

Dear Church: The Seven Letters Of Revelation

Many years ago, before Lindsay and I had our two daughters, we used to do a fair amount of backpacking and hiking, particularly around Tahoe's desolate wilderness and in and out of the Yosemite area. Typically, the same cycle would take place. We'd head off for a three to five-day hike and carry everything we needed for those days on our backs. We would get out into the middle of the wilderness, a detox from the chaotic routine of daily living. As we did this, the same repetition would take place.

The first day, we'd show up pretty hurried. We'd be inattentive, a little bit frazzled, and ragged from the normal grind of life. But as that first day ticked on, it would detox us from the world, and what once was inattentive to us would become sharp, into focus. The first day, we'd be hiking through trees and alongside rivers and rock formations, and honestly, we were just trying to get to where our first night was. Then over time, as we'd walk, the leaves would start to catch our eye. The breeze and the wind through the trees would draw our attention. The rock formations would stop us in our tracks. The complexity of the natural world would slowly come alive to us, even though we had been in it for 24 hours.

Revelation is a bit like that when you immerse yourself in the text. It's similar to Lindsay and me immersing ourselves in Tahoe's desolate wilderness. Over time, our bodily senses would come awake in the same way that immersing ourselves in a book like Revelation awakens our faith perceptions. The forest of Tahoe and the revelation of St. John show us over and over that familiarity tends to dull our perceptions. Hurry scatters our attention.

This series will be in chapters 2 and 3, the seven letters at the beginning of the Book of Revelation, because it is a book that wants to awaken our imagination to what is. The Book of Revelation is the longest of the New Testament letters, and yet it also holds the title of the most misunderstood book in all of scripture.

Most of us get into trouble because we believe that the question Revelation is asking is what comes in the future. But that's not the question that Revelation is answering. Revelation is asking what is present and what we have failed to see, and then how we remain faithful. Once we see all the imagery and the like, we get confused and center our readings about speculative excitations of what could come. We like those because they give us an avenue to escape the reality of where we are. But when we do that, when we center our readings of Revelation into the future, we not only misuse the Book of Revelation, but we also fail to receive its message and the hope it offers.

Now we typically make these mistakes of reading it right from the very first line. Revelation chapter 1 starts like this, "The revelation from Jesus Christ." The letter that we call Revelation derives this name right there

from the second word of its book, but that word is more traditionally translated as the apocalypse. That word is why we get all sorts of backwards as to how we approach this book. Because when I say the word apocalypse, likely what comes to mind is some Nicholas Cage movie, a B-grade, terrible action film in which some invention is happening that threatens the very existence of creation.

That's what comes to our minds when we hear the word apocalypse. But the Greek word for this word, revelation, is apokalupsis, which means disclosure, uncovering, appearing, unveiling. Or, better yet, just simplify all of it—the apocalypse. That word in Greek means the unveiling.

In the ancient world, the term was much more inviting than we consider it now. It was something as benign as pulling the cover off a box, the drawing of curtains of a theater. It was the unveiling of something that was once hidden or blinded by our familiarity with it. Scott McKnight, a New Testament scholar I read a lot, says this about Revelation. "*The Apocalypse is not about the prediction of the future but the perception and interrogation of the present. It provides readers with a new lens to view our contemporary world*" (McKnight).

What we often get wrong about Revelation is projecting our interpreted hope for the future. But Revelation is much more a work we see through than it is one that projects and predicts the future. Richard Bauckham, another brilliant New Testament scholar, wrote, "The visual power of the book affects a purging of the Christian imagination, refurbishing it with alternative visions of how the world is and will be" (Bauckham).

This isn't the exact analogy to think of, but it's a little more akin to the way science fiction works in our world, where it takes something to an extreme and reveals a truth about the world. That's what's going on in this genre of apocalyptic literature. It is refurbishing our imagination. It's taking the familiarity with which we've grown accustomed to the world around us, and it's pulling the curtain back.

There is nothing new in Revelation that hasn't been said in the entire corpus of scripture before it. Everything here is about Saint John the Apostle, whom we looked at through the season of Advent. Everything he writes down is coming from his mind that has been saturated with the stories of scripture, and over and over, you see every single book has some allusion to it in John's Apocalypse or Revelation.

Revelation is an altogether different experience. It's almost more akin to poetry, coming from a different angle to help us see both now and how God is currently living in this world, and how we remain faithful to him.

John, at the time of his writing, was the last living of Jesus' disciples at this point. He's an old man. He'd been imprisoned and exiled to the island of Patmos. He was exiled for spreading the gospel in the Roman

world that viewed Jesus as an opponent of Caesar. He was threatening the empire, and so he was an old man forced to live on an island, which is the ancient world's version of solitary confinement.

It was in that circumstance that this unveiling happened, where John encountered Jesus no longer in the disguise of a human body, but rather the veil was pulled back, and Jesus was seen in all of his heavenly glory. It's during that unveiling that Jesus spoke the words that John wrote down.

From the very beginning of it all, Jesus has words for John to write to the churches. Before we get to the bowls of incense and the pregnant dragons and all that stuff that's in the Book of Revelation, what you find are letters from Jesus to the church. Instructions on how to live in the world in which we find ourselves. So before you get to all of that, we come to the seven letters written to seven churches scattered throughout the province of Asia.

Now seven letters to seven churches. That's not accidental. There's a repetition there. Seven in the biblical imagination is the number of wholeness or completeness. Think of the seven days of creation. So right at the get-go, we understand that these letters are quite literal. They are, in fact, written to seven distinct churches with distinct issues that Jesus wants to address, but they are also metaphoric.

They're not just to those seven churches; they're to the whole complete witness of the churches, which means you and I, right now sitting here in 2026. These letters from Jesus are written to us as well, spurring us on to address timeless issues. So with all of that context, we arrived to the letters.

The first letter that we'll look at is to the church in Ephesus. You're familiar with the name Ephesus. That's the namesake of one of the core biblical letters in the New Testament, Ephesians, and Ephesus has a long, rich, biblical history. If you rewind to Acts 19, you'll remember that Paul, alongside Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila, planted this church. When he left, he left behind those three, Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila, to pastor this church.

Later on, Paul would return to Ephesus, where he would pastor this church longer than any other church in his lifetime. He would spend over two and a half years pastoring this young church of Ephesians. But after his return for two and a half years, he has quite a fascinating history of why he left the church. If you're familiar with the story, he was forced to flee Ephesus during what was best described as just an all-out revival.

What happened was that the gospel had so transformed the city of Ephesus that it led to an economic crisis. Ephesus was a city that worshiped the goddess Artemis. There was such a disruption and transfer of the worship of Artemis to the worship of Yahweh that those who were making idols to Artemis were going out of business. They were literally just running out of people who would buy those statues, and that caused a bit of an uproar. So they began to cause this riot to strike the city in light of its revival that was taking place. They quite literally ran Paul right out of town. They threaten him, so he leaves. And what

he leaves, though, in his wake is Timothy, a young protege to take over in his stead.

John the Apostle would also eventually pastor this church, and church tradition tells us, it's a little fuzzy, but it's believed that Mary, the mother of Jesus, actually called Ephesus her home church for a time.

So pause for a second. Paul, Apollos, Timothy, John, and Mary. I mean, that's like the who's who of biblical names. I mean, this church has an embarrassment of riches within its past in which these pastors came through and led this congregation. It makes a whole lot of sense when we read further in verse 1 why Jesus has such flattering words to this church. Look at chapter 2:1.

"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. 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. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Revelation 2:1-3

Now the text opens with this description of Jesus as the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden Lampstands. All of these seven letters will begin with some description of Jesus, each unique from the other.

This one says he holds the seven stars in his right hand. It's an image of power. It's the image of sovereignty. It's both the literal thinking of the planets and the stars, Jesus holds them in his hands, but it also has to do with modern empires and kingdoms. It's simply naming that Jesus is the one who holds them in the palm of his right hand, the position of power.

But not only is Jesus one of power, but he's also one of presence. It says he walks among the seven golden lampstands. In chapter 1, the seven golden lampstands are named for the seven churches to which the letters are written. So this combination of both the power and the presence of Jesus is the image that he wants this Ephesian church to remember as he brings both commendations and sharp critiques to how they have failed. But it's Jesus' power and presence together that meet this church.

So, although he opens with this accommodation, "I know your deeds, your hard work, and your perseverance." See, don't mistake the church in Ephesus as having had a flash in the pan moment in which the revival took place, and then it fizzled out. This church was a mature congregation. They were the cornerstone of that revival in Ephesus, and for all we can tell, they seemed to steward that moment well in the years to come. They rejected lesser loves. They formed communities. They were living out that long obedience in the same direction. Jesus commends them for their hard work, their perseverance amongst all that they faced that they remained faithful to the way of Jesus.

Then he says that they had tested those who claim to be apostles but are not. Now that is the description of the wicked people that they cannot tolerate. It's important you hold that together. Grammatically,

that sentence is linked. "I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people," and then he defines the specific people he's talking about. It doesn't just mean anyone who doesn't follow Jesus. It's specifically those who were coming into the church, preaching under a different name or preaching a different gospel under the name of Jesus. He's saying this church wouldn't tolerate it. They wouldn't tolerate distorting the name of Jesus.

They were a mature congregation who held to the scriptures, who longed and loved truth that wanted to see Jesus in all of his accuracy, his truthfulness displayed. They had rejected all those other lesser loves. They've resisted the hedonism of the day and the false teachers that had snuck into the church. The Ephesian Church was a mature one. There's much to be admired in the church in Ephesus. But they had, somewhere along the way, drifted into the critique that Jesus brings in verses 4. *"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first."*

Despite the long obedience in the storied history and the litany of the who's who of pastors who'd come through the church, Ephesus forgot what got them started. Somewhere along the way, they had dulled to the complexity and beauty of Jesus. Their love had grown cold.

Scott McKnight says that this is the anguished language of a divorcing couple. He says, "It's like you no longer love me. You used to love me, but you no longer do." It's the language of the worker saying to his coworker that they lost their passion, focus, and commitment. Jesus sees Ephesus, and he knows they no longer love him in the way they once did.

Another scholar, Jeffrey Weima, calls the main problem in Ephesus, loveless orthodoxy. What a challenging phrase. Orthodoxy being right belief. And he says, "Somewhere you can believe all the right things, you can hold all the truth you want to hold, but the problem with Ephesus is it had grown loveless, it had grown cold, it had grown stale." What this loveless orthodoxy means is the good desire and the longing for right belief can in some way consume our ability to love God. We can forget that the whole point of the scriptures is not to fill your head with knowledge, but to woo your heart towards love of Jesus.

The most frequent depiction of sin in the Old Testament is the analogy of marital infidelity. That's the image the Old Testament writers give to describe the waywardness of the Church of Israel and us today. That's the image, infidelity, where the bride of Christ has given herself to others. But what's most interesting is that if you pay attention to this metaphor throughout the Old Testament, it's most commonly used by the prophets when they're calling out the church for its failure when the church is showing all sorts of outward signs of health.

Even though they seem to be doing it right, economic prosperity, temple participation, public prayers, readings of scripture, and attendance are bursting at the seams. It's in those moments that the prophets often say, "But you have," like Jesus said here, "Forgotten your first love." The painful reality is that the infidelity to the way of Jesus tends to be more subtle than we're ever comfortable with. It isn't what the external markers name that matters, but what is internal. It's not always dramatic acts of betrayal, but a lesser love that slowly nudges God from the place of first love.

Infidelity to the way of Jesus is far more opaque than we'd expect or anticipate. Infidelity to Jesus is most commonly not in grand moral failures that we read about in the headlines, but in subtle allowances of lesser loves to take the place of what should be first loves. It's when we move Jesus to the periphery. Slowly but surely, God gets edged out, and he becomes more of an accessory to our lives than the organizing center. That's what had happened to this church in Ephesus. Over time, they allowed God to be pushed to the margins.

So what are these lesser loves? Obviously, you could call them as the scriptures do, idols. That's a good description for them. Thomas Aquinas would call them substitute gods. Augustine would talk about disordered loves. That's my favorite. But the lesser loves can take any form or shape. Put simply, a lesser love is just something that is supposed to be penultimate, something secondary that makes its way to the ultimate.

Every culture and every time has substituted gods all throughout history. They will take on different forms and shapes, but they always do the same thing. They promise to offer freedom to their worshipers, but in the end, they ultimately imprison them. Let's look quickly at just a few of the most common. Money, power, pleasure, fame, accumulation, or accomplishment are a few that we talk a lot about around here. We talk about how these lesser loves work so well in our time.

Any of those lesser loves that I mentioned play to your false self, not to your true self. They don't engage the truest thing about you, that you were created to be in relationship with God, but rather they typically draw on your false self and make a projection of who you think you want to be. They always promise, but they also always underdeliver.

It won't take long for you to figure out exactly what's in your mind. I would think if I just name the phrase, "lesser loves," things start pinging in your heart and in your head. The ladder of success could be it. Or maybe it's not the ladder of success in the job world. Maybe it's the ladder of adventure and vacations, or maybe it's the experience of pleasure, the tax bracket where you feel just a little bit more secure. Maybe it's the next hit of some substance. Whatever it is, it's something that you're beginning to organize your life around rather than God.

The problem is these lesser loves can be dramatic at times. But as we noted, they're often quite subtle, and even more challenging is that they're often neutral appetites that then consume us. See those four that I mentioned, money, power, pleasure, and fame; those are pretty neutral. There's nothing inherently wrong with those things. Every single one of them will bring a level of satisfaction for a time, but they will slowly enslave you. Because there's always another tax bracket to get into. There's always another promotion. There's always another experience. There are always more people to give you the honor and acclaim that you think you desire. You will constantly need another hit, another acquisition, or whatever it is to satisfy your soul's desire.

Your true self is what the writer of Ecclesiastes says. "You were created with eternity in your heart." You are longing and reaching for that which is eternal to match the desire. The desire is not the problem. It's that you're trying to satisfy it with things lesser than the desire in your heart.

What you ultimately need is, in fact, the Lord. The worship of the Lord is the only thing that will satisfy that eternal longing.

But here's the paradox of the human soul. You have both strong desires and deep desires. And the war between those two is exactly what's playing out in the church of Ephesus. So your strongest desire is often the one that's easiest to grasp, but your deepest desire is the one that often takes decades to cultivate within your life.

Put it in the context of the first Sunday in January. I'm guessing there are many of you in here who are making good, healthy goals, New Year's resolutions. I'm not down on that. They're quite positive. They're good things to step into, but you feel this desire play out over and over in these first months of the year.

You may have a new habit, a new diet, a new ambition, or whatever it is. Generally good things. Maybe it's to get into better physical shape, to be more present to your loved ones. Finally accomplish that career goal that you've had lingering. But I'm guessing that over time and in these next few weeks, you will experience the tension of strong desire. You'll experience the tension of saying, "That bowl of M&Ms looks awfully good." It's rare you walk by a bowl of salad and think, "Kale would really hit right now." You're feeling the war of strong desire versus deep desire.

Maybe more particularly, you come home from a long day at work, and your deepest desire is to be a present husband or wife, mother or father. That's your deepest desire. You want to be someone who's attentive to your kids and spouse, but your strong desire is to get home and just turn your brain off for a few hours to binge whatever shows are on Netflix. Strong desire versus deep desire.

One of the joys of my profession is that I get the privilege to sit with people in their final days. I've yet to hear someone say, "I wish I spent more time at the office. I wish I'd have bought one more thing. I wish I'd made one more presentation." The reality is, you look back on the deep desires in those waning moments of life; you will not look back at those strong desires. You will look back on the things that you've most desired. You'll be surrounded by people and relationships you've invested in. You will hope to look back and see a life of integrity where you've become the person that you desired to become so many decades prior. That is your deepest desire.

The deepest desire of the Ephesian Church was to be faithful to Jesus, but somewhere along the lines, their strongest desire began to edge out that love.

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. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Revelation 2:5-6

Consider

Jesus doesn't leave the church to their own failure. He provides a clear three-step process to help reignite that first love: consider, repent, and do. Let's look at each one of those in turn. First, consider. This word can be translated as remember, which is a helpful word. Remember from

where you have fallen. The fundamental step towards any change is to honestly and fairly assess where you currently are, or in the words of Jesus, "To remember how far you have fallen."

Remembering is a particularly powerful agent of change. Something like the practice of examine where each day you come to presence before the Lord recalling your day, the places where you felt connected to God, and the places where you've resisted the presence of God. Something as simple as that can, over time, cultivate in you the remembrance of how far you have fallen.

Honesty about where we actually are in the spiritual life is the genesis of all human change, let alone spiritual maturity. Is there any question as to why the very first step in an AA recovery groups is this? "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, and that our lives have become unmanageable." For you, it may not be alcohol, but we all have lesser love. The first step that AA identifies is the honest assessment that they are powerless over alcohol and their lives have become unmanageable.

All human transformation of any kind must begin with brutal honesty about the place that we have gotten ourselves to. All transformation begins with admitting not our power over these things, but our powerlessness to overcome them. Think of the resolutions and whatnot you are making. If they are to stick, you must take an honest assessment of where you've been and where you desire to be.

John Ortberg, in his wonderful book *Steps*, has a beautiful analysis where he layers the 12 steps of AA on top of a paradigm of spiritual formation. He was so moved by having experienced these communities that he began talking about them. People would come to him from those AA meetings and ask him this question, "Why can't the church be more like AA meetings?" Ortberg's answer was, "They can, if Christians learn to be more like alcoholics."

Now, of course, he doesn't mean that more people should take on the abuse of a substance, but what he does mean is that when he wandered into those recovery meetings, what he found was a ruthless honesty about where people were. And that's the beginning place of all change. Radical honesty is the path forward. Deceiving yourself and trying to deceive God is a futile attempt. If we desire to mature in the Christian life, we must become comfortable with admitting our helplessness and inability to change on our own.

The problem, though, is that this will require us to release the fear of being fully known. So much of our lives are spent, overtly or covertly, hiding our true selves, managing the image of who we are in the world that forces our souls into hiding. The soul is a skittish thing. It doesn't naturally desire to be fully known. It fears rejection; it fears not being loved, so we hide behind all those different idols.

You hide behind the amount of money you make, the neighborhoods you live in. You hide behind the titles that you hold and the positions in your job that you have. But the soul must, at some point, become fully known. What you find when you allow your soul to be fully known before God is that you are also truly loved. And that combination of being fully known and truly loved, that experience is the engine of change.

When you begin to say, I can confess every part of who I am, you allow yourself to be loved. This is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12.

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 1 Corinthians 12:9b-10

The paradox of the Christian life has always been about that. It is not through your strength; it is through your weakness. It is through the faithfulness of Jesus, not your own, that you receive the life and the life abundant. Considering how far you have fallen is the first step. Being brutally honest about where you are. It's the place where you will begin to recover your first love. The second step then makes a whole lot of sense.

Repent

The second step Jesus offers this church is to repent. We talked about this on Christmas Eve and the Sundays through Advent but repent at its core is the Greek word *metanoó*, which is a combination of two words. *Meta*—metamorphosis—the word for change, and *noeo*, which is to know. So change and knowledge, quite literally. It means to think differently afterward. I love that word afterward in the definition, because the after part is saying, in light of something that you've just encountered, you must rethink everything. The experience of being fully known and truly loved is one where you begin to reorder the whole of your life after that experience.

Repentance, despite how it may have been taught or presented to you, has little to do with being loaded up with guilt. The guilt may or may not come, but that's not the point. The point is that you have encountered something. You've experienced a moment of clarity where you realize the path you are walking on no longer leads to the thing that you most desire.

It's when you realize your deepest desire is not in alignment with the actions you've been taking, that you've been actually living towards your strongest desire, not your deepest. It's the moment of clarity when you walk one direction, stop, turn around, and go the other direction. That's repentance. It's the loving welcome and embrace back into the way of Jesus, which means, as we talked about on Christmas Eve, conviction is the moment you realize your desires don't match that vision.

Conviction is the moment of clarity where your deepest desire is no longer in alignment with your strongest. Therefore, conviction is always good news. Don't fear the experience of conviction. Fear grows cold to experiencing conviction. I remember when I used to coach basketball, I used to tell my players, "Don't be fearful if I am riding you hard. Be fearful when I stop talking to you because I've given up on you."

Now, flip that into this. Jesus will never give up on you. He will always bring that. But we can grow cold to the sensitivity of the voice of the Spirit convicting us. It's what happened in the church in Ephesus. See, conviction is the realization that the way you are going no longer leads to the life that you desire. Conviction always provides the opportunity

for you to return down the long road of repentance back to the way of Jesus.

Make sure you catch this truth. Spiritual maturity isn't about perfectly walking in step with the Spirit. It is about staying sensitive to the leading of God. That's spiritual maturity. Constantly being in tune with the Spirit. You are prone to wander as the old hymn says, but the conviction, the kindness of God will lead us back as long as we are sensitive to it.

I heard one pastor say, the great hope of our spiritual life is not that we would stay on the narrow path, but it's in Christ's ability to come and find you every time you go on the wrong path. That's the hope of the Christian life, and the fight of our life, is believing that is enough to continue to allow ourselves and our souls to come out of hiding over and over, admitting our powerlessness. That is the path to spiritual maturity.

Do

So first, consider, second, repent, and third, do the things you did at first. Now that shouldn't be interpreted as some quaint hearkening back to a type of golden age in which you get back up on that mountaintop and experience that spiritual high you did at first. Where Jesus is going with this idea of doing the things you did at first, is returning to the commitments and the vows that you took to be with the Lord in the first place. It's like committing a vow renewal.

Where the married couple, after years of career building and child raising and all of that, have somehow led to a love that has grown cold, and yet later on, they return to those vows: for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, and they recommit to them. But this time, on the other side of those long middle years of life, where all of a sudden, those vows have a little bit more edge to them because you've actually experienced the better and the worse, the sickness and the health, the richness and the poverty. There's something about that love, those commitments, that over the decades becomes all the more beautiful if you fight through those long times where the love is prone to grow cold.

The same is true with our relationship with the Lord. Love tends to want to atrophy, but Jesus invites us back. "Do the things you did at first." Could it be that this morning is the morning that you return to those commitments that you've made with God? Where, on this first Sunday of 2026, are you thinking through your deepest desires? Who do you want to become? You are becoming someone with every thousand decisions you make every single day. They are slowly, over time, cultivating the person that you will be one day. Who do you want to become?

Do you want to be one who has that first love that remains there, that's tested and tried, that finds that connection with Jesus? Not just in head knowledge, but actually a heart that's bent and tied to the person of Jesus? Who do you want to become? It's a good question for you to ask this week, to consider, to journal about, and pray through. Who will you become 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the road? How do you keep your strongest desires at bay and your deepest desires as the thing in front of you?

I love the way Jesus ends this letter to the church. Because that could be a pretty harsh ending, but he comes back in verse 7 and says, "*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" (v. 7). The invitation is to any and all who have ears to hear.

Anyone who hears the knock on the door and lets Jesus in, he will come in and eat with them. The invitation is before us. Do you have the ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to you? What's interesting is that the word "to the one who is victorious" is actually the same word that the brand Nike gets its name from. It has this idea of victory, but it has more to do with subduing or overcoming. Think of the "Just Do It" brand name.

It isn't so much victorious as the NIV translates it here because that makes it feel so triumphant. It means much more. To the one who can subdue the other loves that are trying to crowd out the first love. It says to the one who can do that, I give the right to eat from the tree of life, to experience the communion, the presence that goes all the way back in Genesis 1 with Adam and Eve. He says, whoever has ears to hear, to whoever has the ability to root themselves in the victory of Jesus, that is the person who will experience communion with God.

This morning lands on a good Sunday as we prepare to take communion because communion is, in some ways, the embodiment of all that we've been talking about. It's the reminder that it's not our faithfulness, but it's the faithfulness of God, in which we are able to come back and renew those vows. We come to these tables here at our church once a month. In that, we come to remember the faithfulness of Jesus, of enduring the cross, of going to and experiencing that death for our sakes, to welcome us home.

My invitation to you is that you would come before the Lord and consider how far you've fallen. Consider where you are with the Lord, where you desire to be. You don't need to hide. The Lord knows you. The Lord loves you. Could you just open your heart a little bit more to the presence of God and allow it to be the moment that begins a road of transformation? Your deepest desires will take the slowest, longest work in your life. But Jesus is faithful, and he will, in fact, do that deep work.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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