

First Love Life... *Loving Jesus first*

Jesus Commands That We Love Him

Revelation 2:2-7

² I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵ Remember the height from which 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. ⁶ But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Day One

We all know that we are “supposed” to love God. Most know the highest command to **love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength**. So you may be thinking, “I know this. I don’t need to study it.” So, let’s stop here for a moment. Why do you think it is important to study this topic?

Today, we are going to outline this passage and gain a good starting point. On the following days, we will walk through it and ask the Lord to help us understand exactly what He is saying and to give us the desire to respond in obedience.

1. Read the **Revelation 2** passage above. Underline anything that stands out to you. Make it a habit to always kneel before the Author and ask Him to speak clearly to you as you listen to His voice. Remember (Lesson 1), Jesus prayed that you would be changed by His Word. He prayed that you would know Him and love Him. Ask Him to fulfill that request in you as you meditate on His Word.
2. The Apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos because of his lifestyle of faith. If you have time*, read about his experience in Revelation chapter one. Jesus Himself appeared to him there and had him record His word to the church, His followers. In **verses 2-3**, what three or four things does Jesus acknowledge that the people are doing right? _____

**If you have time to study further do so! Dig deeper. Investigate the setting, the culture, the context, the who, what, when, where, why and how of what we’re studying. A great resource for word definitions and commentaries is www.lifeway.com/Bible. Also, www.biblegateway.com is excellent help.*

TWO

3. Jesus acknowledges the good and right decisions His followers are living by, but then He confronts them with a deep problem. What exactly does He say to them in **verse 4**? _____

4. In **verse 5**, what specific instructions does He give to remedy this problem? _____

5. What will be the outcome for the church not following His Word? _____

6. The Nicolaitans were a heretical sect in the church that compromised with the culture of the day and indulged in sinful practices of idolatry and immorality. They even justified these practices from a spiritual standpoint. How did Jesus feel about this? _____

7. What promise does Jesus make to those of us who overcome? _____

8. Overcome what? _____

Conclude your time of study today by reading the passage again. Ask the Lord to give you ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to you.

Day Two

In order to grasp the impact of this encounter between John, Jesus and us, we must get a basic understanding of what John experienced. Jesus prayed that we would be set apart, sanctified, made holy by His Word. It's important that we understand what that means. Stop and pray that God would use His Word today to begin transforming the way you think.

Read **Revelation 2:1**.

1. Who is John writing this letter to and how does he describe the author? _____

2. Let's rewind to the beginning of the conversation. Remember, John was one of Jesus' first apostles. He is the one who Jesus asked to take care of his mother while he was being crucified. He became a church leader and faithful servant of Christ. Read what he experienced in **Revelation 1:9-20**. Briefly describe the scene: _____

3. Can you imagine if Jesus appeared to you this way? John fell over as though dead! Even though we can't see the vision John had, we can ask the Spirit to impact our minds and hearts with the intensity of His Word, that double-edged sword that came out of Jesus' mouth. You have it laid open before you! What a gift, and what a responsibility. Pause and let the truth of what you have sink in. How do you feel about this Word? _____

- a. As John's vision continues, the Word is described again. Read **Revelation 19:11-16**. What is Jesus' name, and how does this vision describe Him? _____

- b. When John wrote the true account of Jesus' life on earth, he described Him with the same word. What does he write in **John 1:14**? _____

- c. What does the writer of Hebrews tell us this Word is capable of? (see **Hebrews 4:12**) _____

- d. What does God say about our relationship to His Word in **Isaiah 66:1-2**? _____

Life Points . . .

When is the last time you opened the Word of God and trembled? Do we even begin to grasp its power and purpose? End your time today by slowly reading the above passages again. Really listen to His voice. You may want to:

- Ask God to give you the right perspective of Who He is.
- Confess your indifference toward His Word.
- Invite His sword to do the work He can:
 - Penetrate deeply
 - Judge my thoughts and attitudes
 - Be living and active in me!
 - Remind me that You see all and I will give an account to You

Day Three

Read **Revelation 2:1-3** again. Jesus is speaking to believers who are already committed to a relationship with Him. In John 1:14 we read that Jesus, the Word, came full of grace and truth. The gospels fully describe His grace to us. It is this gift of unconditional love and favor that draws us into a personal relationship with Christ.

1. John has written extensively about this relationship in his previous letter to the church. Write his conclusive statement found in **1 John 4:9-10**. _____

2. Review **Revelation 2:1-3**. Can you relate to what they were doing right? _____

- b. How important are these virtues to you? _____

- c. Why do you think Jesus is so aware of their perseverance? _____

- d. In what ways is it difficult to keep doing what is right? _____

3. The apostle Paul brought us the same encouragement in **Galatians 6:7-10**. It seems that the Ephesian church was putting this Word into practice and Jesus commends them for it. What instruction and promise do you find in this passage? _____

4. We aren't asked to simply be against those who do wrong, we are also instructed to do good to *all* people! This is the work that reaps harvest. How do you think we can apply this principle in our culture today?

5. Why is it so difficult to serve those we don't enjoy or agree with? _____

- a. How do you think the instruction to *sow to please the Spirit* applies here? _____

- b. Why is it so much easier to sow to please our flesh? _____

- c. What is the promise if we don't grow weary and give up? _____

- d. When are you the most tempted to give up? _____

6. In **Revelation 2:3**, Jesus commends their perseverance and endurance as they have faced hardships because of their faith in Him. Can you relate to this? Why or why not? _____

7. Jesus *served* us when we were still His enemy. He *gave* according to the pleasure of God, His Spirit. Our flesh compels us to give out of the overflow of our feelings or emotion. The Spirit compels us to *give* out of love for Christ. What do you see as the difference? _____

Life Points . . .

- Would Jesus commend you for your perseverance? Why or why not?
- How do His promises encourage you to press on?
- Ask the Sword to reveal to you where you need to sow to please the Spirit instead of yourself. What do you think?

Day Four

Read **Revelation 2:1-4** along with **verse 7**. Ask the Lord to give you ears to hear as you listen to His Word today.

1. What is Jesus holding against these hard working believers? _____

2. The Greek word for *first* in this passage is the word, *protos*. It literally means: *above; before*. With that definition in mind, what is Jesus holding against them? _____

3. Read the command originally given to the children of God in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. What do you hear God saying? _____

4. Why do you think this command is the core of our faith in God? _____

5. How did Jesus describe it in **Mark 12:28-34**? Describe the scene and Jesus' answers. _____

6. On a scale of 1-10, what is the intensity factor of this love? _____

7. As we proceed in this study, we will learn more of how to love God first. But now we need to see that it is a command, not a suggestion. And, like all of God's commands, there is great promise and blessing for those who keep them. With this *primary* command in mind, read Jesus' sobering statement from **Matthew 10:37-39**. What does He say? _____

8. The Apostle John adds to this in **1 John 2:15-17**. What does he warn against? _____

9. So, with these two passages in mind, make a list of people and/or things that try to steal the center of our love (be as specific as you can): _____

Life Points . . .

God does not give us a command without giving us the power to fulfill it. We will study that aspect more as well. But for today, let's conclude by taking an honest look at ourselves. If Jesus were to approach you with the truth, would He have the same concern? Talk to Him honestly knowing that He loves you more than you can imagine and desires your very best! Use **TWO**

these questions to guide your prayer time:

- What consumes your thoughts?
- What are you unwilling to entrust completely to God?
- Are there times you know you are compromising your love for God in order to be accepted by someone here?
- Where is the bulk of your energy (time, money, talent) spent? Is it in a way that glorifies God, or you and yours?
- Remember Jesus' words from John 15: *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love...I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* Do you lack joy? Thank God for this promise and embrace it as yours. God will keep His Word!

Day Five

It is never God's intent to make us wallow in guilt and self-loathing. That is the work of the enemy that leads to bondage. God's will is for us to live freely in love with Him! So when He points out sin in our lives (i.e. loving others before Him), the goal is always love and reconciliation to Himself so He can bless us and fill us with His joy. Jesus is very matter of fact about what we are to do when we realize we have put other people and things before Him. As you open His Word today, invite His Spirit to lead you to that place of freedom and joy.

1. Read **Revelation 2:4-5**. Keep in mind that Jesus is not addressing what we would define as *bad* people. These are hard working believers. What two things does Jesus instruct us to do? _____

2. What do you remember about your initial love relationship with Christ? Why do you love Him? _____

3. What are some things you did at first, that you find distant from your experience today? _____

4. After recalling where we've been, Jesus tells us to *repent* of our sin. The word *repent* is the English translation of the greek word *metanoeo*. It is a verb (action word!) which means:
to change one's mind, i.e. to repent
to change one's mind for better; heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins
With this definition in mind, paraphrase in your own words what Jesus is telling us to do: _____

5. The first step in repentance (change) is to agree (confess the truth) we have indeed sinned. John explains this in **1 John 1:8-10**. What does he say? _____

6. There is no shame in confessing we have sin. It is simply recognizing truth (conviction) and responding to God's invitation for cleansing and purifying. We are

