which would be a great name for a sports apparel company 😊). It means to conquer, to be triumphant, to be victorious. (Interestingly, etymologically speaking, in Greek mythology, Nike is the name of the goddess who personifies victory; the Roman equivalent being Victoria...that's a freebie for all you trivia nerds out there 😊)

The point is that Jesus is greatly concerned for His church (and it is HIS church) to be victorious and to overcome...which implies there was some level of struggle. Historically we know that the struggle was a combination of external persecution and internal corruption. "Corruption" can take many forms...anything from tolerating idolatry, sexual immorality, false teaching, to reliance on wealth/affluence/materialism, to allowing love for Jesus to grow cold...the latter being the case for the Ephesians.

It is interesting that the key to handling both internal corruption and external persecution is love for Jesus. Love denotes faithfulness, loyalty, commitment, affection, adoration, devotion.

To be hardworking, perseverant, and not growing weary are good and important things, as well as is standing firm for the truth and enduring hardships for Jesus. But if we're not careful those can become external behaviors that don't actually spring from a motivation of love. Perhaps one way we could paraphrase what Jesus said to the Ephesian church is "I know your deeds...which are praise-worthy; but I also know your heart...which causes Me concern." Or, yet another way of sizing up the situation, perhaps we could say that externally they seemed strong and vital, but internally—at the heart level—Jesus could see that long-term sustainability would be a problem if not fueled by a passionate love.

It should cause any reader (either the original readers or us today) to evaluate our relationship with Jesus...both individually/personally as well as communally/corporately.

**Q. What are you doing to cultivate your love for Jesus?**

- Q. What differences do you notice when you compare your early relationship with Jesus to your relationship today? Or, to ask it another way, how has your relationship with Jesus evolved over the years. (Perhaps think along the lines of understanding, emotions, attitude, and activity.)**
- Q. We're told that Jesus "walks among the seven golden lampstands" which is a symbolic way of saying that Jesus is present with His church, no matter where or when they are (i.e. Ephesus then, South Bend now). How aware are you of Jesus presence? What do you do to say alert/pay attention to Him daily, hourly, moment by moment?**
- Q. When you think of your/our relationship with Jesus (think both personally and corporately) does it seem more of "should" or "ought", or more "get to" and "want to"?**
- Q. Do your external behaviors match your heart attitude (or interior life)? Explain.**
- Q. Thinking in terms of spiritual disciplines, practices, habits, exercises, what do you do daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, annually? (Again, think both personally and communally.) Describe how they have deepened your love for Jesus.**
- Q. We can look at the 7 letters to the 7 churches as Jesus giving feedback/input/evaluation to them. Who do you go to for feedback/input/evaluation regarding your spiritual life? How can Home Group be a place where regularly give and receive such feedback in a humble, grace-filled, supportive way? What benefits could you see if this was a regular communal practice? What challenges do you see with it?**
- Q. As you observe the Church at large (perhaps the American church) what do you think Jesus wants us to overcome? (Now go from big picture to personal: what's your contribution to that?) Perhaps to ask in another way, what might Jesus tell His church today (the American church; or Riverside) to repent from?**
- Q. Something else Jesus said to all 7 churches in Revelation is, "I know..." and then He told them something about themselves. How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus knows every little detail about you (and the church that you're a part of)? Or what would you like Jesus to help you know/understand about yourself? Or the church you're a part of to know about itself?**