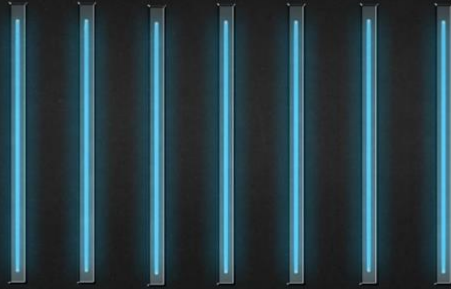


THE SEVEN LETTERS



OF REVELATION



Discipleship Study Questions

October 17th, 2021-December 11th, 2021

Our current sermon series is working through seven letters to various churches found in the first 3 chapters of Revelation. Though John may have been to put pen to ink, it was Jesus who wrote these letters by revealing His heart and His thoughts to John. These letters contain both encouragement and warnings which give us a peek into what Jesus thinks of the church, as well as what He expects of it, both then and now. Let's take a deeper dive into who Jesus is, and what it looks like to be the church that He calls us to be.

Hide God's Word in Your Heart:

Individual: Take a few days and do your best to memorize, or deeply familiarize yourself with, the scripture passage for the week.

Group: Choose one person from the group to commit the week's scripture passage to memory, or thoroughly summarize it in their own words, in order to present it to the group the following week.

Read the story:

Individual: After you've committed the passage, or the essence of the passage, to memory, read two different translations of the scripture for the week.

Group: At your next group meeting, have two different group members read the story using different Bible translations.

Tell the story:

Individual: Recite the story aloud from memory, or tell it to a friend or family member.

Group: Introduce the person who has learned the story for this week. Be ready to assist them if they get stuck at any point.

Rebuild the story:

Individual: Re-read the story to fact check yourself.

Group: Use questions to help the group highlight the main points of the story and correct any omissions or misrepresentations of the story. The point is not to point out the story teller's mistakes, but rather to point people to the Word to ensure everyone understands it accurately.

Dig into the Word:

Individual: Work through the questions and pray about what God reveals to you through His word. Discuss with a Christian friend or family member, if you choose.

Group: Work through the questions as a group, celebrating the work God is already doing in each person's life, and encouraging each other to trust Him in the places that need growth.

Introduction to Revelation

Week 1: Read Revelation 1: 7-18

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is John teaching the church at large?

What sticks out to you personally as you read this passage?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

We see the 7 churches described as 7 lamp stands in this passage. In what ways should the church be like a lamp stand?

What characteristic stands out to you from the description of Jesus in v.13-16? What is the significance of that characteristic? How does this description spark your imagination?

Why do you think John's response was to fall at Jesus' feet as though dead? How does this contrast with what Jesus speaks to him?

How should the appearance and words of the risen Jesus in this passage shape your interactions with Him? How should it shape the way we hold Him in our thoughts? How should it shape our actions?

Prayer:

Father, you are powerful, yet full of mercy, and worthy of all glory and honor. Thank you for coming near to us. Thank you for giving us glimpses of who you truly are, yet still desiring a relationship with us, not constrained by fear. Help us to grasp your true glory and might yet understand your deep love for us. As your children, may we live out of that love in such a way that brings you the glory and honor that you deserve. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Ephesus

Week 2: Read Revelation 2: 2-5

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Ephesus?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

For those who have been in a long term relationship or friendship, think of how the relationship changes over a long period of time. At times, it can cool and become almost robotic, having lost a bit of the intensity that may have been there at the beginning. Other times, it can grow into a deep, stable, more mature version of how the relationship started.

How would you categorize your relationship with Jesus at this point in time?
Is it still new? Has it cooled? Is it maturing? How do you know?

What does this passage tell us about outwardly doing all the right behaviors, yet not having the love for God that we once had? What are the consequences?

How does this passage correlate to Matthew 5:14-16?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for loving us first, for coming near to us, and for sending your son to die for us. Help us rediscover our first love for you. Help us to remember all you've done for us, and why we chose to follow you in the first place. Help us to walk in the love that you have for us, and that we have for you, in both our words and our actions, so that our entire lives honor you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Smyrna

Week 3: Read Revelation 2: 8-11

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Smyrna?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

What does it mean when Jesus says He knows the church's affliction and poverty, yet they are rich? How can this be? (You can refer to James 2:5 as well.)

Why would Jesus tell this church not to be afraid of the suffering to come? Where does their courage and hope come from?

What phrases do we read in these verses that show us that God is still in control, even as the devil and evil people are persecuting the church?

How does persecution lead to gaining a crown of life, and being unhurt by the second death? (For more context, you could also read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 1 Peter 3:17-18, 1 Peter 4:1-2, Revelation 20:14-15.)

Prayer:

Father, thank you for seeing us. Thank you for knowing our struggles, and always remaining in them with us. Help us to trust that the struggles we encounter in life are meant to grow us closer to you and to deeply refine us. Lord, give us the courage and strength to stand firm in you, to stand firm in our faith, and to trust that this present life is not the end for those of us that abide in you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Pergamum

Week 4: Read Revelation 2: 12-17

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Pergamum?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper

The church at Pergamum stayed true to their faith but compromised to their culture in the realms of idolatry and sexual immorality. What is Jesus' response to this? What do we learn about how He feels about partial obedience?

Where in your life have you drifted into partial obedience and compromise? What is God's instruction to you, according to this passage?

What is the reward for repentance and realigning with Jesus? What is the significance of these things?

If you were given a new name by God, what might it be? How would living into that name change how you walk through your life on a daily basis?

Prayer:

Father, you are so good, and you are so kind. Thank you for your faithfulness to us in that you always provide an opportunity for us to turn from our sin and repent. Help us to hold firmly to the truth in both thought and action. Shape our lives in such a way that we look completely different from the culture around us, and that we would boldly reflect the image of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Thyatira

Week 5: Read Revelation 2: 18-29

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Thyatira?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

How does Jesus describe himself at the beginning of this passage? Why do you think He chose to focus on these specific characteristics? How do we see His eyes and His feet come into play throughout the rest of the passage?

Why is it so important to maintain purity within the body of believers? Why did Jesus speak out so strongly against tolerance of sin?

Go back to the way Jesus describes His eyes and His feet: how do fire and burnished bronze represent what is being asked of the church in Thyatira?

What do you need to purify in your own life in order to hold more firmly to the truth God calls all believers to?

Prayer:

Father, you are so patient with us, and so generous. Thank you for the gift of time. Even though we know it is limited, you grant us time to come to you, time to repent, and time to bring others into your saving grace. We are so grateful that you care for us, not wanting anyone to live in their own destructive sin, but desiring for all to come to you, and into repentance. Lord, purify our hearts, and set us on the path of truth. In the words of David, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Sardis

Week 6: Read Revelation 3: 1-6

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Sardis?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

Can you think of anything in your life where you have worked tirelessly to maintain the appearance of life, even though you knew it was truly dead, under all the appearances?

Was it something that needed to die, or was it something you ultimately hoped a fresh breath of life would revive?

Can you think of anything in your spiritual life that someone on the outside looking in would think was alive, but that truly needs God to breathe life into again? Ask your small group, or a trusted friend, to pray along with you that God would strengthen you in that area.

What is the reward for those who have remained vibrant in their faith and walk with God?

Imagine what it would be like to be acknowledged by name by someone famous that you look up to, whether it be an author, an actor, a well-known pastor, an athlete, or someone else with a notable talent. Now imagine what it would be like to be acknowledged by Jesus himself. What would you need to do within your relationship with Him, and in your daily practices of life, to come alive in your faith and walk in that kind of friendship now?

Prayer:

Father, you hold the power over life and death, and we are so grateful that you use that power in our lives. Thank you for your willingness to resurrect the dead pieces of our faith to bring them back to life in you. Prune what needs to die in us, and help your name be always present on our hearts and lips, so that ours may be present on yours. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Philadelphia

Week 7: Read Revelation 3: 7-13

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Philadelphia?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

What courage can you take from this passage, knowing that even when being oppressed, a little strength is enough, and that Jesus provides the rest, opening doors that no one else can close?

Read Matthew 5:1-11. What does "a little strength" look like in the life of a believer? How does it differ from how the world at large sees strength?

What are the promises in this passage for those who are victorious in standing firm in their faith and keeping the Lord's commands?

Is there an open door that God has placed in front of you? What needs to happen for you to boldly walk through it?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for Jesus, who fills in the gap between our tiny bit of strength and what is needed for victory. We ask that you would take our tiny seeds of strength and faith, and help them to grow, by your power and your faithfulness. Help us to hold firm to what we have, and keep our eyes focused on you, so that when we see a door that only you could open, we will walk through it, hand in hand with you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Week 8: Read Revelation 3: 14-22

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching the church in Laodicea?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Digging Deeper:

What would the characteristics likely be of a church that is hot: that is zealous and on fire for God? In contrast, what might the characteristics of the church at Laodicea have been, in their lukewarm state?

What contrast does Jesus draw between the Laodicean church's priorities of wealth and acquisition, and their true condition before God?

What in your life have you mistakenly prioritized that has left you looking poor, blind, and pitiful before God?

What is the remedy for this lukewarm condition, and what does it reveal about God's true heart for His people?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for loving us so much that you rebuke and discipline us, that we might turn away from our sin and come back to you. Help us to see through what the world presents as security, and realize that, in your eyes, those things are all worthless. Help us to turn to you to find what is truly of value, opening the door to you, and abiding in your presence. In the name of Jesus, amen.