

SE7EN

CHURCHES OF REVELATION



MILLINGTON
baptist church



A dark blue world map is centered in the background of the page. The map shows the continents in a slightly lighter shade of blue.

SE7EN

CHURCHES OF REVELATION

Welcome to our special series
Seven Churches of Revelation
at Millington Baptist Church.

We designed this custom Study
Guide to help you understand
God's Word, engage with the
Sunday sermons, and spark
discussion with your
MBC Small Group.

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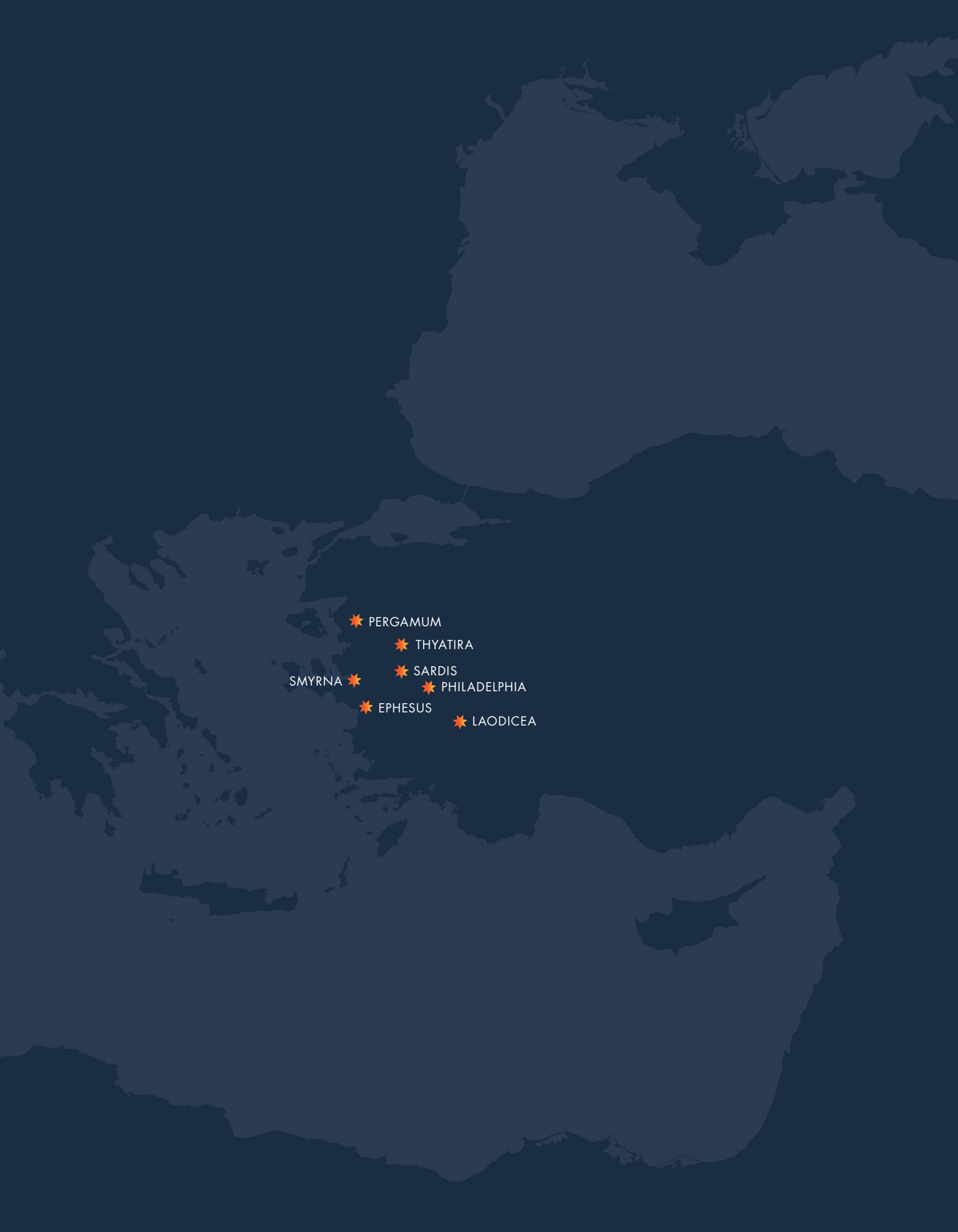
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INTRODUCTION



In a culture that's increasingly hostile to Christianity, people often ask if the Bible is still relevant today? They say, "Pastor Bob/Dave, is God still speaking?"

We believe He is. The real question is: "Are we listening?"

Imagine if our church received a letter from Jesus Himself. What would Christ say about our passion for God? Faithful service? Endurance in trials? Would His words bring commendation ... or condemnation?

The truth is: we have such a letter. Revelation – the last book of the Bible -- contains Jesus' final words to His Church through 7 letters to 7 churches. Over the next 7 weeks, our church is going to examine Jesus' words to these 7 churches... and consider what He is saying to ours.

Now don't be intimidated. Revelation is one of the most intriguing and misunderstood books in the New Testament. But through careful study, we'll see that its message is crystal-clear and full of hope: Jesus Christ is alive, glorified, and coming soon!

We believe this series, *Seven Churches of Revelation*, has the potential to revolutionize your faith.

Here's what you can do to maximize the next 7 weeks:

- Commit to attend MBC every week to experience the Sunday sermon
- Read God's Word yourself- specifically, the first 3 chapters of Revelation
- Attend a MBC Small Group so you can discuss, share, and pray with others about what you're learning

We believe Jesus is still speaking in these last days, and His words of hope and warning are as relevant today as they were in the first century. So let's open our ears and hear what the Spirit is saying!

With hope in Him,

Bob Erbig and Dave Hentschel, Lead Pastors

INTRODUCTION



A SNAPSHOT OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

SETTING | It's approximately 95 AD - 60 years after Jesus died and 30 years after the events in Acts - and persecution against Jesus' followers is heating up. John, the last living apostle, is exiled from the Roman Empire to a remote island called Patmos, because of his influence in the Jesus movement. While John sits alone in exile, Jesus appears to him in all His glory and tells John to record what he sees.

THE SEVEN LETTERS | Jesus sends letters to churches under John's care in Asia Minor to commend, rebuke, and encourage them as they await His return. Jesus wants His people to be a source of light in the world (Matthew 5:14-16, Ephesians 2:10). These letters tell them how they are doing.

GENRE | Revelation is unique in the New Testament. Scholars refer to it as "apocalyptic literature," which simply means it uses symbols, visions, and supernatural imagery to communicate its message (similar to Daniel and Ezekiel in the Old Testament).

SEVEN LETTERS



To the Church in **Ephesus**

Revelation 2:1-7



To the Church in **Smyrna**

Revelation 2:8-11



To the Church in **Pergamum**

Revelation 2:12-17



To the Church in **Thyatira**

Revelation 2:18-29



To the Church in **Sardis**

Revelation 3:1-6



To the Church in **Philadelphia**

Revelation 3:7-13



To the Church in **Laodicea**

Revelation 3:14-22

A SNAPSHOT OF **EPHESUS**

POPULATION | Over 250,000

RELIGION | Home of the great Temple of Artemis, the center for worship of the goddess Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman).

ECONOMY | The commercial center of Asia Minor in the first century, Ephesus was not only significant to the broader culture at the time, the city was very important in the context of the ancient Christian world. It played a key role in the early years of the Christian movement.

RESPONSE TO CHRIST | Paul had his most successful ministry in Ephesus. So many people became followers of Jesus here that the church became one of the most significant influences in early Christianity. It was known as the mother church in Asia Minor.

WRITINGS | “While in Ephesus, John wrote his gospel, three letters and possibly the book of Revelation (after his return to Patmos). Three of Paul’s letters relate to Ephesus: Ephesians and 1 and 2 Timothy, and it is thought that possibly the two letters of Peter and that of Jude originated in that region.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook, Zondervan, p. 841).

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 1 EPHESUS



A Letter to the Church in Ephesus:

THE FORGETFUL CHURCH

SUMMARY

While Ephesus had much influence and significance, the Ephesian church receives a strong warning from Christ (**Revelation 2:1-7**) - "I know your hard work but you have forsaken your first love." The Ephesians were commended for doctrinal knowledge and zeal, but they lacked one thing - *devotion to their first love*. The church in Ephesus held true to solid teaching and persevered in troubled times. They wisely protected their people from false prophets and condemned the licentious living of the Nicolaitans. However, **their love grew cold**. Our Lord's warning to them speaks of the high priority of always holding onto heartfelt love for Jesus and all that He has done for us. He came to break through death, sin, despair, and darkness so we could walk with Him on this earth.



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 2:1-7 (NIV)

¹To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the 7 stars in his right hand and walks among the 7 golden lampstands. ²I 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. ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

⁴Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

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

⁷Whoever 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.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION EPHESUS: **THE FORGETFUL CHURCH**

ICEBREAKER

Q: *What words or phrases best describe an average person's perception of the Book of Revelation? What has been your perception of Revelation? What contributed, positively or negatively, to your perspective?*

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

APPLY THE BIBLE

Background: Each week as we travel through the series *Seven Churches of Revelation*, we'll look at the unique characteristics of one of the 7 churches. Because Revelation can feel mysterious and somewhat cryptic to read, it's important to remember that these were real churches with real people who lived in real time. We'll be exploring the 7 letters sent to 7 churches in the late first century. The letters were penned by the Apostle John, but were authored by the resurrected, glorified Jesus Who came to John in a vision. As you read the 7 letters, you'll see some common threads throughout. Jesus starts each letter with, "These are the words of..." and gives a one phrase description of Himself. He then gives the church a job review. Depending on the church, Jesus will affirm, commend, warn, scold, or correct these churches. His goal is to keep them on target of fulfilling His mission to reach the world with the Good News. Jesus' words were written specifically to them and the real issues they faced.

This week, we'll examine the Church of Ephesus.

Have someone read the snapshot of Ephesus.

Q: *Why is this background information so important to our understanding of the church in Ephesus? How would you describe the culture in which they lived and served? What is something new you've learned about the book of Revelation and the church at Ephesus either from the sermon or from the introduction?*

Read aloud the letter to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of this church? What have they done right? What's lacking? What will be the outcome if they continue this pattern?*

CHRIST

In each letter, Christ is uniquely described. In this letter, Jesus is described as holding the 7 stars and walking among the 7 lampstands. As stated in Revelation 1, the 7 stars are angels for each church and the lampstands are the churches. Jesus is declaring His authority and oversight of these churches. He's also expressing His deep care for them.

The book of Ephesians is a letter written from Paul to the church in Ephesus 30 years prior to Revelation. In short, the letter of Ephesians beautifully describes all that Jesus has done for them (chapters 1-3) and how they should respond to Jesus' love and sacrifice (chapters 4-6).

Read together Ephesians 2:1-10.

Q: *What had Christ done for them? How had they changed because of Jesus? What were they to become as a result? What happens when we forget or lose sight of these critical truths?*

CHURCH

Thirty years later, John draws the Ephesians back to their past. He tells them that they have "forsaken their first love." He then asks them to remember how far they have fallen.

Q: *What do you think happened for them to lose or to forsake the love they had decades before? What's the value of remembering or looking back?*

As of 2019, MBC is currently 168 years old (founded in 1851).

Q: *Based on the passage we've read, what's the warning for churches like MBC? Is our lampstand in NJ permanent? Why or why not? Describe how a church*

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
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can do good things, but be loveless or heartless. How may a church guard against this?

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ME

Keep in mind, as you compare and contrast these letters, that the church is not a building; it's a community of people. In the case of Ephesus, it's not the church building that lost its love, but its people. Over time, a church size may increase, but its people's passion for Christ and their pursuit of loving people may decrease. Drifting happens to most Christ followers at some point in their spiritual walk.

Q: *Has there been a time when you may have forsaken your first love for Christ and His people? What contributed to losing your passion for God and people? Do any of these resonate with you?*

- 1. I grew bored. I lost interest in following God and serving the church.*
- 2. I was wounded. Someone hurt me in the past and I'm leery of it happening again.*
- 3. I became distracted by something else. My schedule is full of good things, but I don't make time to pursue the best things: loving God and serving people.*

Jesus told the Ephesians to repent, which means to turn around and go back to where they started.

Q: *How does a person return to their first love in Christ? What steps or disciplines can help a person restore their passion?*

Paul also wrote this to the Ephesians:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as God loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. —Ephesians 5:1-2

♡ BEAR BURDENS

Go around your Group and ask if anyone can identify with **doing** lots of things for Jesus, but losing their passion **for** Jesus. Allow time for repentance and renewal in Him. You may want to read Psalm 51 as a sample prayer. Remember that repentance is simply turning FROM going in one direction (usually away from Jesus) and moving back TOWARDS Jesus - into His loving arms - a U-turn!

Have someone in your Group close in prayer using these verses as a guide:

God, we acknowledge that we are your dearly loved children. Our desire is to be genuine imitators of you! May your Spirit bring to our minds often this week that Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Because of that, we want to live lives of love. We want to love you and your people in a new fresh way this week. Renew our passion. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

One of the best ways for your Group to grow closer to Jesus and to one another is by serving together. There are many opportunities to serve on our MBC website: **www.Millingtonbaptist.org**. Many of these opportunities are local and family-friendly, which is a great way to model service for your children. MBC wouldn't be the Church we are without you! Thank you for your generous and faithful hearts. To God be the Glory!

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THOUGHTS
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A SNAPSHOT OF **SMYRNA**

Smyrna was one of the most influential cities in Asia Minor. Known today as Izmir, Turkey, it was a prominent port city with a proud tradition of literature, religion, and zealous allegiance to Rome. As you study Christ's letter to Smyrna, keep the following in mind:

A REBORN CITY | Smyrna was destroyed in 600 BC and rebuilt in 290 BC. Because of this history, Smyrna was known as a city that died and came back to life (see **Revelation 2:8**).

HOMER | The Greek poet who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was born in Smyrna.

ROMAN ALLEGIANCE | As Rome came to power, Smyrna quickly showed support. It was one of the first cities in Asia Minor to construct a temple to worship the emperor Caesar.

ECONOMY AND CULTURE | Smyrna was known for fine wine, science, medicine, and the beauty of its buildings. Its hilltop was encircled by public buildings with elaborate column-laden entrances, famously known as its "crown of porticoes."

ENDURANCE | Smyrna was the last city to fall to the Turkish Empire and adopt its religion (Islam) evidence of the people's strength and endurance.

CHURCH LEADERS | Two of John's disciples, Ignatius and Polycarp, ministered in Smyrna. Ignatius wrote four letters from here as he traveled to Rome where he was martyred. Polycarp served as the Bishop of Smyrna until he was martyred as well.

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 2 SMYRNA



A Letter to the Church in Smyrna:

THE SUFFERING CHURCH

SUMMARY

This week we continue our series, *Seven Churches of Revelation*, by exploring the letter written to the church in Smyrna. This was the second letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Smyrna is one of two churches that do not receive correction; rather, Jesus encourages them. In Smyrna, worshipping Caesar as Lord was a way of ensuring favor from Rome. Refusing to worship Caesar was deemed unpatriotic - even treasonous. However, Jesus' followers in Smyrna claimed Jesus as Lord, not Caesar, and they lost everything in return. They were poor, ostracized, and abused. (**vv 9-10**). They knew their faith would cost them their lives.

Their city - the one that had died and came back to life - the one encircled by a famous "crown of porticoes" - rejected them. However, the church grew and flourished anyway. The true Savior, the one who truly 'died and came back to life again' promised they would receive their own crown - 'the crown of life' (**Revelation 2:8-10**). Notice Jesus gives them no rebuke, only encouragement. The Smyrnaeans are living in this reality. Hunger, fear, betrayal and the threat of execution press against them on every side.

Into this reality, Christ reminds them their hope is not found in Caesar, Rome or their city; it's found in Him. They are facing execution, but Christ was executed before them - and then raised from the dead (**1 Peter 3:21-23**).



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 2:8-11 (NIV)

⁸To 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. ⁹I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

¹⁰Do 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.

¹¹Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SMYRNA: **THE SUFFERING CHURCH**

ICEBREAKER

In a sentence or two, describe one of the toughest seasons of your life.

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HERE** 

APPLY THE BIBLE

Summary: This week, we continue our series by exploring the letter written to the church in Smyrna. This was the second letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. The Apostle John penned these letters which were delivered to him in a vision from the resurrected, glorified Jesus. In these letters, Jesus uses affirmation, warning, correction, promise and reward to help these churches stay on track with His mission for them. Smyrna is one of two churches that do not receive correction; rather, Jesus encourages them.

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Smyrna? How would a travel guide describe this city? What would the attraction be? What do you think it would be like to live in Smyrna if you were a person who believed and declared Jesus as Lord?*

Read together the letter to the Church in Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of the Church (either from the sermon or from your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

In each letter, Christ is uniquely described. To Smyrna, Jesus is described as "the First and the Last, who died and came back to life again" (v 8).

Q: *What had Christ done for them? How had they changed because of Jesus? Who were they to become as a result?*

What happens when we forget or lose sight of these critical truths?

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Have someone read 1 Corinthians 15:1-26. Jesus was raised from the dead; because of this, we have hope. No matter what you face, the promise of new life in Christ - spiritual and physical - is offered to all who remain faithful to Christ.

Q: *Why was it so important for Jesus to remind them that He is the beginning and the end of everything (the first and the last)? How would that have encouraged them in their current struggles? Twice in this passage, Jesus mentions the resurrection. Why?*

CHURCH

“I know of your afflictions and poverty - yet you are rich!”
Revelation 2:9

Q: *In a political climate that demanded allegiance to Rome and declared Caesar as god, what afflictions would this church have endured? Though Jesus acknowledges their poverty, He still declares them rich. This sounds like a conflict. How could they be rich? To what could Jesus be referring?*

Contrast Jesus’ words to the impoverished Christians in Smyrna, to Paul’s words to Timothy who was serving in a church that had some significant wealth. **Read together 1 Timothy 6:6-19.**

Q: *How does this passage put wealth and poverty into perspective?*

If you were able to lose all you owned, and perhaps your ability to earn more, how could you find security in this life? “Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer,” **Revelation 2:10.**

ME

“I know your afflictions and your poverty...do not be afraid” (**Rev. 2:9-10**). In other words, I know what you are going through. You are going to suffer. Do not be afraid. And Jesus was clear that Satan lurked behind these struggles (**Rev. 2:10**).

Satan wanted to tear down the believers in Smyrna so they would no longer trust, obey, or turn to Christ. The Evil One wants to devour us as well. (1 Peter 5:8).

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

Q: *Financial pressure, relationship breakdowns, overbearing temptations to sin - Satan uses these to weaken our resolve and turn our hearts from Christ. What are you facing that seems to be more than you can take? Remember that your Savior knows what you are going through. He is with you; He can help you (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15). “The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4).*

Have someone read Peter’s advice from 1 Peter 5:6-11. Spend a few minutes soaking up this encouragement.

Difficulty, struggle, and even crisis can enter our lives at any time. The bad news is that we rarely get to choose when, where and how this will happen; however, we always get to choose how we’ll respond to trials. Smyrna seemed to be a group of people who knew how to respond to trial and pressure with faithfulness and obedience.

Q: *Which of the following describes your first impulse or reaction when something bad happens or goes wrong?*

Panic

Blame

Excuse

Withdrawal

Fight

Try to fix it

Complain

_____ *(Do you have another response?)*

❤️ BEAR BURDENS

Briefly discuss the four statements below as a group. Share which jumps out at you right now.

I need joy while I endure intense physical suffering.

I want to experience a sense of God's goodness in grief.

I need to find contentment in a season of shortage.

I want to experience God's nearness and goodness when I feel abandoned and alone.

Discuss what place suffering plays in our discipleship. What good things can come to life when we are asked to struggle? As a means of encouragement, share times when you experienced significant spiritual growth through times of pain. After sharing these with your group, break into smaller groups of two to pray for one another in two ways:

- For your struggles: for healing, finances, new jobs, relationships, etc.
- For you to see Jesus in the midst of your struggles and that you would experience spiritual growth during this time.

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

We know that when we are going through difficult times, it can be life-giving to serve others. Take time to plan to serve together with your group. Have one member of your group be responsible to research and arrange a group serving activity, such as feeding the homeless on the Relief Bus. Check out these local opportunities at: **www.Millingtonbaptist.org**. Thank you for taking the time to give through serving. It means the world to those who have so little.

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THOUGHTS
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A SNAPSHOT OF P E R G A M U M

Pergamum was Asia's capital for almost 250 years and was considered its greatest city. Its buildings towered 1,000 feet above the plain, projecting the image of a "royal city, the home of the authority."

POPULATION | Between 120,000 and 200,000

EDUCATION | Home of the second-largest library in the world with some 200,000 volumes (second only to Alexandria, Egypt). Pioneered the use of parchment as a writing material.

ECONOMY | Because Pergamum was not a port city nor on a major trade route, it was known more as a center of culture than commerce.

RELIGION | Home of emperor worship and the first temple to a living emperor (Caesar Augustus). The emperors brought peace and stability, so people worshipped them as "lord and god" or "lord and savior". Citizens in the Roman Empire were required by law to offer sacrifices to the emperor as a show of allegiance to Rome. Emperor worship was considered patriotic.

RESPONSE TO CHRIST | When people in Pergamum began to follow Jesus, their patriotism was questioned. For Christians, the titles of Lord, God, and Savior were exclusively reserved for Jesus. Christians in Pergamum were in danger every day.

KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM | Because of its impressive library, Pergamum was a center of learning. However, even in the church, this learning did not necessarily result in wisdom. Jesus commends them for remaining "true to my name," but rebukes them for allowing false doctrine to go unaddressed (Revelation 2: 13-15).

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 3 PERGAMUM



A Letter to the Church in PERGAMUM:

THE COMPROMISING CHURCH

SUMMARY

This week we continue our series by exploring the letter written to the church in Pergamum. This was the third letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. The Church in Pergamum remained true to Christ and His teachings even in a culture steeped in emperor worship and satanic practices. Because of its impressive library, Pergamum was a center of learning. However, even in the Church, this learning did not necessarily result in wisdom. Jesus commends them for remaining “true to my name,” but also rebukes them for allowing false doctrine to go unaddressed (**Revelation 2:13-15**).

Something was wrong. Some in the church held to false teaching that promoted immorality and idolatry - and this was permitted! **Idolatry and Immorality** are two areas the church of Pergamum had allowed to invade their belief system. **Idolatry** is giving anything more prominence, significance, or importance than our devotion to Jesus. **Immorality** involves sexual activity that goes beyond what God intended for human relationships. **Immorality** says, “God is withholding. Find more.”



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 2:12-17 (NIV)

¹²To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. ¹³I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

¹⁴Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. ¹⁵Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

¹⁷Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
PERGAMUM: THE COMPROMISING CHURCH

ICEBREAKER

How would you summarize the highs and lows of this past week?

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

 **APPLY THE BIBLE**

Summary: This week we explore the letter written to the church in Pergamum. This was the third letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. The Apostle John penned these letters which were delivered to him in a vision from the resurrected, glorified Jesus. In these letters, Jesus uses affirmation, warning, correction, promise, and reward to help these churches stay on track with His mission for them. Pergamum receives both praise and correction.

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Pergamum? How is this city different from Ephesus or Smyrna? What's unique about this city?*

Read together the letter to the Church in Smyrna in Revelation 2:8-11.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of the Church (either from the sermon or your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

Christ is uniquely described in each letter. To Pergamum, Jesus is described as the One with the sharp, two-edged sword (v 12). The imagery of a two-edged sword is also found in **Hebrews 4:12** and **Revelation 1:16**.

Q: *Read these passages together and discuss why God would describe Himself this way. Why would it be helpful or important for the Church of Pergamum to see God as Someone holding this type of sword?*

CHURCH

The church of Pergamum receives both praise and correction.

Q: *How did Jesus affirm them (v. 13)? What do you think it was like living as a Christian in this city? What kinds of things happened to Christians there? What needed correction in this Church? What were they tolerating? What had infiltrated their church community? Why was this wrong?*

At MBC, two of our core values are: *Grace Wins* and *Truth Is Relevant*.

Q: *In light of the struggles at Pergamum, how important is it for us to balance these two core truths? How can we practice this?*

Satan is mentioned several times in this passage.

Q: *How is he described in regards to Pergamum? Have you ever thought of Satan and his presence in this way? When and how? What pressures would a church in the “city of Satan” experience?*

ME

Satan is known as a great deceiver. **Read together 2 Corinthians 11:12-15.** In this passage, Paul passionately describes his approach to handling people who are disguising themselves as apostles but really are not.

Q: *Discuss how he describes and relates Satan to this situation.*

Idolatry and Immorality are two areas the church of Pergamum had allowed to invade their belief system. Idolatry is giving anything more prominence, significance or importance than God. Even good things, like our families, jobs, and serving at church can become idolatrous when we elevate them over our devotion to Jesus. Immorality involves sexual activity that goes beyond what God intended for human relationships. Immorality says, "God is withholding. Find more."

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

✉ LETTER 3 PERGAMUM

* * * * *

Q: *In what ways do people build idols today? Does idolatry always seem or look bad? Explain.*

Christ promises three things to those who remain faithful: hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name (**Revelation 2:17**). The hidden manna is Jesus Himself, the ‘bread of life’ (**John 6:48-51**). It symbolizes all the blessings of knowing Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**). The white stone likely alludes to the stones awarded to victors in Roman athletic contests, which gave them access to the awards banquet. In the same way, Christ promises those who overcome will enter an eternal victory celebration.

The new name is perhaps the most intimate reward here - it’s something just between us and God. Throughout Scripture, God has a habit of giving people new names as a way of granting them a new start, a new identity, and a new future. Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel, and Saul became Paul. While we do not yet know what our new name will be, we do know it will uniquely reflect His special love for us. God knows us better than anyone ever will, and He delights in this relationship. Whatever our name will be, we are assured of God’s eternal salvation and blessing.

Q: *What does it mean to be given a “New Name” by Christ Himself? Can you help one another guess what your new name may be? Have some fun and encourage one another with possible new names!*

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

♡ BEAR BURDENS

Discuss how does Satan disguises immorality in our culture. Can you think of a time when you have bought into cultural lies?

It's been said that the best way to spot counterfeit currency is to have studied intently the real thing.

Q: *How does this principle apply to avoiding being deceived lie of Satan? What are some areas in your life that you recognize as being weak or vulnerable in respect to being deceived by Satan? Would you share this with your group so that they can pray that Jesus' truth penetrates your heart?*

Break up into smaller groups to read these passages together and discuss how these principles can help us avoid being caught up in Satan's deceptions.

Read these passages as an encouragement to one another:

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4: 12

Q: *What is the power of community in this respect? Would you consider becoming an accountability partner with someone in your group?*

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

When we serve others, especially those who are less fortunate, it helps us to prioritize those things which are most important in our lives. Check out these opportunities to serve at: www.Millingtonbaptist.org. Working together in smaller outreaches reminds us of how blessed we truly are and it bonds us together. Plan to serve soon and have fun! We want to say THANKS for the giving of your time, energy, and resources for those who are lost and who have the least.

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

A SNAPSHOT OF **THYATIRA**

Thyatira was an uneventful city with very little mention in antiquity. This city did not share the glamour of Ephesus or Pergamum. Here are a few details as you consider Christ's letter to this church:

TRADE | Thyatira was a blue-collar labor town that served as a trade city. It was built upon trades, guilds, and crafts. In fact, trade guilds or unions served the area as the center of commerce. John's description of Jesus' feet as "like burnished bronze" (Revelation 2:18) may have been familiar to a town with bronze guilds.

UNIONS | Trade unions dominated societal life. They had monthly meals and a strong pull on members. Plus, each union had a Greek god associated with it. Faithful worship was meant to ensure prosperity of the trade. Christians who refused to participate faced isolation and suffered economically.

THE APOLLO CULT | Thyatira housed a major cult of Apollo, the Greek god of the arts, the sun, and prophecy. The emperor was linked to Apollo and was likely worshipped in the city as the human embodiment of Apollo.

THE CHURCH | Perhaps one of the first people from Thyatira to put their faith in Christ was a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple cloth. We read about her conversion in Acts 16:14 when the Apostle Paul visited Philippi (where she lived at the time) and led her to the Lord.

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 4 THYATIRA



A Letter to the Church in THYATIRA: **THE WAY WARD CHURCH**

SUMMARY

This week we explore the fourth letter of 7 written to the church in Thyatira. Thyatira seems split: some in the church need strong warning, while others receive affirmation for their faithfulness. Thyatira was commended for their sense of true dedication; however, they had compromised in a critical area of their lives. Many lived a licentious life, ate food sacrificed to idols, and practiced idolatry.



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 2:18-29 (NIV)

¹⁸To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

²⁰Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²²So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

²⁴Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, ²⁵except to hold on to what you have until I come.'

²⁶To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸I will also give that one the morning star. ²⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

THYATIRA: **THE WAYWARD CHURCH**

ICEBREAKER

When have you felt strong peer pressure? How did you handle this social pull?

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

APPLY THE BIBLE

Summary: This week, we unpack the letter written to the church in Thyatira. This was the fourth letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Thyatira seems split: some need strong warning, while others receive affirmation for their faithfulness.

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Thyatira? How is this city different from previous churches we've studied? What's unique about this town?*

Read together the letter to the church in Thyatira in Revelation 2:18-29.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of this church (either from the sermon or your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

Christ is uniquely described in each letter. To Thyatira, Jesus describes Himself as One “whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.” Then He says, “I know.” The eyes may be an image of Jesus having the ability to see and know all. The feet are images of authority and action.

Q: *Why would Thyatira need to see Jesus with this perspective?*

CHURCH

The Church of Thyatira receives both praise and correction.

Q: *How does Jesus affirm them? What progress had*

they made? What do you think it was like living as a Christian in this city? What pressures may they have felt? What needed correction in this church community? Why was this wrong? What progress have you seen in MBC's community? How do you respond if you see correction is needed?

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

ME

The people of Thyatira most likely faced enormous pressure to “fit in” financially, socially, and religiously. Our culture sends out similar messages constantly.

Q: *In our culture, who are the messengers and what are the messages? Which are subtle and which are overt? Which messages conflict with obedience and faithfulness to the way of God?*

One reason we compromise is because we believe that the consequences of our sinful actions will not come into play. We believe that they either won't happen, we can avoid them, or that the consequences won't be that bad and will be worth the risk.

Q: *What's broken in this thinking? What's missing?*

There are only two groups mentioned here - those who need to repent and those who need to keep going. Read Philippians 1:3-6, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (v. 6).

Q: *Which group are you in? Is Christ calling you to repent or to keep going?*

I will repay each of you according to your deeds (Revelation 2:23). To those who are faithful, keep going “I will give authority over the nations...I will give him the morning star.” (v 26;28). While we don't know exactly what this means, we do know it is going to be “REALLY GOOD” in the end. Keep going. Your journey is not static. Your quest is to continue growing in faith and perserverance!

♡ BEAR BURDENS

God loves it when we are faithful under pressure. To those who haven't compromised under temptation, He says hold on to what you have. He doesn't add anything to their list. He draws them back to their good deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance. He says, "Keep going!"

Q: *How does Jesus' encouragement resonate with you today? In what situations do you need encouragement to "keep going?" Are there any areas of compromise surfacing with you that you need to repent of? [Remember, repentance means making a U-turn]. Are you willing to pray a prayer of repentance with your group? Would you be willing to ask someone in your group to hold you accountable for that U-turn?*

You may not want to do it today, but pray that you would have the courage to ask for prayer in future group settings. Remember, we are called to this in **James 5:16**, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

As Jesus draws us back to good deeds, consider serving together as a group! Rather than meet one night, Find an outreach that works for your group at: **www.Millingtonbaptist.org**. Jesus is glorified by our love, faith, service, and perseverance. Remember, He says, "Keep going!" Thank you for your continued service and love for others - you are appreciated!

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 



THESE ARE
THE WORDS
OF THE SON
OF GOD,
WHOSE EYES
ARE LIKE
BLAZING
FIRE.

—REVELATION 2:18

A SNAPSHOT OF **SARDIS**

Sardis does not exist today. In fact, out of all the 7 churches, Sardis and Laodicea are the only ones that don't exist today. However, Sardis had a rich history including power, wealth, and prominence to the point of arrogance. Here's some background to this city:

ECONOMY & WEALTH | Sardis was the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, strategically located on the communications route between Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. It was famous for its affluence and creative culture in the arts and crafts, and it was first to mint gold and silver into coins.

POWER & ARROGANCE | Sardis was the home of King Croesus who was legendary for his wealth, prosperity and arrogant pride. In fact, Croesus' arrogance contributed to the destruction of his kingdom when he preemptively attacked the Persian armies.

DOWNFALL | Sardis sat high on a plateau, protected by ridges up to 1500 ft high, which created a sense of security as well as complacency. However, in 549 BC, one of Persia's soldiers figured out how to climb the highest ridge by watching a Lydian soldier and staged a surprise attack. It was as though Sardis wasn't even paying attention – like they were asleep. Over 300 years later, the Syrians did the same thing! This may be why Christ says, "Wake up! (Revelation 3:2) People of Sardis would have understood this well.

DEVASTATION | In AD 17, an earthquake destroyed the city. Rome sent relief aid; but the city, now saddled with debt, never recovered.

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 5 SARDIS



A Letter to the Church in SARDIS:

THE SLUMBERING CHURCH

SUMMARY

This week, we continue our series by exploring the letter written to the church in Sardis. This was the fifth letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Sardis lived in the past. It had a reputation for wealth, affluence, and culture; but after the big earthquake in AD 17, it was reduced to nothing. They tried to prop up their reputation for life and vibrancy, but they were dead and dependent on Rome. It appears that this church had no lack of money, resources or talent. They weren't experiencing serious persecution, and had no issues with false doctrine. On the outside, everything seemed fine – perhaps even thriving, but Jesus says, **“I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead...I have not found your deeds complete” (Revelation 3:1-2)**. This seems to be a form of spiritual sleepwalking – people who look awake, but whose souls are asleep. When we spiritually sleepwalk, our heart is asleep, but our mind and body go through the motions. Jesus says, “Wake up!” He doesn't just want our energy; He wants devotion in our hearts to Him. He hates when we do things - even good things – just to look good for others.



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 3:1-6 (NIV)

¹To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³Remember, 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.

⁴Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SARDIS: THE SLUMBERING CHURCH

ICEBREAKER

Have you ever sleepwalked? Tell a few stories of when you've been awakened suddenly. What happened? How did you respond?

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

APPLY THE BIBLE

This week, we explore the letter written to the church in Sardis. This was the fifth letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Sardis receives both praise and correction. It appears that they had no lack, were not under persecution, nor did they accept false doctrines. The Church in Sardis was active, perhaps even busy! There was an energy that people loved. The other churches in the area may have even looked at them with admiration; therefore, Jesus' words can seem shocking! Sardis was full of respectable, but ultimately, disobedient Christians. They were spiritually complacent, working more to maintain their reputation than to serve God.

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Sardis? How is this city different from previous churches we've studied? What's unique about this town?*

Read together the letter to the church in Sardis in Revelation 3:1-6.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of this church (either from the sermon or your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

Christ is uniquely described in each letter. To Sardis, He's described this way: "The words of him who holds the 7 spirits of God" (Revelation 3:1). This description of Christ may seem odd to us, but in the Bible, the number 7 represents completeness or fullness. So the "7 spirits of God" represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Q: *Why would this church need to be reminded about the fullness of the Holy Spirit?*

Author John Stott writes, “So Jesus reminds the Church of Sardis that...Christ has the Holy Spirit...it is He who can animate our dead works and make them pulsate with life. He can rescue a dying Church and make it a living force in the community.”¹

Notice how the Spirit of God is at work in us. Without the Spirit’s work in your life, you are powerless to change. Stott concludes, “He dwells within you; but does He fill you? You possess Him; but does He possess you?” (p. 95)

Q: *How would you answer Stott’s questions - does Christ fill you; does He possess you? Discuss as a group how you could work towards growing in this area.*

CHURCH

The Church of Sardis doesn’t receive praise; they are abruptly corrected.

Q: *However, reading between the lines, what had been good in their past? What was once going right in Sardis? What was wrong? What was missing? What would the outcome be if they didn’t ‘wake-up’?*

This is a huge warning to us as well. We must remember that God looks at our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7). He doesn’t just want energy; He wants devotion. He hates when we do things - even good things – out of a sense of tradition, duty, or obligation.

Q: *How would you define complacency?*

What are signs of spiritual complacency in a church setting? In a home, marriage, or relationship setting? How about a group setting?

ME

If you think about it, it’s amazing that God would

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

¹Stott, John, “What Christ Thinks of the Church,” p. 94

bother to write a letter to a church that is virtually dead. Why? Because Jesus offers grace and provides a plan for their renewal, “Wake up! Strengthen...Remember....Obey.... Repent” (**Revelation 3:1, 3**). He points them back to what they received – the Gospel that was preached and the Spirit that was sent. But there is an urgency to act! God wrote them a letter with a limited time frame warning them that He will return...“like a thief” (Revelation 3:3).

Q: *What about you? What is the condition of your heart?*

Have someone pray David’s prayer in **Psalms 139:23-24** for the group:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!”

Ask the Lord to reveal this to you daily.

♡ BEAR BURDENS

Discuss ways our hearts can go to sleep. In what spiritual areas can we go through the motions without engaging fully (heart, mind, and body)? What’s the outcome for the spiritually asleep person?

Jesus says, “Wake up!”

Pray together for areas of our soul that need to be “woken up!”

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

One way we can “wake up our hearts” is by serving others. When we do this out of simple devotion to Jesus, with no expectation of thanks in return, we honor and glorify Him by our deeds. Consider signing up to serve together as a group this week. Go to: **www.Millingtonbaptist.org** for more information. We appreciate all you do to advance the Kingdom through your service!

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 



HE WHO
HAS AN EAR,
LET HIM HEAR
WHAT THE
SPIRIT SAYS.

—REVELATION 3:6

A SNAPSHOT OF PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia was founded to be a center of Greek culture and language, an outpost for spreading Hellenism to the regions of Lydia and Phrygia. Here's some background to this city:

TRADE | Philadelphia benefitted from its location at the juncture of several important trade routes, earning the title “Gateway to the East.” Leather and textile businesses provided much income to the city.

GEOGRAPHY | The city was located in a volcanic region whose fertile soil was ideally suited for its well-known vineyards. The downside to living in such an area, however, was the increased threat of an earthquake.

DEVASTATION | A powerful earthquake finally hit the city in AD 17, causing significant damage as the aftershocks continued for 20 years. The city was eventually rebuilt though financial aid from Caesar Tiberius.

RELIGION | Their chief god was Dionysus, who was worshipped to ensure a productive grape and wine harvest. Jewish believers risked excommunication and disenfranchisement from the synagogue when they trusted Christ. Non-Jewish believers risked being branded a traitor.

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES

✉ LETTER 6 PHILADELPHIA

A Letter to the Church in PHILADELPHIA: **THE ENDURING CHURCH**

SUMMARY | Revelation 3:7-13

This week we explore the letter written to the church in Philadelphia. This was the sixth letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Believers in Philadelphia were facing persecution all around them, much of it from the city's Jewish population. Like Smyrna, this Jewish opposition was so fanatical that Christ calls it a synagogue of Satan. They “**claim to be Jews though they are not, they are liars**”, (**Revelation 3:9**). The fierceness of this opposition probably tempted these Christ followers to keep their faith private – to hold their peace and keep quiet. Perhaps some church members counseled discretion rather than boldness, in order to avoid trouble when their beliefs ran against the grain of culture.



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 3:7-13 (NIV)

⁷To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

¹¹I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

¹²The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. ¹³Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PHILADELPHIA: THE ENDURING CHURCH

ICEBREAKER

Share a time when you have felt as though it was “you against the world.” What did that feel like? Did you hold your ground or did you give in to pressure to conform to others?

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

APPLY THE BIBLE

This week we discuss the letter written to the church in Philadelphia. This was the sixth letter of 7 written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Philadelphia is one of only two in Revelation that receives no rebuke or correction (the other is Smyrna). Instead, in the midst of severe persecution and opposition, and in light of His return, Jesus offers comfort. He encourages them, “Hold onto what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (**Revelation 3:11**).

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Philadelphia? How is this city different from previous churches we’ve studied? What’s unique about this city?*

Read together the letter to the church in Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of this church (either from the sermon or your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

Christ is uniquely described in each letter. Jesus portrays Himself to this church as the One “who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open” (**Revelation 3:7**). His language refers to Isaiah 22 where Eliakim receives authority from the kingdom of Judah in negotiations with Assyria. In this act, Eliakim prefigures Jesus as the head of God’s household, the church (**Hebrews 3:6**). It is Jesus who has the keys, not only of “death

and Hades,” (**Revelation 1:18**), but also of salvation. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Davidic King who would rescue the whole world from sin, death, and evil. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, the door of salvation is all about Jesus, and how He uniquely accomplishes it.

Scripture is clear that Jesus alone holds these keys, which means he alone is the gateway to God. There are no others.

Q: *Have you placed your faith and trust in Jesus the “One who holds the key?” If so, share what it means to serve Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life.*

If you haven’t, ask your group leader if they would explain the Good News of the Gospel to you. Today could be the beginning of a new life with Christ!

CHURCH

The Church of Philadelphia doesn’t receive correction, Jesus comforts them. In the midst of severe persecution and opposition, and in light of His return, Jesus offers comfort. He encourages them, “Hold onto what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (**Revelation 3:11**).

We may not understand all that God is accomplishing through our “troubles,” but we do know he offers to comfort us in them. And He promises that “we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (**2 Corinthians 1:3-7**). Our troubles become a channel of comfort for others.

Q: *Have you experienced Jesus’ comfort in the midst of trials? If so, share this with your group. If you haven’t or if you are experiencing severe trials right now, share this with your group and ask them how you can experience Jesus’ comfort today.*

Today, ask the Lord to help you be more aware of those around you who are experiencing trials and troubles. Commit to graciously sharing with them what God has done for you.

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

✉ LETTER 6 PHILADELPHIA

* * * * *

ME

A consistent theme in Jesus' letters to these churches is: "This world isn't all there is. I have so much more for you" For those who overcome and remain faithful, Jesus has promised incredible rewards (**Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21**). To those in the church in Philadelphia, Jesus promises, "I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God" (**Rev. 3:12**). This would have been particularly significant to those in earthquake-prone Asia Minor; pillars were the last things standing when everything else fell.

Q: *What significance does eternity have in your life today?*

♡ BEAR BURDENS

Discuss what is threatening to shatter your world right now? What battles are you facing? In the midst of your "earthquakes" and the spiritual battles that beckon you to compromise, remember this "...Stand your ground - and after you have done everything, stand firm" (**Ephesians 6:13**).

Share your "battle" now with the group and ask them to pray with you to help you believe that God will give you the power to stand now and throughout eternity.

🌐 CHANCE TO SERVE

One way to share all that God has done for us is to serve others who are in need. Have you gone out to make a difference in our world? Take a look at our website to find opportunities for your group to share Jesus' love with others. Check out: **www.Millingtonbaptist.org** for ways you can serve Christ on the streets.

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 



I AM
COMING
SOON.

— REVELATION 3:11

A SNAPSHOT OF LAODICEA

Laodicea was one of three cities in the Lycus River Valley (with Hierapolis and Colossae). Named after Antiochus II's wife, Laodice, it was known as "Laodicea on the Lycus" to distinguish it from six other cities of the same name. Here are a few details as you consider Christ's letter to this Church:

WEALTH | Laodicea was an extremely rich city. The people so prided themselves on their financial independence that they refused Roman financial aid after an earthquake devastated the city in 60 AD.

MEDICINE | Laodicea had a School of Medicine, so it was the chief medical center of the region. One of its graduates wrote an influential textbook on the eye, and the city was also known for its eye salve.

TEXTILES | The city was renowned for its soft, raven-black wool, supposedly produced by sheep that drank certain water. This wool was used to make garments for the upper class of society.

WATER | The city's major weakness was its water supply. Because the waters of the Lycus were undrinkable, they received water through an aqueduct built by the Romans. But by the time the cold water arrived from Colossae, or the hot water from the springs in Hierapolis, it was lukewarm.

RELIGION | The major god worshipped in Laodicea was Zeus, the "Father of gods and men." In April, 2011, the head of a statue of Zeus was unearthed in excavations at this city.

SUNDAY SERMON NOTES



LETTER 7 LAODICEA

A Letter to the Church in LAODICEA: THE LUKEWARM CHURCH

SUMMARY

This week, we conclude our series *Seven Churches of Revelation* by exploring the final and seventh letter written to the church in Laodicea. It seems that the congregation in Laodicea was filled with self-satisfied churchgoers. They said, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need anyone or anything” (**Revelation 3:17**). And they were right – materially speaking. They lived in a prosperous banking center located in a rich, agricultural region at the center of several key trade routes. Laodicea was rebuked because they imagined their spiritual wealth mirrored their city’s material wealth. Jesus calls for repentance in **v. 19** and He follows up with a gracious invitation in **v. 20**:

“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.” Eating speaks of fellowship, communion and intimacy. To those who repent and have this close connection to Him, Jesus promises a seat with Him on His heavenly throne (**Revelation 3:21**). Jesus doesn’t just want to save you – He wants to know you!



SCRIPTURE | Revelation 3:14-22 (NIV)

¹⁴To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.

¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰Here 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.

²¹To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²²Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LAODICEA: **THE LUKEWARM CHURCH**

ICEBREAKER

At a restaurant, do you typically prefer ice water, hot tea, or room temperature water? Why?

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

APPLY THE BIBLE

This week, we conclude our study by exploring the letter written to the church in Laodicea. This was the seventh and final letter written to churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. Laodicea receives a huge correction and an intimate invitation.

Q: *Why is the background information so important to our understanding of the church in Laodicea? How is this city different from previous churches we've studied? What's unique about this city?*

Read together the letter to the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22.

Q: *What are your initial impressions of this church (either from the sermon or from your own thoughts)?*

CHRIST

Christ is uniquely described in each letter. To the Church in Laodicea, He identifies Himself as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Ruler of God’s Creation” (**Rev. 3:14**). These words communicate some powerful truths about Jesus.

- Jesus is the Amen because He is the One who confirmed all of God’s promises (**2 Corinthians 1:20**).
- Jesus is the Faithful and True Witness because His testimony is completely trustworthy, accurate, and always reliable (**John 12:49-50; John 14:6**).
- Jesus is the ruler of God’s creation because through His power all things were created (**John 1:1-2; Heb. 1:1-2**).

Q: *Why do you think these descriptions would be important for the people in the church of Laodicea to hear? Which ones are important for us to think about today?*

Explain why.

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

CHURCH

The Laodicean Church doesn't receive any affirmation; Jesus corrected them immediately. The city and the church boasted of their wealth and independence: "You say, I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing" (**Revelation 3:17**). But Jesus called them wretched, poor and pitiful. What is alarming is the fact that the people of Laodicea didn't see themselves as Jesus did.

Q: *How does this happen to a church? To a country? What factors contribute to a group of people losing an accurate self-awareness? What happened in Laodicea?*

Jesus called them lukewarm; this is a reference to water. They knew the refreshing power of cold water and the cleaning and medicinal power of hot water. By comparison, lukewarm water was useless.

Q: *How would you describe a lukewarm church? (Don't mention any church names, just give descriptive statements).*

Jesus tells them three things they need in order to get back on track: buy His refined gold, put on white clothes to cover their nakedness, and apply salve to their eyes so they can see.

Q: *How do these three things connect with history? What is the spiritual meaning to each of these?*

ME

Think about the word, "lukewarm." Lukewarm water is hot water that cooled, or cold water that, over time, stopped being refreshing.

Q: *What are some of the characteristics of a lukewarm Christian? Describe how a passionate follower of Christ can become lukewarm? Why did Jesus use such strong language?*

♡ BEAR BURDENS

Jesus disciplines those He loves like a loving parent corrects a disobedient child.

Q: *Tell of a time when you experienced Jesus' discipline or correction. Did it feel like love?*

Jesus invites the wayward Church to open the door of fellowship with Him: "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**). In the ancient world, dining together was the ultimate symbol of friendship and love.

Q: *Is God knocking on any doors in your life? Here are some options to discuss:*

Your beliefs

Your habits

Your friendships

Your finances

Your marriage or dating life

Your home or family

Your emotional world

What would it look like for Jesus to enter into that room and dine with you?

SUMMARY

Pray together and ask the Lord to reveal all areas of your life He wants you to surrender to Him. Has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you throughout the 7 weeks of this study? What have you heard Him say to you? As a reminder, here is a summary of the way the Churches have been described in these letters:

Forgetful (Ephesus)

Suffering (Smyrna)

Compromising (Pergamum)

Wayward (Thyatira)

Slumbering (Sardis)

Enduring (Philadelphia)

Lukewarm (Laodicea)

JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE 

What have you learned about Christ, about your relationship with Jesus, the universal Church, and specifically about MBC throughout this study? What changes will you make in your life as a result of this study?

Discuss these changes with your group and ask for direction and guidance in taking the necessary steps to change.

COMMUNION

Take time as a group to celebrate all God has done in your heart through this study and share Communion together. Praise Him for His faithfulness!

CHANCE TO SERVE

If your group hasn't had an opportunity to serve together, consider making a significant difference in the lives of others by serving with one of our strategic partners: Relief Bus, Feeding Hands, Market Street Mission, World Impact, Kingdom Cars, and First Choice. Visit www.Millingtonbaptist.org/missions to find an outreach that suits your group! You will gain far more than you give. Thanks for putting your faith into action, with hope in Him.

**JOT YOUR
THOUGHTS
HERE** 

