

WEEK ONE

EPHESUS: LOVE FIRST

GETTING STARTED

Choose one of the following discussion starters:

- What is your favorite love song or rock ballad? Why?
- What are some current cultural issues that tend to stir up passion rather than apathy?

Read Revelation 2:1-7.

I AM . . .

Lord of the church. In Revelation 2:1 Jesus says, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.’” In short, Jesus is declaring that he holds the seven churches. He is the sustainer and protector. He is in control. What a way to introduce himself in these letters!

See the video teaching and page 20 for more insight.

I KNOW . . .

Your works (Revelation 2:2).

See page 22 for more insight.

- Does it bring you comfort or concern to know that God knows your works? Explain.

I HAVE . . .

This against you: You lost your love (Revelation 2:4).

See page 24 for more insight.

Watch the video for week one.

- Give an example of our society's tendency to misappropriate love.
- What are some warning signs that the church is losing its first love?
- As individuals we have a bent toward desire. What do you desire today that competes with Christ?
- In Isaiah 29:13, the Lord described the people as those who "draw near with their mouth / and honor me with their lips, / while their hearts are far from me." Could he say the same of us in this season of life? Explain.

I SAY . . .

Remember, repent and do (Revelation 2:5).

See page 26 for more insight.

- *Remember:* Take a moment to share your conversion experience. What fostered your "first love" with Christ?
- *Repent:* As a group, read 1 John 1:8-10 and James 5:16. What do these passages say about our confession to God and others? How might we respond?
- *Do:* What were some of the things that initially stirred your passion for Christ? Which of these can you return to today?

I WILL . . .

Remove your lampstand (Revelation 2:5).

See page 28 for more insight.

- Read Matthew 16:18-19. While we can have confidence that the universal church will be victorious, individual churches may falter if they lose their first love. What would Jesus say to our church today? Is there danger in hyperactivity for Jesus without intimacy with him? Explain.

I PROMISE . . .

The tree of life (Revelation 2:7).

See page 30 for more insight.

- This promise is for more than mere life—a life of intimacy with our Creator. For more, read “At the Finish Line” on page 17 as a group to conclude this teaching.
- Pray together as a group, giving thanks for God’s unfailing love and asking for a vibrant relationship with him for each member throughout the years ahead.