



# **Built up for victory!**

**A Study from  
Revelation  
Chapters 1-3**

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# INTRODUCTION

For many people, the Book of Revelation is a secretive, strange book and people often struggle to understand and apply it. However, it is a book of encouragement and hope.

At the beginning of the book, the author, John, explains how he received the revelation from God while he was in exile on the island of Patmos, where he was sent because of his faithful preaching of the gospel.

A revelation means to reveal something, to uncover it, to show it off. A monument, movie, or book can have a revelation when they are unveiled and shown to the world. A person has a revelation when he becomes aware of something he never knew before. The very first sentence contains the theme of the book of Revelation. What is it a revelation of? It is a revelation of Jesus. He will be revealed for all to see. Jesus was made visible in part at His first coming. At His second coming, He will be made visible for “every eye” to see. And every single person in the world will see Him in His power and glory as He truly is.

The letter is addressed to the seven churches in Asia. Why seven churches? The symbolic meaning of seven indicates completeness or perfection. When the Apostle John wrote to them these were real, physical congregations that existed at that time and represented the church at large. They were not the only churches in Asia Minor, but the order in which he addressed them is the order in which a messenger from Patmos would travel as he made his way around Asia Minor on a circular route. These letters should not be seen as individual letters – only meant for that congregation – but as a circular letter with seven recipients. Each congregation should read each part of this circular letter.

The churches had begun to feel the effects of persecution. Jesus gives His revelation about the things that are to come - but he begins by first talking to the churches about the things that are going on with them (Rev 1:19). There are issues that should receive attention immediately - not one day!

Jesus' call was not just for those seven congregations and their pastors - but universally for the church of all ages as we head towards the Coming of the King. To these churches, but also to the believers of all times, Revelation provided a message of hope. God is in sovereign control and Christ will come in glory to judge and rule.

Congregations matter to God - and how they live and what they focus on affects Him. In Revelation 2 and 3 we find 7 examples of how a congregation either makes God happy or "goes on a side-track" and deviates from their purpose and disappoints Him. However, it is impossible to understand Chapters 2 and 3 without chapter 1.

Use this study to understand God's warnings to the congregations and apply them to your life and congregation. Remember that God is in control, that Christ has already won the victory over evil and that all who believe in Him are saved.

#### **NOTE ON THE STUDIES OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES:**

The letters to the seven churches share a similar structure. They each feature:

- An address to a particular congregation.
- An introduction of Jesus.
- A statement regarding the condition of the church.
- A verdict from Jesus regarding the condition of the church.
- A command from Jesus to the church.
- A general exhortation to all Christians.
- A promise of reward.

As we study each of the churches, we will identify each of these features.

# MAP SHOWING THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION







**Week 1**

# **Jesus' call to His Church**

## **Memory Verse:**

*“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

*Revelation 1:17(b)-18*

# PERSONAL STUDY

**Read Revelation 1:1-20 and Colossians 1:15-22**

## **OPENING REMARKS:**

From the outset, we are given the most important truth about the Book of Revelation - it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ to us. Revelation depicts Jesus as the risen, glorified Son of God ministering amongst the churches. If we catch everything else, but miss Jesus in the book, we miss the Book of Revelation.

The Revelation from Jesus Christ reaches the church by a three-stage process:

1. God gave it to Jesus.
2. Jesus sent His angel to John, and
3. John writes to the believers.

Jesus discloses unseen, divine realities of what must soon take place. It speaks of things that will happen in the future — at least future from the time of its writing.

In Chapter 1 of Revelation we meet Jesus, described in different ways and with different symbols. In each of the letters in Revelation 2 and 3, we will see that chapter 1 is quoted as John highlights a different attribute of Jesus in each letter.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 1:1-3. What did John mean when he wrote: “the time is near”? (Also refer to Matthew 24:36-39 and 2 Peter 3:3-4)

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Read Revelation 1: 4-6. Why do you think John is addressing the 7 churches in the province of Asia? Why were they important?

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What does it mean for us as church today and for you personally that:

- Jesus is and was and is to come.?

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- Jesus is the faithful witness.

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- Jesus is the first one who rose from the dead?

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- Jesus is the Ruler of the Kings?

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Read Revelation 1:7. What will happen when Jesus comes again?

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Read Revelation 1:8. How is the Lord described in this verse? Explain the phrases used in your own words.

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Read Revelation 1:12:20. How does John describe the amazing appearance of the Son of Man in this vision?

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The seven churches are pictured as seven golden lampstands. What does this tell us about the function of the church? Explain.

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Who or what are the seven stars? What is the significance of churches having “stars”?

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Why is it important that Jesus (the Son of Man) was amongst the lampstands?

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Read Colossians 1:15-22. What does this paragraph teach us about Jesus?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

This was a spectacular vision that John had, and many people wish they could have such an experience. The truth is, we can know the very same Jesus John saw. We can know His purity, His eternal wisdom, His searching judgment, His victory, His authority and His majesty. Each of these aspects of His nature are ours to know intimately.

The first time Jesus came, He came in humiliation, but He will return in exaltation. The first time He came to die, He will return to judge His enemies. The first time He came to serve, He will return to be served. He came as the suffering servant, but He will return as the conquering King. The Book Revelation challenges all people to be ready for His return.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

Revelation 1:17(b)-18

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 1:1-20

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read Revelation 1:1-6. What does it mean for us as a church today and for you personally that Jesus:

- Is and was and is to come?

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- Is the faithful witness?

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- Is the Ruler of kings of the earth?

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Read Revelation 1:17(b) – 20. What does it mean to us that Jesus said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

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How do you think we should understand verse 20? And what does this mean for our congregation? Discuss.

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**Close in Prayer**



# Week **2**

## **Ephesus, the Careless Church**

### **Memory Verse:**

*“Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”*

*Revelation 2: 5(a)*

## **PERSONAL STUDY**

### **Read Revelation 2:1-7**

#### **OPENING REMARKS:**

One of the seven wonders of ancient times was the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. In Greek mythology she was the daughter of Zeus. She was worshiped as the goddess of fertility. Her name in the Roman deity was Diana. The temple was 150m long and 70m wide. There were 120 pillars and 36 of them were gilded. The roof was 20m high.

The worshipers of this goddess engaged in immorality in the temple as worship for her, in an uncontrolled way. There were always 120 full-time temple prostitutes on duty.

Ephesus was one of the largest cities in Asia Minor. It is estimated that at the time of Revelation there were more than 250,000 people living in the city. The Romans kept records quite well, so we know quite a lot about what went on at that time. It was a port city and three major trade routes converged there. Many businesspeople did business there. It also had the second largest library of the ancient world.

Christianity probably originated or got a boost when Paul arrived there in AD 52 and when he left Aquilla and Priscilla there. (Acts 18:18-22). When John wrote the letter, the congregation was about 40 years old and therefore there were already quite a few second and third generation Christians. In other words, people who only heard about Jesus but who did not experience Him personally. It was a congregation that continued with the everyday life.

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 2:1-7.



How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Ephesus? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 1 and Rev 1:12-13).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verses 2-3)

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What verdict does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verse 4).

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What command does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verses 5-6).

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What reward is promised to those who are victorious? (Refer to verse 7{b}).

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What general exhortation (general warning) to all Christians do we find in this passage?

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There is a tendency for most of us to lose the initial enthusiasm and excitement we had when we first came to know Christ. If we have lost our first love, what steps can we take to renew our commitment to Jesus?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

As Christians, we are told to love God and to love one another. Did the Ephesians leave their love for God? Did they leave their love for one another? Probably both are in mind, because the two loves go together. You cannot say you love God and not love His family, and you cannot really love His family without loving Him first.

Jesus made a promise to those who overcome the coldness of their hearts and the lack of love marked by leaving their first love. The promise for these overcomers was a return to Eden, a restoration, and eternal life.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

Revelation 2: 5(a)

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 2:1-7

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read Revelation 2:1-3 and 6. How do you feel about the fact that God knows everything you do and what goes on in the congregation? Discuss.

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Read Revelation 2:4-5 and Matthew 22:37-39. What do you think is meant by Jesus’s statement: “*You have forsaken the love you had at first*”? Discuss the implications of this statement for your personal life as well as the congregation.

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How do you understand the command *repent*? Does it only refer to the unconverted or also for believers?

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What does Jesus' warning that He will remove the lampstand from its place, mean? Discuss what it means for our congregation?

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



## Week **3**

# Smyrna, the Crowned Church

### Memory Verse:

*“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 life as your victor’s crown.”*

*Revelation 2: 10*

# PERSONAL STUDY

## Read Revelation 2:8-11

### OPENING REMARKS:

The wealthy city of Smyrna was located about 56 kilometres north of Ephesus, at a central and strategic point on the Aegean Sea, rising picturesquely from the sea. Due to its favourable port conditions, its ease of defence and its good inland connections, the city was extraordinarily rich and important. The city is also referred to as the "Port of Asia". The city was known for its fidelity and loyalty to Rome.

The congregation of Smyrna was a persecuted congregation. They had two major problems: the Jewish population was fiercely opposed to Christianity, and the non-Jews were in favour of worshiping the Roman emperor. It was therefore inevitable that there was persecution of the Christians.

Smyrna is one of two congregations that receive a completely positive message from the Lord.

### STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Revelation 2:8-11.

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Smyrna? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 8 and Rev 1:17{b} – 18{a}).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church?  
(Refer to verse 9)

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What command does Jesus give to the church? What is required of those who suffer for the Lord? (Refer to verse 10).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verse 11).

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What general message to all Christians do we find in this passage?

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The letter to Smyrna mentions no problem and gives no warning. What role does affirmation play in helping Christians who are under spiritual pressure?

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## **CLOSING REMARKS:**

The Christians in Smyrna suffered under persecution, and they were afraid. Sometimes we think that Christians who endure persecution are almost super-human, and we often do not appreciate the depths of fear they struggle with. There were things which they were about to suffer, and Jesus wanted to make them ready to stand against those things.

Smyrna is the only church among the seven still surviving today, and it has survived through centuries of Roman and Muslim persecution.

Though Satan threatened and attacked their life, Jesus promises His overcomers that death is conquered for them.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“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 life as your victor’s crown.”

Revelation 2: 10

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 2:8-11

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share with one another what was the most significant revelation for you reading this letter.

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Read Revelation 2:8-9. In verse 9 Jesus said that He knows about the church’s afflictions and poverty – about their suffering. What does this mean for the church of Smyrna? And for our congregation?

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Read Revelation 2:10. What does it mean to remain faithful unto death? What is the result of such faithfulness?

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Read Revelation 2:11. What does the term “second death” refer to?

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



# Week **4**

## **Pergamum, The Compromising Church**

### **Memory Verse:**

*“Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”*

*Revelation 2: 16*

# PERSONAL STUDY

**Read Revelation 2:12-17**

## **OPENING REMARKS:**

The conditions in the city of Pergamum were quite different from those in Ephesus and Smyrna. The city was located on a high, rocky hill, and the Romans made it the political capital of the province of Asia. When John wrote, Pergamos had been the capital city of the region for more than three hundred years. It was also the centre of Caesar worship - They ruled from here and here were the temples dedicated to the worship of Caesar.

The city was a sophisticated city, which was known for its educational opportunities. It was also known as an important Greek cultural centre and there was a library with around 200,000 sources available.

Just like Ephesus, Pergamum was a city of idolatry and different cults. For example, the god of healing, Asclepius, was worshiped under the sign of the snake, which for believers in Christ was the true symbol of Satan. Several other pagan altars were also to be seen here, including the great altar of Zeus.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 2:12-17.

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Pergamum? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 12 and Rev 1:16).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church?  
(Refer to verse 13)

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What verdict does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verses 14-15).

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What command does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verses 16).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verse 17).

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What general exhortation (general warning) to all Christians do we find in this passage?

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What temptations lure the church today? What antidote does 1 John 2:15-17 provide to guard against being led astray?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Sexual immorality marked the whole culture of the ancient Roman Empire. It was simply taken for granted, and the person who lived by Biblical standards of purity was considered strange. The Christians of Pergamum were like the Christians of Corinth to whom Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5:1-9. They were too tolerant and accepting of false doctrines and immoral living, and Jesus had to rebuke them.

Satan could not accomplish much by persecution, because many of them held fast, like Antipas. So, Satan tried to accomplish his goals by using deception. The strategy was: first violence, then alliance.

A difficult environment never justifies compromise. It is easy for a church in such difficulty to justify this compromise in the name of “we need all the help we can get” — but no church needs that kind of help.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Revelation 2: 16

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 2:12-17

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share with one another what was the most significant revelation for you reading this letter.

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Read Revelation 2:12 and 16. Look at Jesus' introduction of Himself in verse 12 and His warning in verse 16. How should we understand this? Discuss.

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Read Revelation 2:14-15. Jesus warns them against false doctrines and the constant danger of doctrinal compromise. What false doctrines or compromises do we currently face as believers? Discuss how it impacts you.

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Read Revelation 2:17. What is promised to those who stick to the fundamentals of biblical truth? Describe it in your own words.

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



# Week **5**

## **Thyatira, The Corrupted Church**

### **Memory Verse:**

*"I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."*

*Revelation 2: 19*

## PERSONAL STUDY

### Read Revelation 2:18-29

#### OPENING REMARKS:

Thyatira was the smallest and least important of the seven cities Jesus addressed in Revelation 2 and 3. It was located in a valley that connected two other valleys. It was a connection centre and many people travelled through here. Since the city was wide open to an attack/invasion, a garrison was usually stationed here to defend the city and to block the road to Pergamum.

Thyatira was a worker's city. Here were various trade guilds, e.g., wool workers, linen workers, makers of outerwear, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, etc. Each trade guild had its own patron deity associated with it. This meant that if you wanted to advance, you had to belong to a guild, which implied that you had to worship its patron god. You had to attend the guild festivals and eat the food offered to the patron god. You also had to participate in the indecent fun afterwards. There was no one particular religion that was dominant.

Thyatira was famous for the manufacture of a purple dye, and numerous references are found in secular literature of the period to the trade guilds which manufactured cloth. Lydia of Thyatira, who was converted in Philippi under Paul's work, was a seller of purple cloth from the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:14).

#### STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Revelation 2: 18-29

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Thyatira? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 18 and Rev 1: 14{b} and 15 {a}).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church?  
(Refer to verse 19)

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What verdict does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verses 20-23).

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What command does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verses 24-25).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verses 26-27).

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What general exhortation (general warning) to all Christians do we find in this passage?

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Jesus charges this godly and loving church with being too tolerant of evil in its midst. In what areas are Christians too tolerant today?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

Thyatira was the least significant city among the seven cities Jesus addressed, yet they were not hidden to Jesus. Like each one of the churches, Jesus proclaimed to the church at Thyatira “I know your works.”

Jesus described the specific sin of this woman “Jezebel.” Mainly, she was an immoral and ungodly influence on others, and led others into sin. Jezebel led others into immorality and idolatry.

This is a letter that applies to everyone. It applies to those who are like Jezebel, who led others into sin. It applies to those who follow the teaching of a Jezebel and follow others into sin. It applies to those who permit a Jezebel to work her wickedness. Finally, it applies to the faithful who must hold fast.

Even when there is the immoral and idolatrous influence of a Jezebel, Christians can overcome and keep Jesus’ works until the end. We must not become overly discouraged at immorality and idolatry around us, even among Christians. God’s work will still go on through His overcomers.



# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.”

Revelation 2: 19

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 2:18-29

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share with one another what was the most significant revelation for you reading this letter.

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Read Revelation 2:18. The Lord is described as “the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze”. What does the description mean for the congregation of Thyatira? Discuss.

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Read Revelation 2:20-23. A general spirit of debauchery and sexual immorality was taking hold in the congregation. The Lord comes to warn the congregation against moral compromise and calls them to repent again. Do you think this still applies to us today? Discuss.

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Read Revelation 2:28 and 2 Peter 1:19. In these verses Jesus is called the morning star. The morning star is visible just before dawn, when the night is at its darkest. What does this mean for us? Describe it in your own words.

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



# Week **6**

## **Sardis, The Feeble Church**

### **Memory Verse:**

*“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”*

*Revelation 3:3*

## **PERSONAL STUDY**

### **Read Revelation 3 : 1- 6**

#### **OPENING REMARKS:**

Sardis was the capital of Lydia and located on an almost unclimbable hill overlooking the Hermus Valley. The inhabitants of Sardis were proud and conceited and confident - they were sure that no one would be able to climb this hill with its perpendicular slopes. There was only one entry point, which they guarded very well.

The hill on which Sardis was located was too narrow for the growing city, and a second part of the city developed in the valley below at the foot of the mountain. The city was always moving and alive - there was always something happening. Sin also flourished here.

This city was also a city well known for its softness and luxury. It had a well-deserved reputation for apathy and immorality. In Sardis there was a large, stately temple to the mother goddess, Cybele. This mother goddess was honoured and worshipped with all kinds of sexual immorality and impurity.

The combination of easy money and a loose moral environment made the people of Sardis notoriously soft and pleasure loving.

At the time Jesus spoke these words to John, the ancient city of Sardis had seen its best days and had started to decline. Yet it was a wealthy city, situated at the junction of several important roads and trade routes.

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 3: 1-6

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Sardis? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 1 and Rev 1:4{b} and 16{a}).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verse 1)

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What verdict does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verses 2-3).

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What command does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verses 2-3).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verses 4-5).

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What general exhortation (general warning) to all Christians do we find in this passage?

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In his book, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, George Ladd wrote: Here is a picture of nominal Christianity, outwardly prosperous, busy with the externals of religious activity, but devoid of spiritual life and power. To what extend does the church today fit this picture? To what extend is this true of our church?

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How could we as a congregation change this?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

A church is in danger of being called dead when it is more concerned with form than life, when it loves systems more than Christ and when it is more interested in material things than spiritual things.

Jesus knew the church at Sardis had a name — that is, a reputation — of life and vitality. If you looked at the church of Sardis, you would see signs of life and vitality. In the church of Sardis, like the city of Sardis, everything seemed

alive and good. But Jesus saw them for what they really were. A good reputation is no guarantee of true spiritual character. Despite their good appearance, Jesus perceived them as dead.

Though the spiritual condition of the church of Sardis was bad, it wasn't hopeless. Spiritually, there were still things which remained that could be strengthened. Jesus had not given up on them, and it was not too late. Jesus told them they need to examine and protect, strengthening what they have.

What they needed to do was to remember how they first received and heard the Word of God. Then they must hold fast to those things and repent by turning back and restoring the gospel and apostolic doctrine to authority over their lives.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

Revelation 3:3

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 3:1-6

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Let's be honest: Does (y)our church also have a name in Society? How would you describe our appearance in society and how do you think does Jesus see us (for what we are)?

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Read Revelation 3:1-3. What is the Lord calling the congregation to (there are 5 calls)?

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Read Revelation 3:4 and 5{a}. What does the reference to the white clothes mean? Discuss.

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Read Revelation 3:5. Christ promises that everyone who steadfastly and faithfully follows Him will have Eternal Life. They will be clothed with honour. What does this mean for us and our congregation? Discuss.

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



**Week 7**

# **Philadelphia, The Faithful Church**

**Memory Verse:**

*“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”*

*Revelation 3:11*

## PERSONAL STUDY

### Read Revelation 3 : 7-13

#### OPENING REMARKS:

The word Philadelphia means brotherly love. The city was founded by King Attalos II Philadelphus of Pergamum (159–138 BC), who founded the city out of love for his brother. Philadelphia had been built with the deliberate intention that it might become a missionary city. Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia and the barbarous tribes; and it was intended that the function of Philadelphia should be to spread the Greek language, the Greek way of life, the Greek civilization, throughout the regions beyond.

The city was located on a busy trade route and was sometimes called "the gateway to the East" and was known for its wine production. The most important religion was the worship of Dionysius, the god of wine. The congregation there was small but spiritually strong. This city was also known for beautiful buildings (it was called the "little Athens") and her earthquakes, which required frequent evacuations.

To this congregation Christ presents Himself as the Holy One, the true God, He who has the key of David. The key of David finds its explanation in Isaiah 22:15–25 where the Word of God is directed against the palace official Shebna. He is dismissed from his office and succeeded by Eliakim to whom the word of the Lord says: *I will give Him the key to the house of David...* (Is 22:22).

Jesus is the Son of David, the expected Messiah, to whom the key to the royal house, the heavenly kingdom, was given. He alone has the power to open or shut, and what He does no man can undo. Apparently in Philadelphia the doors of the synagogue were closed to the Christians by the hostile Jews. Now Jesus says that He will open the door to Heaven for them.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 3: 7-13

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Philadelphia? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 7, Isaiah 22:22 and Rev 1:18).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verse 8)

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What promise does Jesus make regarding the church? (Refer to verses 9-10).

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What command does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verse 11).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verse 12).

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What general encouragement - applicable to all believers - do we find in this passage?

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Why would a weak church be encouraged by Jesus' promise of an open door of opportunity?

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Members of many churches today are discouraged by what is going on in the world around them. What can we learn from Jesus' words to the Philadelphians?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

The church of Philadelphia is commended for keeping the Word of the Lord and not denying His Name. Success in Christian work is not to be measured by any other standard of achievement.

Overcomers were told that they would be as a pillar in the temple of My God. Pillars were pictures of strength, stability, and dignified beauty. The ancient city of Philadelphia suffered from frequent earthquakes. When a building collapsed in an earthquake often all that remained standing were the huge pillars. Jesus offers us this same strength, to remain standing in Him when everything around us crumbles.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

Revelation 3:11

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 3:7-13

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share with one another what was the most significant revelation for you reading this letter.

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Read Revelation 3:8. What do you think caused the congregation to have little power? What drains our congregation's strength. Talk to each other about it.

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Read Revelation 3:10-11. Christians, including us, are not exempt from trials. How should we deal with trials, so that no one takes away our crown. Discuss this in the group.

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Read 1 Timothy 3:15(b): What is the Church meant to be and to what goal should we stand strong?

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The area in Turkey where the church was located is still plagued by earthquakes. It is as if He is saying that buildings are falling around you, but if you stand firm, you will be a pillar that will stand forever, holding up the truth of the Gospel. Nothing, no persecution or death, nothing will knock you over again because Jesus holds you close.

Read Revelation 3:12-13. Talk to each other about the fact that Jesus' Name is written on the people who overcome. What do you think it means? What does it mean for us to be bearers of Jesus' Name? Discuss.

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**



# Week **8**

## **Laodicea, The Foolish Church**

### **Memory Verse:**

*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”*

*Revelation 3:20*



## PERSONAL STUDY

### Read Revelation 3 : 14-22

#### OPENING REMARKS:

Laodicea was an important, wealthy city, with a significant Jewish population. Like other cities in the region, it was a centre for Caesar worship and the worship of the healing god Asklepios. Laodicea was the banking centre of Asia Minor. When the city was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 AD, they rebuilt the city themselves without any outside help. This is just an indication of how rich the city was. It was and is still known worldwide for its textile industry. They produced a particularly soft black wool. Today they still make the most beautiful linen and tablecloths and all the big brand names like Levi, Wangler and Lee have factories in the area. Perhaps this is what verse 18 refers to (you shame your nakedness). You make all the wonderful clothes, but actually you are naked before God.

There was also a large medical school in the city, where medics of that time were trained. The school was known for its contribution in the development of medicine, especially eye and ear medicine. Jesus also alludes to this in verse 18, when he speaks of the eye ointment.

About 7 km away from the city is the Hierapolis. A city that was built in front of a hot spring. Jesus also refers to this in verse 15, when He says if only you were cold or hot, but now you are lukewarm. One of the problems of Laodicea was a poor water supply and that made them vulnerable to attack through siege. If an enemy army surrounded the city, they had insufficient water supplies in the city, and the supplies coming into the city could be easily cut off. Therefore, the leaders of Laodicea were always accommodating to any potential enemy, and always wanted to negotiate and compromise instead of fight. Their main water supply came on a six-mile aqueduct from the hot springs of Hierapolis. Because the water came from hot springs, by the time it reached the city, it was unappetizingly lukewarm.

There is no word of praise for the congregation here. Jesus immediately begins with His concern for what is going on in the congregation.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Revelation 3: 14-22

How does Jesus introduce himself to the congregation of Laodicea? What does this mean? (Refer to verse 14 and Col. 1:16 and 18).

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What statement does Jesus make regarding the condition of the church? (Refer to verses 15 and 17)

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What promise does Jesus make regarding the church? (Refer to verse 16).

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What advise does Jesus give to the church? (Refer to verses 18-19).

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What reward is promised to those that are victorious? (Refer to verses 20-21).

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What general encouragement - applicable to all believers - do we find in this passage? In what sense might God call you “lukewarm”?

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Laodicea was so self-sufficient that when they suffered an earthquake in A.D. 60 they rejected help from Rome. How did this attitude affect them spiritually?

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What warning is here for you spiritually?

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**CLOSING REMARKS:**

The church of Laodicea exemplifies empty religion, and tax collectors and harlots were more open to Jesus than the scribes and Pharisees. Satan will have us any way he can get us, but he prizes a lukewarm religionist far above a cold-hearted sinner.

In his sermon, *An Earnest Warning against Lukewarmness*, Spurgeon described the lukewarm church:

- They have prayer-meetings, but there are few present, for they like quiet evenings home.
- When more attend the meetings they are still very dull, for they do their praying very deliberately and are afraid of being too excited.
- They are content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal are considered to be vulgar.
- They may have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them.
- They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still and exhibit no motion or emotion.
- The pastor does not fly very far in preaching the everlasting Gospel, and he certainly has no flame of fire in his preaching.
- The pastor may be a shining light of eloquence, but he certainly is not a burning light of grace, setting men's hearts on fire.
- Everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not.
- Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all around.
- The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means.
- They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel.
- They are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are 'neither cold nor hot.'

Jesus gave this lukewarm church *The Great Invitation*. He knocked at their door, asking entry to come and dine with them, in the sense of sharing warm, intimate time. It only happens for those who respond to His knock, but the promise is made to all.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

Revelation 3:20

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Revelation 3:14-22

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Share with one another what was the most significant revelation for you reading this letter.

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Read Revelation 3:14-15. Why do you think God doesn't like lukewarmness? Talk to each other about what lukewarm means and whether there really is such a thing as a lukewarm Christian?

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Read Revelation 3:17-18. "I don't need anyone, I'll manage on my own." Talk to each other about the statement above. Why is this a problem for God? What should we do to avoid becoming like that?

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Read Revelation 3:20. Jesus stands outside the congregation's heart and knock. What is your reaction when you read this verse? What is the only way that Jesus gain access to His people's hearts? Discuss.

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Talk to each other about how the message of this letter can help our congregation and yourself to achieve victory.

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**Close in Prayer**

## Resources

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MacArthur, John. Revelation The Christin's Ultimate Victory. Thomas Nelson Books, Nashville, Tennessee, 2007.

Stevens, R. Paul. Revelation The Triumph of God. Intervarsity Press, Illinois, 1999.

<https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com>

<https://studyandobey.com/inductive-bible-study>

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[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

<https://www.biblestudytools.com>

[www.gospelway.com](http://www.gospelway.com)

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Scripture Direct Application

## **ADDENDUM 1 : GUIDELINES FOR SMALL GROUPS**

Welcome to the small group. We believe that you will experience God's love in the group. You are part of the group to give and receive. Feel free to join discussions at any time. The Lord works with everyone in a unique way, your comment or testimony might just change someone else's life. Please pray regularly for our congregation, your small group and for the world around us. You will see that the group studies are divided into a number of moments.

### **Prayer**

Welcome every group member, especially newcomers. Pray together as a group and ask Father to bless this time together in His Word.

### **Reflection**

Give each person an opportunity to share with the group about his/her week. Give opportunity for feedback following last week's personal study.

### **Scripture reading:**

Take the time to read the indicated passages from God's Word. Give people who want the opportunity to read some of the verses. One person can read the entire passage(s) or you can each read a few verses - depending on how the group feels about it.

### **Discussion Questions**

Take time to re-read each verse referred to. Talk about God's Word following the discussion questions. Make sure everyone gets an opportunity to participate in the discussions.

### **Close in Prayer**

As a group, spend time in prayer. Give everyone an opportunity to pray out loud. Ask Father to help you to apply His message practically. Pray for each other, the congregation and the world.



## ADDENDUM 2: SMALL GROUP AGREEMENT

1. **Unconditional love** - I pledge that I will not allow anything to harm my love for each small group member. Even if I don't agree with another's opinion or actions, I will still love him as a person. Even if we differ, I will still accept others and make room for God's love. My love will also reach out to others who are not yet in the group, and seek to involve them and make them part of the small group.
2. **Overall availability** - I make myself, my time, my energy, my insight and my gifts available to the group. I undertake that the group will always have high priority and that I will prove this by my willingness to sacrifice and make time for the group.
3. **Faithful intercession** - As the loving Father would like it, I undertake to pray for each small group member on a regular basis. I believe that these prayers are answered and that every member will experience God's blessing.
4. **Greater openness** - I promise to strive to share my feelings, my struggles, my hardships and my joys with the group. I will be more open and trust the group with my problems and my ideals.
5. **Absolute honesty** - I undertake to be honest with everyone, even if it involves hurtful and sensitive things. I will speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), aware of the fact that the Lord uses us to shape each other.
6. **Sensitivity to others** - I undertake to be attuned to group members' needs to the best of my ability, to look with Christ's eyes, listen with his ears and care with his heart.
7. **True confidentiality** - I promise not to talk about confidential things about the group, thereby helping to create an atmosphere where security and openness prevail.
8. **Completely controlled by the Holy Spirit** - I would like to be in the small group and in this world that God intended me to be. That is why I want to live under the control of the Holy Spirit and put myself and God's gifts at the service and blessing of the group members.

9. **Faithful attendance** - I undertake to attend each small group meeting promptly and regularly. I will apologize if I cannot attend in exceptional cases.

10. **Thank offering** - I undertake to faithfully give my thank offering contribution every month.

