

A letter to the Ephesian Church – Staying Known

Revelation 2:1-7

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



At first, the little band of Christians that had formed in Ephesus didn't really have any sway or impact on the local economy. Yes, they were different in just about every way that they could be. Their values, ethics, morals, and, most centrally, their spiritual convictions all stood out in contrast to everything that was Roman and, particularly, Ephesian. But, as time went on, this little band continued to grow, and as it grew, the stark difference in its members became more apparent. Not in the sense of political power or influence, there was only one political authority in town, Rome. And Rome doesn't share or extend power. Instead, the differences stood out in their lack of participation in the local idol trade and worship. They simply did not engage it, and when they shared the message of Jesus, it taught that the idols were powerless and impotent. Most missiologists (theologians that focus on missions) say that it takes just 2% of a local population to convert to Christianity to begin influencing that area for Christ organically. Was it at that point that the local idol trade was disturbed enough that it outraged a silversmith named Demetrius in Acts 19? We really can't say, but what Luke records for us is that Demetrius was so distraught over the teachings of Paul and the Christians that he stirred up the locals into a riot. One by one, through interpersonal, not political influence, Christianity challenged the cultural practices of Ephesus, and it was a tough place to be a Christian. So, the church there had to work hard to guard, protect, and teach right theology. And this was important work because who God is matters and theological precision matters in a religiously pluralistic place.

But, over time, the pressure continued to mount. Demetrius and his riot was a memory, a picture in the rearview mirror, but the contrasts between the Christian life and the Ephesian life were still prominent. As the pressure mounted, so did the temptation to make concessions to the culture. Some made concessions and entered into heresy, and others began to keep their faith more and more private. They lost their passion for sharing Jesus with the world around them. Sure, they held to right theology, and they kept studying and learning about God, but something pivotal changed in their relationship with him. They knew all about him (factually and intellectually) but had grown distant in being known by him. This wasn't a God problem, but a them problem. It is a reality that we know all too well; **I can know someone and not be known.**

1. Seven Letters – Seven Churches (Background)

a. Real churches with real pressures.

- i. As we continue in our study of the book of Revelation, we come to the second section, the seven letters (messages) to the seven churches of Asia Minor.
- ii. **Truth that applies to the larger church and the historic church (i.e, you and me today).**
 1. Some interpreters take the seven letters to the churches as purely a literary device. **They see the message as addressed to the church at large, with the division into seven as purely artificial.** Others take the churches to stand for periods in history, Ephesus representing the first century, Smyrna the period of persecution, Pergamum the age of Constantine, Thyatira the Middle Ages, Sardis the Reformation era, Philadelphia the time of the modern missionary movement, and Laodicea the apostasy of the last days (see Smith).
 2. **Such views are unlikely. It seems much more probable that the letters are letters to real churches, all the more so since each of the messages has relevance to what we know of conditions in the city named.**¹
 3. **So, why the messages? → The churches addressed in the three central letters have to varying degrees some who have remained faithful and others who are compromising with pagan culture.**²
 - a. **Despite the differences, all the congregations were alike in that they were subject to currents that threatened to undermine their commitments, whether blatantly through persecution, or more subtly through the erosion of the basis of their faith.**³

iii. There is a literary structure to the larger section of the seven messages.

1. In this light, the condition of the churches is presented in the literary form of a chiasm: a b c c c b' a'. The significance of this is that the Christian church *as a whole* is perceived as being in poor condition, since not only are the healthy churches in a minority but the literary pattern points to this emphasis because the churches in the worst condition form the literary boundaries of the letters and the churches with serious problems form the very core of the presentation. This is highlighted as we recognize that at the center of the middle letter stands a general statement that “all the churches will know” that Christ is the omniscient judge of his unfaithful followers (2:23).⁴
2. **A further pattern is to be discerned in the sevenfold arrangement.** Churches 1 and 7 are in grave danger, churches 2 and 6 are in excellent shape, churches 3, 4 and 5 are middling, neither very good nor very bad.⁵
 - a. **Only Sardis and Philadelphia do not receive a warning.**

b. Key interpretive principle – How did they understand and apply the message?

¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 62.

² G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 226.

³ Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 60.

⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 226–227.

⁵ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 63.

- i. Once we understand that, then we can apply it to our lives.
- ii. This is something we stated would be a hermeneutical principle for us in week one.
- iii. Why is this important? → It helps us to stay centered and ultimately not to read ourselves into the text (eisegesis). When we do that, we make the text say something that is not true and could be downright blasphemous.

c. Lampstands – Church or believers or both? (v. 5b)

- i. **Important** – These are letters to churches, that is, corporate groups of Christians. The warnings to close the church (lose their lampstand) is a warning to close the church, not to take away the salvation of individual believers.
 - 1. There is no scholarly opinion that I have read that teaches otherwise.
 - 2. **Yes, this warning (remove the lampstand) should strike us, but it should do so in a balanced way by the complete picture of who we know God to be.**
 - a. He has ultimate authority and judges rightly.
 - b. He is also slow to anger, gracious, and merciful.
- ii. So, how are we to understand the warning?
 - 1. We are to see it as a clarion call that there is only one head of the church, Jesus.
 - a. Not you, not me, not our board, not our denomination... all are ultimately under Christ who is the who holds the stars and walks among the lampstands.⁶
- iii. Did they respond to Christ's warning and call to repentance? → Yes, at least for a time.
 - 1. → ¹ **I BECAME acquainted through God with your much beloved name, which you have obtained by your righteous nature, according to faith and love in Christ Jesus our Saviour.** You are imitators of God, and, having kindled your brotherly task by the blood of God, you completed it perfectly. ² For when you heard that I had been sent a prisoner from Syria for the sake of our common name and hope, in the hope of obtaining by your prayers the privilege of fighting with beasts at Rome, that by so doing I might be enabled to be a true disciple, you hastened to see me.⁷
 - a. **This comment is likely written some 18 years after John writes Revelation.**
 - 2. **Who is Ignatius of Antioch?** - THE epistles or letters of Ignatius are among the most famous documents of early Christianity, and have a curiously complicated literary history. Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica* iii. 36 tells the story of Ignatius. He was the third bishop of Antioch in Syria, and was condemned to be sent to Rome to be killed by the beasts in the amphitheatre. His journey took him through various churches in Asia Minor and while he was in Smyrna he wrote letters to Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome, and later on, when he reached Troas he wrote to the Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans, and Polycarp the bishop of Smyrna. In his *chronicon* Eusebius fixes the date of his martyrdom in Rome in the tenth year of Trajan, i.e. 108 A.D.⁸

d. The Ephesian church: What was life like in Ephesus?

⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 231.

⁷ Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 173–175.

⁸ Pope Clement I et al., *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 166.

- i. Ephesus was the most important of the seven cities. Though **Pergamum** was apparently the official capital of the province of Asia, Ephesus was its greatest city (population 250,000+). It was an assize town and a seat of proconsular government (Acts 19:38). When a proconsul took up his appointment, he had to enter his province at Ephesus.⁹
- ii. **Ephesus may be addressed first because it played a leading role in the beginning of the Christian church in the Gentile world** (it was the center of the Pauline mission and later the residence of John). It also had geographical priority since it was the best port of entry into that part of Asia Minor (e.g., Roman governors going to other regions in the area would embark there).¹⁰
 - 1. **Paul spent over two years in Ephesus establishing the church (Acts 19:8, 10)**, to which the important Epistle to the Ephesians was later sent. Timothy was there for a time (1 Tim. 1:3), and tradition says that John lived there in his old age.¹¹
- iii. Not only important religiously for Christians, but also for Romans through the cult of Artemis. → In fact, much of the local economy was linked to worship of Artemis (Diana).
 - 1. **Acts 19:23ff - ²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”**
 - 2. Luke’s report of this conflict gives us the scope of the importance of Ephesus in the Roman world as a religious and economic center.
 - a. There would have been great pressure on the Christians in this city to bend to local religion so as to make sure that their livelihoods would have been preserved.

2. Right Doctrine Matters

- a. **The Ephesian church did well to struggle to keep right doctrine.**
 - i. **That is a word for us today, holding to right doctrine is not an easy thing, but it is a worthwhile thing.**
 - 1. Our Statement of Faith (SOF) – This is our rubric or compass as a church.
 - a. When questions on theology come up, this is the first place that we turn.
 - b. When you wonder, why is that what was taught? → Check the SOF.

⁹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 63.

¹⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 228–229.

¹¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 63–64.

- ii. V. 7 - The promises at the end of each section depict the faithful as “conquerors.” **This military metaphor assumes that the faithful in each congregation are engaged in a struggle to remain faithful.**¹²
 - 1. Though it is not specified precisely what is to be overcome, John’s other writings speak of both Jesus and the believer overcoming “the world” (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4–5). This implies the continued successful resistance of the world’s corrupt moral and spiritual influence.¹³
- iii. **Unsound doctrine is only a generation or two away.**
 - 1. **It is possible that John is addressing a second generation in the Ephesian church that had failed to maintain the witnessing fervor of the first generation.** If they do not repent, Christ will come and judge them. They will cease to exist as a church when the very function that defines the essence of their existence is no longer performed. However, the Ephesian church apparently responded positively to this exhortation (cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 1:1; 9:1; 11:2).¹⁴
 - 2.
- iv. **Staying faithful in Ephesus was no easy task.**
 - 1. V. 6 – You’ve resisted the Nicolaitans.... Good job!
 - a. **The Nicolaitans taught that some degree of participation in the idolatrous culture of Ephesus was permissible.**¹⁵
 - b. **A tradition having the support of some of the early church fathers identifies the Nicolaitans with the followers of Nicolas, who was one of the seven men selected to serve the church in Acts 6:5, but later became a heretical teacher.**¹⁶
 - 2. **Paul’s repeated refrain to Timothy... teach sound doctrine.**
 - a. Timothy was the pastor in Ephesus.
 - b. Timothy did his job well.
 - 3. There are at least 14 specific references to the importance of teaching sound doctrine. Here they are:

1 Tim. 1:3 - ³As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

1 Tim. 1:6 - ⁶Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

1 Tim. 3:6 - ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

→ This is an important note on the qualification of being an elder / overseer. Elders must be mature in faith and grounded in doctrine.

¹² Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 61.

¹³ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 65.

¹⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 232.

¹⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 233–234.

¹⁶ Steve Gregg, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 64–65.

1 Tim. 4:1 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,² through the insincerity of liars...

1 Tm. 4:6 - ⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

1 Tim. 4:16 - ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Tim. 6:1ff - Teach and urge these things. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness...

1 Tm. 6:20ff - ²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.

2 Tim. 1:13 - ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim. 2:1-2 - You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2 Tim 2:14 - ¹⁴ Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

→ In the larger context Paul goes on to warn Timothy to not engage in foolish controversies.

2 Tim. 3:16 - ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 4:2 - I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

2 Tim. 4:17 - ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

b. God’s promises only count if God’s character and nature can deliver on them.

i. Example: Wedding vows

1. When I work with any couple that is preparing for marriage we spend time reviewing what vows are and what they aren’t.
2. What they are – A solemn pledge that will be made in a moment of great joy and expectation. But, ultimately, they will be kept and realized in the difficult and hard moments of marriage.
3. What they aren’t - I often give the example that their vows aren’t simply a propositional contract like you sign when you buy a car. I.e., If you do this, then I’ll do that.
4. Again, wedding vows only matter or mean anything based on the character of the person making them. → If one person in the marriage is known to be untrustworthy or deceitful, then their vows mean nothing.

ii. Doctrine (theological teaching)¹⁷ or the larger branch that it belongs to, the discipline of theology is important because it teaches us about the character and nature of God.

¹⁷ A theological formulation that attempts to provide a summary statement of the teaching of Scripture on a particular theological topic. - (Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 40.)

1. Again, this is why Jesus commends them for holding to sound doctrine.
 2. This is likely why they are willing to repent... they know Jesus.
- c. **Jesus – Who do you say that I am? (Who is Jesus in this passage?)**
- i. **V.1 - Jesus introduces himself with a stock formula that the OT prophets used to introduce prophetic sayings from God:** τάδε λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ (“these things says the Lord Almighty”). This OT formula occurs 21 times in the Minor Prophets (about 12 times in Zechariah the phrase introduces a new literary unit, as here); likewise τάδε λέγει κύριος introduces sayings of the Lord and introduces new literary units in Ezekiel (at least 65 times), Jeremiah (about 30 times), and Amos (8 times). **Consequently, the use of the formula here and to introduce the sayings of Christ in the letters emphasizes that Christ assumes the role of Yahweh¹⁸**
 1. There is no missing it here... Jesus is the one with ultimate authority over the church.
 - ii. **John 1:44** – Philip to Nathaniel... “We’ve found the Messiah... Come and see.”
 - iii. Peter – So close, but still room to grow.
 1. **Mark 8:27-29** – The people say, Elijah, John the Baptist, one of the prophets... Peter confess, Jesus, you are Messiah.
 2. **Acts 1:6** – Will you now defeat the Romans and restore Israel to an earthly power? → So close, but so far away. They still needed to grow in their understanding of Jesus and his mission.
 - iv. Rich young ruler (**Matt. 19:16-22**) – A good teacher, but nothing more.
- d. **The warning for us is the warning for them. → Right doctrine matters, but we are not to miss relationship.**
- i. We can get swindled into the lie that knowing about God is the same thing as knowing God.
 1. God desires for us to know Him and be known by Him. → The relationship is a two-way street.
 2. When we stand before Jesus and the Father, we will not be handed a scantron sheet and exam booklet as if our factual knowledge about God is what will save us.
 - a. I once had a professor tell a story about when her pastor gave out a Bible knowledge test, scored them, and reported their score back as the “percentage Christian” they were. → You could literally score 100% on that test and not have given your life to Jesus!
 - ii. **V. 4** – You’ve lost the love you had at first... a passion to share God’s love.
 1. **They lost their disciple-making convictions.**
 2. Although they were ever on guard to maintain the purity of the apostolic teaching, **the Ephesian Christians were not diligent in witnessing to the same faith in the outside world.**
 3. This is what is meant when Christ chastises them for having left their “first love.”
 4. The idea is that they no longer expressed their former zealous love for Jesus *by witnessing to him in the world. This is why Christ chooses to introduce himself as he does in v 1. His statement that he “walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” is intended to remind the introverted readers that their primary*

¹⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 229.

role in relation to their Lord should be that of a light of witness to the outside world.¹⁹

5. That losing their “first love” was tantamount to becoming unzealous witnesses is suggested further as we see a link with Matt. 24:12–14, which shows such an end-time expectation: “Most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a *witness* to all the nations, and then the end will come.”²⁰
- iii. Jesus reminds us in John 15 of an important truth – Intimacy (abiding presence / communion) is not an either-or.
 1. As we abide in Christ, our knowledge grows, we are known by God, and we are eager to bear fruit (make disciples).

3. Intimacy is not an either-or.

- a. Loving God is a whole-self action. (Deut. 6:5 / Matt 22:37)
 - i. The Shema - ⁴ **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**
 1. Israel’s obedience was not to spring from a barren legalism based on necessity and duty. It was to arise from a relationship based on love.²¹
 - a. **They were trying to love God with their everything.**
 - ii. **Jesus’ answer** – Love God with your everything. (Matt. 22:37)
 1. ³⁶ **“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**
 2. We should not make too much of this difference, for both ways of expressing it make the point **that love for God should be wholehearted, involving all that we have and all that we are** (the threefold *all* is important).²²
 - iii. **So, yes, loving God requires right doctrine (mind) but it isn’t that exclusively, it is more.**
- b. **Three essentials for healthy communion with God.**
 - i. A healthy and growing faith requires all three of these things. It is a bit a three legged stool... take one leg away and the stool cannot stand.
 - ii. **Intellectual engagement** – This is loving God with my mind.
 1. This is the discipline of theology. I hope that you are finding yourself growing in the depth of your knowledge.
 2. There is a danger to be avoided on both sides of this point. One side is that we ignore emotional and communal engagement, our faith becomes purely academic (where the Ephesians were headed). The other side is that we ignore academic rigor and rest on an immature and even naïve understanding of God.

¹⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 230.

²⁰ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 230–231.

²¹ J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 138.

²² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 563.

- a. Ultimately, both errors are houses built on sand. They are not strong enough to survive the whims of culture or the pain of this life.
- iii. **Emotional engagement** – This is loving God with my heart.
 1. This is when we can feel God. Sometimes it is referred to as communing with God or experiencing abiding presence.
 - a. It is when we hear God’s voice in prayer, or experience his comfort in a felt way at a timely moment.
 2. There is a danger to be avoided on both sides of this point. One side we lean into the emotional experience so much that we overemphasize it, and diminish study and community. The other side is that we disregard it because it seems superfluous and God’s love grows distant and cold.
 - a. Again, both sides are errors to be resisted and are houses built on sand that will not last.
- iv. **Communal engagement** – You’ve heard me say it this way before, Christianity is not a solo sport. We see the pattern of believers gathering together in community all through the NT.
 1. **Acts 2:42 – ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**
 - a. Even in this verse we see the larger 3 essentials for communion with God.
 2. **Heb. 10:24-25 – ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**
 - a. Do you hear in this verse the importance of meeting?
 - b. This is talking about in small groups not just large corporate gatherings.
 - c. The average house church in the 1st century was 15-30 people.
 3. **Gal. 6:2 - ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.**
 - a. **In the larger passage, Paul will go on to tell them not to grow weary of doing good.**
 4. When we give up on meeting together and think that we can go at it alone, we either overestimate our strength or we really don’t want accountability and sharpening. Either way, it is a serious detriment to our spiritual health and walk.
- c. How can we measure our abiding relationship with the Lord?
 - i. First, ask yourself, are all three of the essentials present in my walk (mind, heart, community)?
 - ii. Second, ask yourself these life questions. (Life questions are what we use hear at Christ Community to help us stay healthy and growing in our faith.)
 1. **How is God making my day?**
 - a. **Character: Biblically saturated and prayerfully minded**
 - b. **Competency: Biblically literate and prays without ceasing**
 - c. **Demonstrated by:**
 - i. I regularly consult with God before entering my day/week/month/year.
 - ii. I confer with God and allow Him to interrupt my plans.
 - iii. I regularly seek guidance from God through the Scriptures.
 - iv. I am regularly attending a Bible study.
 - v. I am usually in a listening posture with God.
 - vi. I humbly obey the voice of God and seek His answer through prayer.

2. Is the Spirit flowing through me?

- a. **Character: Dependent upon the Holy Spirit**
- b. **Competency: Actively trusting and obeying**
- c. **Demonstrated by:**
 - i. I depend on the Holy Spirit, versus my own efforts, to make it through each day.
 - ii. I am joyful and at peace, despite my circumstances.
 - iii. I act and decide with wisdom, rather than impulsively and out of my own desires.
 - iv. All areas of my life are surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to do with them as He chooses (friends, career, job, health, loved ones, entertainment, recreation, etc.).

3. Who am I fishing with?

- a. Great commandment love motivates great commission living – That is, I have a heart and passion to share Jesus with others.
- b. **Character: Helps others follow Jesus**
- c. **Competency: Reproduces disciples**
- d. **Demonstrated by:**
 - i. I am intentionally ‘pouring’ Christ into others.
 - ii. I bring others with me as I follow Christ.
 - iii. I am actively engaged in making disciples.
 - iv. I ask others to help me serve Christ.
 - v. I train others to serve in the way I serve.
 - vi. My family benefits from what I’m learning.
- d. The letter to the Ephesians reminds of the reality that I can know someone and not really be known by them or not really know them relationally.
 - i. The church in Ephesus did well to resist false teaching, but they were in danger of losing their passion for sharing the love they first experienced. We are to be warned just as they were; let us repent of the ways we have grown cold and rekindle that love with and for Christ.