

## Ephesus' Evaluation

### I. Slide1,2 Intro: Ephesus' Evaluation

- A. Next week my *Timeline*.
- B. Our 1st *Postcard from Patmos*. Dear Ephesus...
- C. Ever had an evaluation done on you? At work. School. Ministry?
  1. Does anyone like them? But they are very good for us. (CCBC. Homeletics Q&A)

### II. Slide3 INTRO TO THE 7 CHURCHES

- A. We now start the 2nd part of John's book outline (1:19) *The things which are*.
- B. John, *Postman of Patmos*, pens *7 Important messages to 7 local churches*.
- C. Slide4 Note Patmos. Circle in order clockwise. Starting with Ephesus near the coast.
- D. Why is Christ 1st dealing with **the church**?
  1. Because, judgment begins where? (1 Pet.4:17) *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*
  2. So Jesus deals with these **7 churches**, before He deals with *the lost world*.
- E. Why were these **7 churches** singled out?
  1. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
  2. Why not Philippi? Why not Corinth? – There were **more popular** churches, there were **larger** churches, there were **more needy** churches.
- F. Some say because, these 7 represent *7 consecutive time periods of church history*.
  1. Though this is fascinating, intriguing, & we find some correlations when we examine each era, we clearly find the merits & weaknesses of not one particular church...**but all 7.**<sup>1</sup>
  2. What seems plausible at 1st, becomes something **forced & artificial** in the end.

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<sup>1</sup> Shepherd's Notes, pg.6.

3. We need to be careful in **spiritualizing** the 7 churches, as they were **real** churches who had **real strengths & weaknesses**.
4. **Ephesus**/Neglected Priorities; **Smyrna**/Satanic opposition; **Pergamos**/Religious Compromise; **Thyatira**/Immoral Practices; **Sardis**/Spiritual Apathy; **Philadelphia**/Lost Opportunities; **Laodicea**/Material Prosperity. David Hocking

G. **Slide5a 4-Fold Reference:**

1. **Local** - To the churches actually addressed.
2. **Admonition** - to **all** churches of **all** time periods as tests by which they may discern their true spiritual state. **Note:** in 2:7 **churches**.
3. **Personal** - In the exhortations **he who has an ear** & in the promises **to him who overcomes**. (7)
4. **Prophetic** - The progress of its spiritual state until the end of the church age.

H. **Slide5b So why these 7?**

1. **Geographically** – They were **readily accessible** to one another & the world.
2. **Historically** – They each had **strengths** to **commend** **and/or weaknesses** to **correct**.
3. **Spiritually** – **churches of every age** share the same strengths & weaknesses as those historical churches.

I. **Slide6 With each of the churches there is: 1st** a positive affirmation, **then** a corrective discipline, **& 3rd**, a motivating promise.

J. **Slide7 Have you ever evaluated** a church or a ministry?

1. You should have when you moved in this area.
2. When you came here what did you use as a measuring guide?
  - a) **The building? the amount of members?**

K. **Only Jesus Christ** can see the **true condition** & give a **true evaluation**.

1. Jesus here **peers into the pews** of 7 churches, & gives them each **a report card**

2. Just as an *ultrasound technician* places the probe onto the mothers stomach, and **views & measures** the growth, & **watches** for any abnormalities, **so** does Christ w/His babies.

- L. 2 of the churches are given **no affirmation** (Sardis & Laodicea);  
2 of the churches are given **no discipline** (Smyrna & Philadelphia).
- 1. These churches represent the **good & bad** in churches everywhere & in every age.
- 2. As we go through these over the next 7 weeks be thinking, **which of these churches would you join & why?**

### III. Slide8 **BUT HAVE NOT LOVE (1-7)**

A. Slide9a **EPHESUS** (1)

- B. **Background:** A great commercial center. It bore the title *The Supreme Metropolis of Asia*. It had the great Temple of Artemis/Diana (1 of the 7 wonders of the ancient world).
- 1. It was an important gulf city, a crucial export center, they had sea trade, 3 main routes converged there. It was wealthy, politically influential, & a very pagan city.
- 2. **Paul** did the church plant there. **Timothy** followed up. Later **John**.

C. Slide9b **Holds & walks** – Jesus’ **hands & feet** are emphasized here.

- 1. **Jesus** is in the midst of the churches & He knows what is going on.
- 2. **Holds** - When God has a hold of something it speaks of **divine security**, sovereign control. [remind you of Jn.10?]
- 3. **Walks** – represents His **continual presence** in his church. (peripateo/walk about)

D. Slide9c Others have an opinion of our church...**but** what does **Christ** think of it?

- 1. **Isn't it interesting** what **we** look at in a church, verses what **Jesus** looks for & commends or condemns in them.
- 2. **We ask**, **Is it a mini or a mega-church? Hymns or contemporary music?**
- 3. **We say**, **wow it's successful because they have a large building, or so many home studies, or programs, or awesome retreats.**

#### 4. What would you expect Christ to hone in on w/the churches?

E. **Note:** 1 point from the description of **Jesus** in **1:13-16** is used for each of the churches.

1. The specific attribute of Christ that applied to the particular needs of the church is emphasized in the message.

F. **Slide10a EPHESUS, BATTLE TESTED & ORTHODOX** (2,3)

G. **Religious busyness** - a *status symbol* in many churches today.

H. Remember He's speaking to those *inside* the church.

1. **Slide10b This was a Serving church** - a *Saint Martha's* if you will, **no not** the Catholic Church in town (they are a *serving church*) **but** a reference to *Mary/Martha*.

a) **Works** - They were *busy* doing the *works* of the Lord.

2. **This was a Sacrificing church** - **Labor** = toil to the point of exhaustion.

3. **This was a Steadfast church** - **Patience** = *endurance under trial*.

a) They were also known as *The Duracell Bunny Church*.

b) They were *Christian marathoners...disciplined, determined*.

4. **This was a Separated church** - They **didn't tolerate** those that are evil, & they **tested** visiting ministers.

a) They were the Pit-Bulls of orthodoxy. Guardians of truth. Chasing away false teachers.

b) They knew **How** to defend the doctrines of the Word, **but** forgot **Who** the doctrines pointed to.<sup>2</sup>

I. (3) **They were tired in** their labor, **but not of** it.

1. They were a **busy church** with **high spiritual standards**.

2. In every way this was a **successful** church...from the *human* standpoint.

J. **Slide11a LOVE IS PRIMARY** (4)

K. The Righteous Bro's sang, *"You've lost that loving feeling - Oh, that loving feeling - You've lost that loving feeling - Now it's gone, gone, gone - Whoa-oh"*

<sup>2</sup> Charles Swindoll, The 7 Churches, pg.15.

1. Was Christ singing the same?
  2. He had **one bone** to pick with them.
- L. **Slide11b** What is it to *have left your 1st love?* (left, abandon, to stop maintaining)
1. Do **feelings** follow **behavior**, or the other way around? If we did the things we did in the early days of our relationship with Christ, will we come to feel the way we felt at first? Again, do **feelings** follow **actions** or the other way around? Is this first-love issue primarily an issue of **feelings** or **behavior**? Is Jesus concerned with our **behavior**, or how we **feel** about Him?
- M. **Love is primary** and without it the church has no reason to exist. (wow)
1. Now, we both know *biblical love* isn't talking about **a loving feeling** but is **love in action**. That love isn't only sharing w/someone some words but is both words & action.
- N. After hearing of all the positive things this church was doing it's surprising to discover they had **left** (not lost) **there 1st love**.
1. No amount of **separation**, **sacrifice**, or **service**, can make up for your lack of love toward the Lord.
    - a) 1 Cor.13:1,3,13 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, **but have not love**, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal...And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, **but have not love**, it profits me nothing...but the greatest of these is **love**.*
    - b) When Paul wrote his letter to this church (Eph) earlier, he referred to Love **20x's!**
- O. Isn't this the very question Jesus asked Peter (3x's)? **Do you love me?**
1. There is always the danger of **a love grown cold**.
  2. **Slide11c** It's not a **hatred** of Christ, **not** even being **mad** at God; *it's indifference, it's apathy, it's lack of interest, lack of concern.*
  3. Christ is more concerned what we do **with** Him, **then for** Him.
    - a) **Slide11d** **Labor** is no substitute for **love**.
  4. To the public, the Ephesian church was **successful**, to Christ it had **fallen**.
  5. **Slide11e** Peter, do you love me? Ephesus, do you love me? CM, do you love me? *Your name here, do you love me?*

a) *The love of Christ compels/controls me.* 2 Cor.5:14

P. What decisions did you make that resulted in you **feeling** on fire for Christ?

Q. **Slide12a BEING RESTORED TO 1ST LOVE STATUS** (5)

R. **Remember** / *keep on remembering...* What you've lost. Cultivate a desire to regain that close communion again.

1. The prodigal *remembered* his home. [This is the 1st step to the road back]
2. **Reminisce.** *Flip back the pages in your mind. Take a walk down memory lane.*
3. What do you remember about **your** 1st date w/your spouse/boyfriend?
  - a) Dad's Caprice Classic. Supertramp's *Breakfast in America* 8-track playing. Seafare Inn Whittier (drawn butter, zipper, curb).
4. What do **you** remember about 1st being saved?
  - a) The freshness of God's word. Being enraptured in Worship. Hanging out after bible studies talking to friends.

S. **Slide12b Repent** – *Repentance is the admission that the fault is **ours**. It is the **acceptance of responsibility** for our failure & our fall.* Barclay

1. The prodigal son said, *I have sinned*. Saul (OT) said, *I have sinned....Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly.*
2. (Spurg) **Christ & we will never be One, until we & our sin are Two.**

T. **Slide12c Repeat** - *Do the 1st works* - The sorrow of repentance is **Not** to drive a man to despair; it is meant to drive him to **2 things**:

1. **Drive him to fling himself on the grace of God** saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*
2. **Drive him to action** that we may bring forth fruits w/repentance. (ie) *A changed life.*
  - a) \* Notice, they are to **Do** their 1st works, **not** to **Feel** their 1st feelings.

U. (Message) *Turn back! Recover your dear early love. No time to waste, for I'm well on my way to removing your light from the golden circle.*

V. The danger to the churches is that Christ would remove their testimony. He would rather have a city in the darkness **than** to have a lampstand out of His divine will.



1. There are 250,000 Protestant churches in America. 200,000 are either stagnant or declining (that's 80%). 4000 close their doors every year (that's 10 churches close their doors daily). *Patheos.com*
2. "The church that loses its **Love** will undoubtedly lose its **Light**...no matter how doctrinally sound it may be."
  - a) The glorious city of **Ephesus** retained its vigor till the 5th century but now is a heap of stones today, silt 7 miles inland. [fare assessment? are any? Well The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem has been around since 333ad]
  - b) **The local church is to shine as a light in the world.** W/o true **love** for Christ, it's true **light** will go out.

#### W. **NICOLAITANS** (6)

- X. **Nicolaitans** [nikao=victor, laos=the people] *To conquer the people*, a sect who lorded over the people. A Christian heresy. [Inventors of the *clergy/laity* split]

#### Y. **Slide13 OVERCOMERS** (7)

- Z. **Tree of life** – lost in Eden, regained in Paradise.
1. *Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, & eat, and live forever.* Gen.3:22 [(ie) live forever separated from God]
  2. The *thief on the cross* was promised this **Paradise** by Jesus.
  3. 1 Jn.5:4,5 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*