

2021 Community Groups

WEEKLY GUIDE

October 10

Pastor Aaron started a new series on the Book of Revelation last week and Pastor Woody will continue with us this week. You will recall what was said last week...Revelation is a book that can blow away so many of us and overwhelm just as many. We will spend the next few weeks focused on the 7 churches in Revelation, so hold onto your seat as we continue this series. Here are just a few primer notes to get everyone on the same page.

- The entire book is introduced as the Revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Genre of literature: 1. Letter 2. Prophecy 3. Apocalypse (a well-known form of literature in the Ancient World).
- Exaltation of Jesus, evaluation of the churches.
- 7 stars representing 7 angels and
- 7 lampstands represent 7 churches: Every church has the opportunity to be a lampstand.
- A call to radical discipleship, an invitation to wholeheartedly follow Jesus (no matter what), reminds us to worship.

Pastor Woody will take the baton this weekend on the second church, Smyrna. The title of this message is "It may get Worse before it gets Better."

Community Prayer:

Gracious Father, as we continue our journey through Revelation let us reflect on what we learned about Ephesus, and prepare us for what we will learn about Smyrna. Help us to understand that being a Follower of Jesus does not make us exempt from suffering, but the good news is that you are a very present help in our time of need; in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Questions

1. Why is suffering as a Follower of Jesus so misunderstood by so many Christians?
 - a. What does suffering for Jesus mean to you?
 - b. Have you ever experienced that level of suffering for Jesus? What did that look like?

EXPLORATION

Read the passages below...what can you learn about what it means to follow Jesus from these passages? (Have someone read from their bible)



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Smyrna

- Loveliest of the 7 churches / maybe the wealthiest
- The Crown / the flower of Asia (birthplace of Homer)
- City now called Izmir – It still exists in Turkey today // It has a rich history of faithful believers – Technically not really mentioned or highlighted anywhere else in the Bible // We do not have additional information or biblical references, but we do have historical details.

Revelation 2:8

1. What do these two references about Jesus say to you about who He is?
2. Which one of these two resonate with you the most? Why?

Revelation 2:9

3. What does this verse say about how much Jesus knows about you?
 - a. Why is this important for you to know, not only this season but every season?
4. Jesus sees the poor in this church as being rich, how do you think they were rich in Jesus' assessment?
5. How can a professing Jew be a part of the Synagogue of Satan?
(Romans 2:28-29)

"We tend to avoid suffering by way of compromise" - Sam Storm

6. TRUTH TIME...have you ever been in the midst of one of those compromising moments and felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit? Share a little about that.

Revelation 2:10

7. Jesus tells us to not be afraid when suffering comes our way, why is this important?
8. What is the antidote to your fear? Why?
9. Is the devil the cause for every problem you have? Why?

Ephesians 6:12-13

10. What does this verse say about persecution and our persecutor?
 - a. Verses 13-17 tells us how to deal with these challenges.

Revelation 2:11

The first death is physical; the second death is spiritual and eternal; as followers of Christ we need not fear it because we know where we will spend eternity!



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THE TAKEAWAY

In the face of difficult times "persecution"

- We will experience opposition from the Visible (the world "authorities" / systems and the flesh "other people")
- We will experience attacks from the Evil one

In the face of difficult times, we are tempted to live by:

- FIGHT – IF IT GETS ANY HARDER I am going to go off on someone
- FLIGHT – IF IT GETS ANY HARDER I am moving to another place (state)

OR

- FAITHFULLY live intentionally dependent upon a Savior that Sees and Cares and is Present enough to say – DO NOT BE AFRAID!

WHICH ONE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Parents' Corner

In his introduction on Sunday Pastor Woody raised the question, "If given the choice, would I prefer persecution or the 'good life'?" As parents we want the best for our kids, but we also don't want them to suffer or experience too much hardship. As followers of Christ, however, we know that Jesus is more concerned with our character than our comfort. Oftentimes the "good life" He has for us is very different than what the world promotes, and doing the right thing isn't always the easy thing.

Read James 1:2-5.

What are some of the goals God has for us and our kids in difficulties?

11. How can we model and teach our kids to be more concerned with character than short-term comfort?

Read Eph. 6:12.

We know that as Christians we battle against Satan, the systems he has put in place that go against God's kingdom ("the world"), and even our own sinful tendencies.

12. How can we be proactive to guard our family against things that will lead away from the gospel?



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13. How can we help our kids think clearly and biblically in the face of such opposition?

(You can go a few ways with this. You may want to explore how the answer to this question might change as students grow through jr. high, high school and into college. You may also want to focus on not only what we expose students to, but how we teach them to think biblically).

Prayer

Lord, please give us wisdom to know how to parent in a world that is contrary to your Word and the gospel in so many ways. Help us to think biblically, parent biblically, and to do it in an atmosphere of love and grace. Please protect our children from the evil one and help them to faithfully follow you in every stage of life.

PRAYER REQUESTS

