



Ephesus: The Forgetful Church

Week 2 | September 17, 2023
Community Group Discussion Guide

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Citizens Institute

Applications due October 1

Discipleship happens within the local church. We believe that no one should have to go outside of the local church to receive a theological education. In fact, for most people, going back to school or seminary just simply isn't an option.

The Citizens Institute exists to train and equip members in theology, doctrine, and practice to follow Jesus and lead in the local church.

The Citizens Institute offers three Core Modules to help our people internalize their faith and connect it practically to everyday life. Our Core Modules are for everyone, and we hope all Citizens members will go through them at some point.

This Spring we are kicking off the Institute with our first Core Module - Christian Practice. Spend 11 weeks from January - April, 2024 learning the ins and outs of how to follow Jesus in your everyday life.

[MORE INFO + REGISTRATION](#)

Family Vacation

November 10-12, Black Mountain, NC

Registration for this year's Family Vacation is now open! We value the chance to get away, retreat, rest, and spend time together as a church family, and we'd love for you to join us this year! On November 10-12, we are heading to the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC. We will be staying in two cabins on the property, and will have a main meeting area for family style meals and sessions.

Family vacation is open to all Citizens Church members, members-in-progress (have taken membership class), and children of current members. The cost of the trip is \$100/adult and \$25/child. Scholarships are available if needed, but please talk to Dan about that sooner rather than later.

If you're planning to attend, please register ASAP. The earlier you register, the easier it is for us to plan for the weekend. You can register and get more details by clicking the graphic below.

[MORE INFO + REGISTRATION](#)

REVIEW THE MISSION

Take some time to review who various people are building relationships with and seeking to share the gospel with.

Pray for these individuals - that God would open their eyes to the good news of the gospel.

PRAYER + SCRIPTURE

Open with a brief word of prayer: “God, we thank you for this time together. We open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us. Allow us to hear your voice and experience your work among us. Come Holy Spirit.”

1-2 minutes of silent reflection.

Read *Revelation 2:1-7*

“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. 2 “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’”

1-2 minutes of silent reflection.

Close with this short prayer: “. Spirit, help us to fight our apathy towards Jesus with long and steady devotion. We ask that our time in prayer, scripture, worship, and serving others would come out of the love Jesus has shown us and the love for Him that we have. Amen.

As you reflect on *Revelation 2:1-7*, what is the Holy Spirit showing or teaching you?

SERMON DISCUSSION

YOU HAVE LOST YOUR FIRST LOVE

In this letter to Ephesus, Jesus commends the church on their good deeds and good doctrine. They are praying, serving one another, sharing the gospel, and serving the poor. Additionally, they are also holding fast to solid doctrine, teaching and believing the right things about God.

However, in light of that, Jesus still has something against the church – that they have abandoned their love for Christ.

Q1: Has there been a time when you may have forsaken your first love for Christ?

Q2: What contributed to losing your passion for God? Do any of these resonate with you?

- I grew bored. I lost interest in following God and serving the church.
- I was wounded. Someone hurt me in the past and I let it dictate my present involvement.
- I became distracted by something else. My schedule became full of good, but lesser things.

THE PATH TO REMEMBERING YOUR FIRST LOVE

The truth shown to us in Revelation 1 is that we are not victims to our lost love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we actually can turn away from our apathy towards God and return to our first love.

Jesus gives us the path in verse 5:

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

We are instructed to:

- **Remember** - the gospel and how Jesus first captured your heart
- **Repent** - Turn away from lesser things that dampen your love for Christ
- **Return** - Step back into spiritual practices and do the works you did when you first followed Jesus

Q3: Spend some time now remembering how Jesus saved you. (Individuals should share what it was like when they first came to Christ as a means of encouraging one another in our love for Jesus)

Q4: What do you need to repent and turn away from right now that is hurting your love for Christ?

Q5: How can you step into spiritual practices this week (consider fasting + worship) **as a way of fighting for a renewed love of Christ?**

SERIES PRACTICES

One of our key discipleship values as a church is that of practice. Moving forward, we are going to begin emphasizing various spiritual practices during each sermon series. These practices are meant to coincide with the theme of the series, and something we invite our church to practice as a part of their spiritual formation.

PRACTICE #1 - FASTING

In its most basic form, Biblical fasting is the intentional abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. As Christians, we intentionally face the pain of hunger and lack to direct our hearts towards God.

For resources on fasting, check out:

- www.rhythmsandformation.com
- <https://citychurchknox.com/sermons/formation-v-fasting-rethinking-our-relationship-with-food>

For this series, we are encouraging individuals to fast from all food and non-water beverages from dinner Wednesday through dinner Thursday, as a means of focusing our attention on God and asking Him to deepen our love for Him. Although there is freedom to adjust this to fit your various circumstances or season.

PRACTICE #2 - WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

The second practice we are inviting our church family to participate in is that of worship through song. Singing is a great way to help connect what we believe in our minds to what we experience in our hearts.

To that end, our worship team has put together a playlist to help guide this practice for us, that you can sing along with in your car, in your home, on a run, or anywhere else that seems appropriate.

You can find the playlist here:



Take some time now before you close discussing plans for fasting and worship during the next 8 weeks as a group.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray over what was shared in the discussion, for your group to be united in the gospel, and for help from the Holy Spirit to be shaped to be more like Jesus as we put God's ways into practice.