

**SATURDAY**  
**APRIL 16**

Ask God to prepare the hearts of the 3 and give them faith to believe. - Acts 20:21

Ask God to bless Easter Rehearsal today.

DAY 20: TURN FROM OUR WICKED WAYS  
**WEEK 3: PREPARING FOR REVIVAL**

When God called his people to “turn from their wicked ways” in preparation for his revival, we would think that they were involved in all sorts of evil practices. Maybe the Israelites were abusing the poor, or worshipping idols, or even sacrificing their children. They must have been into some rotten stuff that clearly needed to be abandoned before God could revive their nation. In comparison, our ways are not too wicked. Some of us may have “big” sins that taint our lives and wreck our relationship with God. But while we are aware of our weaknesses, most of us do not appear all that bad. We do not feel that we have to change our lives all that much. We do not have too many “wicked ways” to abandon. We are mostly behaving okay and we feel that God is fine with us. We are off the hook. The church in Ephesus was just like that.

**Scripture: Revelation 2:1-5**

### **Devotion**

The church in Ephesus sounds pretty decent to me. They had been through some rough times but they had worked hard, stayed true to Jesus, dealt well with sin in their midst, and persevered despite the challenges. What a solid church. Good theology, committed, faithful, robust, stable. Like us, they were difficult to fault in any major way. There were no obvious “wicked ways” from which to turn.

Yet Jesus is so unhappy with this church that he threatens to finish their work completely, to wipe them out. What?

Their problem was that they did not love Jesus the way they did at first and it showed in their actions. Perhaps they were going through the motions without any real desire for intimacy with Jesus. Perhaps they had correct theology but it got stuck in their heads and didn't touch their hearts. Perhaps they felt that all their hard work had earned them God's favour and so they lost sight of Jesus. Perhaps they had become hard and judgmental towards each other. Whatever the reasons and signs, they just did not love Jesus and each other the way they used to. Jesus could see this.

Losing love can happen in any relationship. For example, without continual effort in a marriage, the love can fade, and the relationship becomes two people living together but sharing very little. Jesus is not happy with such a relationship with us. He loves deeply and is looking for our love in return. The “wicked ways” of the Ephesians were not rebellion or apostasy or immorality, but something equally dangerous and more insidious in Jesus' eyes - lost love.

This is the biggest challenge in the Western evangelical church. Our theology generally is not bad. We are reasonably committed and hard working. In a broken world, we continue to maintain most of our Christian distinctives. Our worship has plenty of energy. But we just do not love Jesus and each other the way we should, and it shows in our prayer life and in our dependence on Jesus and in our love for his word and in our grace towards each other. As we prepare for revival, God calls us to turn from our wicked ways and return to our first love. And as we do, he will come running to welcome us home with incredible love.

Maybe personally you know that there is a major sin blocking your closeness to God. It is time to repent and turn away from your wicked ways. But maybe your greatest sin is your lost love for Jesus. Much more hidden but just as harmful. It is time to turn back to Jesus.

### **Prayer Response**

Lord you love me deeply and I want to return that love. Set my heart on fire for you. Grow my need for you. Reawaken the love I once had. I have drifted a long way from the love I once had. Please forgive and revive me in your grace.

### **Prayer for Revival**

Jesus, open our eyes to your love and heart for your church, your bride. Forgive our waning love and the mess it has brought to our lives and churches. Restore our love Lord and bring revival.