

# Leader Guide

## Revive, First love

Spring 2026 | Week 6

Message Date 5/10/2026

### THE GOAL

Unfortunately, it happens every once in a while, that I will write a Life Group study and Craig will not actually preach the message. So, I know that many of you have already done last week's and the message that he preached this week would have been perfect for it. However here we are. So, I'm going to shift the thought process. This week we move from diagnosing the drift, to engaging in the fight against it. In the passage Jesus closes His letter to Ephesus with a striking word — “victorious” — reminding us that following Him is not a casual stroll but a calling we have to actively contend for. David's story shows us what happens when a person of faith steps out of position and stops listening for the Spirit's warnings. Psalm 51 gives us the warrior's prayer of return — the cry of someone who finally tells the truth and asks God for a brand-new heart. Our goal is to help our group hear what the Spirit is saying, take their place in the fight again, and trust that God is still in the business of making broken people new.

### MY STORY

- 1) If your morning routine were a military operation, what would the code name be — and what is the mission objective before 9 a.m.?
- 2) What is the most pointless thing you have ever fiercely competed for and absolutely refused to lose?

### QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

### DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

#### Read Revelation 2:1–7 (NLT)

*<sup>1</sup>“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:*

*<sup>2</sup>“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say*

*they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. <sup>3</sup>You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.*

*<sup>4</sup>“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! <sup>5</sup>Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. <sup>6</sup>But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do. <sup>7</sup>“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.*

- 4) Jesus says, *“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”* What does it actually look like to “have ears to hear” the Spirit, and why is this kind of listening so often missing in our walk?

Listening to the Spirit isn’t mystical or complicated — it’s the steady, daily habit of letting God speak before we speak, before we react, and before we plan. The reason this is so hard is that most of us live with constant noise around us — phones, opinions, schedules, expectations. Jesus’ warning to Ephesus is sobering: He doesn’t say, “Anyone who can hear,” He says, “Anyone with ears to hear **MUST** listen.” That tells me listening is a discipline. It is not a gift. It is something we choose. The Spirit is always speaking but rarely shouting. He whispers in conviction, in Scripture, in nudges of compassion, in the moments we’d normally rush past.

- 5) Jesus closes with this promise: *“To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.”* What does it mean that the Christian life is described as something we have to be victorious in — and what does that say about how seriously we should take our faith?

Notice the word — victorious. Not “comfortable,” not “comfortable enough,” not “surviving.” Jesus describes the Christian life as a fight. That should reframe how we see our daily walk. Following Jesus is not a hobby we maintain; it is a battle we engage. There is an enemy, there is a flesh, there is a culture, and there is a drift in our own hearts — and all of them are pulling us off mission. Jesus is not threatening us; He is honoring us. He is saying you were made for victory, not survival, and for the prize He promises. When life gets hard and it's painful this is the place that I reminded myself that it's a fight. The key to remember is we don't fight the same way the world fights. We fight through prayer, the Word, and obedience.

- 6) The Ephesians hated the practices of the Nicolaitans, just as Jesus did. What does this teach us about the role of holy hatred behavior and teachings in a believer’s life?

There is a lie that culture tells; that if you don't agree with me and my behaviors 100% you don't love me. This is false. I can love people and hate what they do. In fact, in many ways behavior should grieve me and make me very angry at a deep level. This does not mean I fight differently. I still fight in prayer and in His Word. One of the greatest lessons I've ever learned as Christians is we offer gentle noncompliance to evil. I do not have to agree with it; I do not have to comply with it. If it is truly a moral issue. God's standard is greater.

### **Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5 (NLT)**

*“In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.*

*Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, ‘She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.’ Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period. Then she returned home. Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent David a message, saying, ‘I am pregnant.’”*

- 7) The text says, *“In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army...”* but he stayed behind. What is the significance of David being out of position, and how does being out of position open the door for trouble in our own lives?

King David was out of the place that he was supposed to be. That's why the opening phrase says this. There is a truth that when we get out of sync and out of rhythms that God has us in for safety, we become an easier target. One of the things that David was doing was resting on his past wins and not engaging in the current fight. One of the biggest dangers for me in my own personal life is when I get out of my healthy rhythms. They become more susceptible to bad attitudes and the possibility of sin.

- 8) David was told that Bathsheba was the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite — a clear stop sign — and he kept moving forward anyway. Where do we typically have our last chance to stop a wrong path, and why do we so often blow past those moments?

For me (Justin) it is often because I have allowed myself to become idle, then I am much more susceptible, and when temptation comes, I have not allowed myself to hate it as much as I should. I have already leaned into it somehow. I have also had seasons when I harbored sin in my life. I wasn't ready to let it go.

### **Read Psalms 51:1-17 (NLT)**

*“Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner — yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me — now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your*

*presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God."*

- 9) David begins his prayer with God's character — *"Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion..."* He doesn't open with promises or excuses. Why does grounding our repentance in who God is rather than what we'll do change everything about how we approach Him?

One of the things that's so important to recognize in David's response is he doesn't start with justification or excuses. He leans on the truth of God's character. David doesn't come with promises of I'll never do it again or I'll do better or I'll try harder. He relies on the truth that God is loving and forgiving and we are not. I am so grateful that my forgiveness is dependent upon God's character and not my works. I can't earn my way back; His character is already there. I just need to lean in and trust it. One of the things that happens early on in a believer's life is that we don't believe we're really forgiven. "I've done it again! How can You forgive me?" But He can and He does.

- 10) David asks God to *"create in me a clean heart"* and *"renew a loyal spirit within me."* What is the difference between simply asking God to forgive sin and asking Him to change the very nature of our hearts?

One is about transformation and wanting to change. The other is about feeling not guilty. The key is in repentance--to turn away from sin towards God and ask for His help to become a new man or woman.

## CHAIR TIME TOOLS

- 1) Ask the Lord this week, "Where am I out of position — places You have called me to be that I have quietly stepped away from?" Listen for one specific answer and write it down.
- 2) Spend ten silent minutes a day this week and end with a single prayer: "Holy Spirit, what are You saying to me right now that I have not been listening to?" Then sit long enough to actually hear an answer.
- 3) Pick one person who has wandered from the Lord and intercede for them daily by name. Don't try to fix them; just pray, the way David said he would teach rebels to return.