

Missions is about being able to communicate. To INTERFACE

Think about what you know about your faith. How did you acquire that knowledge. By yourself through the bible. Or through other people. This is an important point. The quality of the material you receive depends on the quality of the church and the quality of the teaching. ie your ability to mission often depends on the health of the local church.

We are going to take a close look at what can go wrong in churches to make them ineffective for mission and we are going to use a very special section of the bible. REVELATION 2

*"THERE EXISTS IN EVERY CHURCH SOMETHING THAT SOONER OR LATER WORKS AGAINST THE VERY PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT CAME INTO EXISTENCE. SO WE MUST STRIVE VERY HARD, BY THE GRACE OF GOD TO KEEP THE CHURCH FOCUSED ON THE MISSION THAT CHRIST ORIGINALLY GAVE TO IT." – CS LEWIS.*

In each of these churches bar one something was threatening their very existence. Today we are going to use a Contemporary historical approach to Revelation.

The date is about 90 AD. The Emperor is Domitian and Christianity is definiely not the flavour of the month. Each church was located in a small town and was probably not very big and not very old. Their commision would have been to preach the gospel. Go and make disciples of all nations!

Revelation 2 (New International Version)  
To the church in Ephesus

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: **2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**  
4 Yet I hold this against you:  
**You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which 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. 6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Hard work, perseverance, doctrinal purity, energy. THESE WERE THEIR GOOD QUALITIES.

**BAD QUALITIES**

You have lost your first love. There are two ways of interpreting this text and well look at both.

No 1 Doctinal PURITY had resulted in exclusivity and intolerance-  
What is the effect on missions? It narrows the field considerably. Can you and I understand that as Christians other people can be deeply converted and disagree with us on points of doctrine.

No 2 The passion and energy that characterised their first days of service had become nothing more than duty. They did what they did because they had to.

What does Jesus say next??? Repent!!

**What does Jesus say about Smyrna?**

8 To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:  
These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.  
9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.  
10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.  
Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

The big problem that this church faced was..... FEAR.  
Fear can make or break a church. In the early church when the persecution was at its highest the church grew fast. When the church is running scared, it shrinks.

We all face fears. What does Jesus say we should do???

Be faithful. That means stand firm and dont let Satan take your crown. Trust what Jesus is doing in your life.