

Monday

Read Revelation 2:1-7

If you receive our weekly emails (if not, go to cooks creekchurch.org/connect) and completed the activity in the email, you are ahead of the game for today. I would suggest you take some time to explore how your understanding of this passage changed from reading this passage before the sermon and now seeing it after the sermon.

If you have not done so yet, answer the following questions looking at Revelation 2:1-7. This will help you understand the passage better.

In Jesus' communication to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3, these six elements are usually present in what he says to the churches (but not every time! Read closely. But, I'll tell you that each of the following questions has an answer in Revelation 2:1-7 for the Church at Ephesus).

1. What is the description of Christ given to the Church at Ephesus?

2. What is the commendation (the good job!) to the church?

3. What is the rebuke (do better!) given to the church?

4. What is the solution to the problem that led to the rebuke?

5. What are the consequences for disobedience?

6. What is the promise for those who conquer?

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 15:31–33 and Matthew 7:1-5

If you are anything like me, you naturally assume that you are wise about the matters you care passionately about and that those who disagree with you are foolish. That is a very dangerous road to walk – it can too often lead to self-righteousness, breaking fellowship with other Jesus followers, and hatred.

The core of our faith is that Jesus Christ is the resurrected Son of God, the Lord, the Messiah, and that only he is perfect. You and I (and everyone else) should continually pray for forgiveness, restoration, and transformation into greater Christ-likeness. The deeper we go with Jesus, the more we should become like him. We must pray and have the perspective that the person who is outside the faith who we disagree with today might become a brother or sister in Christ if we interact with them in a Christ-like, loving, graceful way. We don't want to be accused of looking for specks and ignoring logs...

Wednesday

Read Matthew 18:15-20

It is a tough balance to be doctrinally pure and loving Jesus and others. We love others for the sake of Jesus and we love Jesus for the sake of others. And yet, sometimes, we see that there are areas where doctrinal purity and love come into conflict. This is where Jesus' words in Matthew 18 come in. He is specifically talking about handling conflicts amongst his followers, but I think in this day and age that we would need to be even more loving, gentle, and patient with people outside the faith (who we should want to come to love and follow Jesus!). For too many who don't know Jesus, Christians are self-righteous and full of hate towards those they disagree with on social and political issues. And, of course, there are plenty of non-Christians who hate Christians and are self-righteous. Yet, Jesus tells us to love and turn the other cheek, not fight fire with fire.

One way to think of this is that we shouldn't demand of non-Christians what we should expect of Christians. There are different standards. That isn't to say that you can't advocate for what you think is best for society based on how you feel guided by Jesus, but you shouldn't expect people to embrace your views or join you until they know the love, grace, and forgiveness of Jesus like you do.

Thursday

Read Revelation 2:1-7

Jesus teaches us all kinds of things that are hard to do and hard to balance. In this message to the church at Ephesus, even the things they are doing well aren't easy to do. It isn't easy to be doctrinally pure or to patiently endure when things don't seem to be going our way. Yet, Jesus doesn't tell them to get more doctrinally pure, get angrier about it, and not take any garbage from anyone. Instead, he says that what he has against them is that they've lost their first love, most likely in their zeal to be doctrinally pure.

Jesus tells them, and us, to return to our first love: Jesus. Jesus and his love are the reason you would even bother to read this little devotional and the only reason you are a Jesus follower. Pray today and keep it in your heart, mind, and spirit that whatever you think, say, or do, that you will do out of your loving devotion to your first love, Jesus.

Friday

In preparation for Sunday worship, please read and reflect upon Revelation 2:8-11.