

THE FIRST LETTER: FIRST THINGS FIRST

March 29, 2020

I. LETTER TO EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1 “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.

A. Jesus is in control.

1. *Jesus is with you.*

Revelation 2:7 Whoever 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.

2. *It may get worse before it gets better.*

B. You are going to make it!

- **Our hope is not in living a perfect life today but in the eternal life of our future.**

Revelation 2:2-3 I 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. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

1. *Do the right things.*
2. *Believe the true things.*
3. *Endure the hard things.*

- **You can work so hard for what is in front of you that you lose sight of what truly matters to you.**

Revelation 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

4. *Don't miss the first things.*

- a. **There is no time like a crisis to challenge your priorities.**
- b. **If your priorities are right, your heart will be right.**
- c. **How does a pandemic affect your priorities?**

Mark 12:30-31 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

- How do you love?
- What do you love?
- Who do you love?

Revelation 2:4 (NKJV) "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

- Is Jesus the first thing in your life?

Revelation 2:5 Consider 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.

II. **THREE STEPS FOR KEEPING FIRST THINGS FIRST**

1. Reflect

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- What is the state of my heart?
- How anxious are my thoughts?
- Is my life offending others?
- Is my life offending God?
- Am I heading in the right direction?

2. Repent

Psalms 51:7-12 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

- Repentance brings honesty.
- Repentance brings joy.
- Repentance brings freedom.
- Repentance brings life.

3. Repeat

Revelation 2:7 Whoever 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.

- The things you prioritize in this season will determine the value of this season.
- When you put first things first you will find victory and life.
- You are going to make it!