



**Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!** If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions beginning at the bottom of page 2.

**NEW this year:** These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders. As always, use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group. And of course, please continue to give us feedback.

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**LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE**  
for the Sermon given on May 21, 2023  
by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson  
**A CHURCH FOR THE WORLD - Revelation 2:1-7**



Questions: Is the church good for the world? And if so, why? What does it have to do with Grace Chapel as we come to a transitional moment in its history?

Bottom Line: The church is good for the world when it's faithful to its mission to love like Jesus loved.

Welcome to our fourth sermon in our current series, Revelation: for the World. So far, we have learned that this book is from God about Jesus, to the church and for the world. Two weeks ago, we talked about a Savior for the world. Last week we talked about worship for the world. Today we will talk about a church for the world, focusing on John's message to the church in Ephesus, and how his affirmation, rebuke and promise might apply to our own church.

Pastor Bryan began with the announcement that the next ministry year will be his last as Senior Pastor at Grace Chapel, finishing in May 2024. Last week an [email](#) was sent to all the church members to prepare us for this news. Change in leadership will have a momentous impact on the direction of the ministry and the life of our congregation. A search committee for a new senior pastor is underway and updates about the transition will be available on the GC website. We appreciate your prayers of gratitude for Pastor Bryan's vision and leadership over the last 23 years and for the Lord's guidance in finding the right person to write the next chapter of Grace Chapel's story.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

### **Main Scripture Reading: Revelation 2:1-7**

**2** "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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

<sup>4</sup>Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup>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.

### **Group Discussion Questions**

1. Pastor Bryan's announcement to step down as Senior Pastor is both sad and full of hope for the future of our church. Take a moment to check in with your group – how is everyone processing the news?

2. Part of today's message was a look back at the history and growth of Grace Chapel since its inception by four couples meeting for Bible study 75 years ago. Let your group spend a few minutes sharing thoughts about how our church has influenced your own life and impacted your faith journey. If you have additional time, think about the possibilities of how GC might continue to grow both inward and outward.
3. Pastor Bryan intentionally chose to focus on one of the seven churches apostle John wrote to – the church in Ephesus, because he felt it had the most relevance to Grace Chapel.

Reread Revelation 2:1-7 together as a group, as though John is writing to Grace Chapel. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you concerning Grace Chapel? What words resonate the most? What words resonate the least? Which part raises questions?

4. The "first love" the Ephesian church had forsaken could refer to loving God, loving one another, or loving the world. Although, in the message, this was discussed collectively, we can also look at these individually. Consider your own relationship with God, with brothers and sisters in Christ, and non-believers.

When/where have you neglected your first love?  
What is the Holy Spirit bringing into your attention?

Take time in your group to confess and repent, even to repent on behalf of Grace Chapel in the areas where we as a church neglected our first love. Take time to pray for one another and the church to return to the first love and for love to abound more and more.

5. Pastor Bryan pointed out that each of the seven messages John wrote to the seven churches follow a similar format: an introduction, followed by affirmation, rebuke, a warning/promise, and an invitation to "*hear what the Spirit is saying.*"

What is the Spirit inviting you to hear?

One activity you can consider is writing a letter for Grace Chapel. Prepare pens and paper. Take a moment to pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through people's thoughts and words. Have everyone write a letter for Grace Chapel, starting with words of affirmation, followed by words of warning. Then write words of promise. Finish the letter with the invitation to "*hear what the Spirit is saying.*"

Once activity is over, have few people volunteer to read their letters aloud. Conclude activity with prayer, blessing Pastor Bryan, the church leadership, and the overall community.

**Homework Until Next Time:**

Ask the members of your LG to complete the Discipleship Planning Tool and the GPS Assessment Tool before your next meeting. Here is some fresh language:

*We're all on a journey; where is yours taking you?*

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it's good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus; it comes from putting them into practice. Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The with-God life of our personal habits and routines;
- The with-others life of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The for-the-world life that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

**Let's Pray**

**Support for the Leader (These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and also opportunities in the life of our church).**

**Teaching Points:**

- The book of Revelation wasn't meant to be a road map for the end of the world, sealed up in a time capsule to be "decoded" two millennia later by scholars and preachers. It was meant to disciple believers and shape churches for life and mission in a changing and sometimes frightening world
- Revelation chapter 2 contains messages to seven churches of western Turkey. Each message has a similar format: introduction, affirmation, rebuke, warning/ promise, and an invitation
- Spreading the Good News (the Great Commission) is central to Jesus' mission for the church. Jesus believes in the local church. He trusts churches like ours to fulfill his mission in the world. He is walking among us today, and holding us in his strong right hand
- Like the Ephesian church, Grace Chapel has proven to be hard-working, influential, healthy and resilient. Our staff team is committed to doing great work together and our ministry touches thousands of lives each week. We have been able to adapt and thrive through all kinds of challenges, not the least of which was COVID. Our congregation is faithful in serving, giving and doing God's work.

- Revelation 2:1:4 says, “you have forsaken the love you had at first”. It is unclear what that first love refers to, but it could have several meanings:
  - Love for God
  - Love for one another
  - Love for the world (serving and reaching people with the good news of Christ)
- The promise for those who hear and obey what the Spirit says is life with God in the new heaven and the new earth, eating fruit from the tree of life.

### **For Further Biblical Study:**

#### Revelation 1:9-11

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

#### Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

#### Psalms 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the one  
 who does not walk in step with the wicked  
 or stand in the way that sinners take  
 or sit in the company of mockers,  
<sup>2</sup>but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
 and who meditates on his law day and night.  
<sup>3</sup>That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
 which yields its fruit in season  
 and whose leaf does not wither—  
 whatever they do prospers.

#### Revelation 22:1-4

**22** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

**How to Use These Study Guides:**

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
  - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
  - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

**Group Leader Support:** Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor Tim or Grace Lee from the Group Life team.