

Revelation 2:1-7

Series: So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore

"Message 1: First Things First"

03 - 08 - 09

In his book, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It*, what is Craig Groeschel getting at in his introduction (the part we read out loud)?

Throughout this new series, what is the *primary* question we are asking?

Throughout Jesus' seven letters to seven churches at the start of the Revelation, what does he acknowledge about each church? Why is this so important?

One of the key questions we need to ask ourselves is, "What can Bridge of Hope _____ than *anyone* else?" Why?

What are some *historical context details* regarding the church in Ephesus that help explain this passage better?

Despite the great "report card" in verses 2-3, what does Jesus have against the church in Ephesus (v. 4)?

Writing about the church in Ephesus, William Mounce says, "Within each virtue lies the seed of its own destruction." What does he mean?

What is the real difference between reading 2:4 as . . .
"You have forsaken your first love" vs.
"You have forsaken the love you had at first"?

According to Craig Groeschel what is the problem of "Too Many, Too Much, Too Bad"?

When we lose the love we had at first, what does Jesus say we need to do? (*Thanks, Darrell Johnson*)

1) Re _____

2) Re _____

3) Re- _____

For Discussion:

In your own words (borrowing from Rev. 2:1-7), what is *it*?

So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore Small Group Discussion Questions: Week 1: Chapters 1-2

Mixer:

In chapter 2, Jake admits to counting ceiling tiles when he is really bored in church (p. 22). When is church boring to *you*? Why? What games do you play if/when that happens?

Chapter 1:

- 1) What is your favorite part of the book so far? Cite a line or paragraph that really jumped out at you. Why?
- 2) Have you ever talked to a friend or family member that has left the church? Why did they leave? What did (or would) you say to them?
- 3) On pages 3-8, Jake overhears a conversation about church that gets pretty heated. People say things like, "The only thing I learned in church was how to feel guilty!" (p. 3) and other complaints about "extravagant facilities, hypocrites, boring sermons, always asking for money, and burnout from too many meetings" (p. 4). Share honestly with the group that which frustrates you the most about church. About Bridge. (Try to be both critical and edifying in your comments.)
- 4) Someone read aloud the entire paragraph on p. 8 that starts, "If I were you . . ." Here, John challenges the crowd by asking them to be changed "from the inside." How much of frustrations within (and dislike towards) the church is a result of all of us wanting everyone else to change, rather than ourselves? How much of your own answers to question #3 would you change in light of this statement?
- 5) On the bottom of p. 6, referring to Jesus, John suggests that "If someone was going to catch you at your worst moment, you'd want it to be him." Is this how *you* picture Jesus in the midst of your own sin? As those called to reflect Jesus in this world, could this same statement be said of the church? What would we have to do at Bridge to make that kind of picture a reality?

Chapter 2:

- 1) At the start of the chapter, Jake shares his frustration concerning Ben & Marsha Hopkins, saying, "Now, just as they were getting to a place where they could give something back, they were running off to greener pastures" (p. 12). What underlying expectations about being part of church did Jake have? Are these right? Are any expectations? Why or why not?
- 2) On p. 17, Jake confides in John admitting to him, "I am really frustrated. It seems like everyone I talked to lately is running on empty—even Christians I've known for decades." Have you ever felt like this? When you do, who can you go to in complete and brutal honesty?
- 3) On p. 18, Jake tells John that, "It seems like the more I do for God, the further he gets away from me." As a group, try to articulate the difference between *working for* God and *knowing* God. Why do you think "working for" becomes such a tempting substitute for real "knowing"?
- 4) At the bottom of p. 21, John replies to Jake's story about the church plant his parents were a part of by concluding, "Strange isn't it, that forming something into what they thought was a church could do what persecution couldn't?" Spend some time brainstorming together. What specific parts of the institutionalization of church make it such a threat to real relationship with Father? Practically speaking, how can we help each other avoid this potential pitfall within Bridge of Hope?
- 5) What makes *you* the most hungry for God?
- 6) Christian youth author and speaker, Josh McDowell, gets at the heart of living out our faith when he challenges parents by telling them to ask their kids: "Do you guys want what your dad and I have?" (*Does our faith look like something you want in your own life?*) I dare you, ask your kids this question this week and encourage them to speak honestly. What will you learn about your own faith?

Closing Prayer:

In closing, pray together offering prayer for the ability to maintain our first love, to see lives transformed through this study and within our church body, and specifically, for anyone who was brave enough to share about their struggles during discussion and could use some encouragement.