

WEEK 1

TO BUSY CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Introduce yourselves as you begin the first week of your seven-week journey of discovery.

What motivated you to be part of this study group? How do you hope to grow personally and what do you hope to learn?

How do you feel about studying part of the Book of Revelation?

What funny or intimidating ideas do people have about this book of the Bible?

One important note: While these are seven letters critiquing and encouraging seven actual churches, Christ's words here are not meant for you to use as ammunition to criticize other congregations. These are meant for us to apply to our own lives and our own church.

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 2:1-7. Have someone in your group read the passage out loud. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #1 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

1. What are the relational and spiritual dangers of a busy lifestyle?

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2. Jesus has many words of praise for this church. What does he commend them for?
3. What fatal flaw does he see? Why is this so important to Jesus?
4. What can cause your first love for Jesus – that first enthusiastic passion you had when you understood the gospel – to leak away? Have you ever experienced this? What happened to drain that first love?
5. What do you think Jesus means by, “Remember the heights from which you have fallen”? How can this help any relationship? How can this help you spiritually?
6. What do you think Jesus means by, “do what you did at first”? How can this help any relationship? How can it help your relationship with Christ?
7. If your first love for Jesus was ever drained and then reignited, share with the group how you returned to a sense of love and passion for Christ. What helped? Does it parallel Christ’s prescription for the Ephesians?
8. Is there a relationship right now that you need to reignite? How can you put Christ’s words here into practice?

≡ WRAP UP

One goal for these studies is that each group will participate in some sort of group service project. Agree to pray about what that could be.

Ask for other prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book.

As you close, pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group.

WEEK 2

TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went. Also, share anything that struck you as interesting or surprising from the book so far.

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 2:8-11. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #2 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

1. Are you at a place in your life right now where you relate to Christ's words to this suffering church? Why?
2. Smyrna is one of the only churches in the Book of Revelation that has had an uninterrupted Christian presence for nearly 2,000 years since the book was written. This is intriguing, because in many ways, when Revelation was written, the future of this church seemed to be the most uncertain of them all. How does this encourage you?
3. What is it about Christ's description of himself here – that he is the First and the Last, that he died and came to life, that he knows our tribulation – that is encouraging to you?
4. Jesus does not say the Christians here will not suffer. In fact, he assures them that they will. But he says he will be with them,

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will reward them, and that their suffering will have an end (“you will be tested... for ten days”). How is this a better encouragement than simply telling people that bright days are ahead?

5. Has your Christianity ever cost you anything—a job, an opportunity, a relationship, a business account? What happened? How did you see God bless despite this?
6. What are you afraid of right now? How do these words encourage you?
7. How would you summarize these words of Christ?

≡ WRAP UP

One goal for these studies is that each group will participate in some sort of group service project. Agree to pray about what that could be, and return next week to discuss it further.

Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book.

As you close, pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group.

WEEK 3

TO CONFUSED CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went.

What have you learned from a sermon, video, or devotional reading in this series? What has intrigued you or surprised you?

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 2:12-17. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #3 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

Jesus acknowledges the difficulty the Christians in Pergamum are facing. He knows they are living in a rather eclectic spiritual environment. It's dark. And they have been suffering. They have held on, even to the point of death. Yet even for them there is something Jesus wants to correct. Some of them have become followers of a cult-like teacher who insists they can compromise with their culture to the point of sexual immorality.

1. Why do you think such teaching would be attractive to people in a situation like theirs?
2. Are there times when suffering can actually weaken your resolve to resist temptation? Why? Have you ever seen this to be true in your own life?

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3. The teachings of the Nicolaitans are obscure, but according to early Christian sources, they taught a form of “dualism” that states that what we do in the physical world does not impact our spiritual lives. Do you ever see people following a version of this today? How so?
4. It’s important to note that Jesus does not criticize these Christians for living in Pergamum, or for doing business with pagans, or for knowing pagans as friends. In the video René said, “The problem was not that the church was in Pergamum, but that there was too much Pergamum in the church.” How does this apply to us today? What practical steps can you take to try to be shaped more by Christ than by culture?
5. One of the lessons about Pergamum is that theology matters. How you think about God and the world – what you believe, the people you listen to – really does change your behavior. How have you seen your own beliefs about God impact your behavior?
6. What has been the core of your faith that has brought you back when you go astray, or kept you on the right track?
7. Are there lessons from Jesus’ words to Pergamum that you feel are particularly relevant to your life?

≡ WRAP UP

Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book. As you close, pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group.

Before you leave, discuss your group service project. Share ideas. Your church may have plans for a service day, or a community impact day. Find out what opportunities may be there. If there seems to be consensus about an idea, make plans now for your group project.

WEEK 4

TO COMPROMISING CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went.

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 2:18-29. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #4 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

It's interesting that, of all the churches in The Seven, Thyatira is the one we know the least about. Fewer of its ruins survive. No Roman persecution is mentioned. The congregation was growing, full of love and faith and good works. Yet Jesus reserves his longest critique, by far, for this congregation.

1. Why is it important for Jesus to proclaim that he is the one "with feet like burnished bronze"? (see chapter 23)
2. This church is doing so many good works. But they have slowly drifted from the core of the gospel, and toward a false gospel taught by a self-proclaimed prophet that Jesus calls "Jezebel." He says that by her teaching she misleads people into immorality. In these seven letters you consistently see the importance Jesus places on teaching, and not just behavior. Why is doctrine so

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important to God? Why does it matter what I believe as long as I am doing good works? (Hint: Think long-term)

3. Jesus says the cultic leaders at Thyatira are teaching the “so-called deep secrets of Satan.” Why is “secret” teaching so appealing to people? How do you see this today?
4. The Thyatirans were ultimately facing pressure to conform, not from Roman government persecution, but from the business world. Are there similar temptations to compromise associated with career and the workplace in our society?
5. Have you ever been tempted to compromise at work in some way? If you feel comfortable, share with the group what happened. How did you resist, or give in and then come back?
6. Obviously God understands that many Christians will be working with and for people who may not share their values. How can you maintain Christian integrity in the workplace without unnecessarily driving everyone around you crazy? Look up 1 Peter 3:15,16 and have someone read it to the group. What advice do these verses give about how to preserve your Christian witness when surrounded by people who do not share your faith?
7. Jesus has some harsh-sounding words for the Thyatirans, but we need to remember that, first, he says he has given this false teacher time to repent. He is always patient with us. If there are no consequences to our sin immediately apparent, that does not mean God approves. It means God is patient. Second, he sometimes lets us hit bottom in order for us to give up and turn our lives over to him. Have you ever been glad to hit bottom because it brought you to God – or have you seen this happen to a friend or loved one? If you are comfortable, and can do so without breaking confidences, share what happened.
8. What is your biggest take-away from this letter to Thyatira?

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≡ WRAP UP

Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book. As you close, pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group.

Before you leave, discuss your group service project. If you've already had a chance to serve, discuss your feelings about the project. What was challenging about it? What was fun?

WEEK 5

TO DEAD CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went.

What was your favorite part of the reading since last week? Did anything intrigue you or surprise you?

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 3:1-6. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #5 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

1. Has your faith ever been dead and yet come back to life? Why? What happened to kill it and then how was it brought back?
2. Is there now a gap between your reputation and your reality in some area of your life? Where?
3. It's interesting that Jesus doesn't mention any external or internal problems that the Sardis Christians were facing, unlike most of the other churches in The Seven. There's no mention of persecution or false doctrine or compromise or other suffering. How is a comfortable life sometimes a challenge to spiritual growth? Could this be a challenge in our culture now?

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4. How does Jesus advise the Sardis Christians to change? What do you think “strengthen what remains” means practically? How could this work in a relationship with a spouse or child?
5. Jesus tells them to “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast...” He is telling them to remember the gospel they heard and received. Why is it important for us Christians to keep preaching the gospel to ourselves? How does this help our faith stay alive? Have you ever found your faith revitalized by a simple return to the gospel of grace?
6. How do Jesus’ words encourage you, particularly if you find yourself in a place where your faith is on life support?

≡ WRAP UP

If you haven’t had a chance to discuss it yet, talk about your group service project. If you’ve completed it since your last meeting, how did it go? What did you find challenging? What was fun?

Pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group. Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book.

WEEK 6

TO DISCOURAGED CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went.

What did you read this week in the book that interested you or challenged you?

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 3:7-13. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #6 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

1. Do you remember experiencing an actual earthquake or other natural disaster, as the Philadelphian Christians did? How did it impact your sense of security?
2. Have you ever been discouraged when one thing after another seems to go wrong in life? What helped you?
3. Jesus tells these discouraged people, hammered by earthquakes, bad government, persecution, and more, some very encouraging things:
 - First, he tells them that he is the “true” one, meaning he will stay true and faithful. He will not betray them. How would this encourage you if you were in their situation?

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- Next he tells them he “knows your works.” How is it encouraging to a suffering, persecuted minority to hear that God knows what good they are doing?
 - He promises them that they will be “pillars.” How was this an image of comfort particularly to these people?
 - Then he says he will write on them three things: The name of God, the name of the city of God, and Jesus’ own heavenly name. It’s a poetic way of reminding them what to “tattoo” on their hearts. The worship of the true God, the hope of the eternal city, and the love of Jesus for us is where we find our strength. How is this a comfort to suffering people?
4. If you have undergone times of suffering, what particularly was it about your faith that was important for your endurance? Does it relate to any of the things Jesus tells the Philadelphians here?
 5. What can Christ’s words tell us about how to pray for and comfort those going through times of trouble?
 6. How does it encourage you to know that this tiny band of suffering Christians became a consistent witness of Christ, sending missionaries to the world for centuries after this was written?

≡ WRAP UP

Take time now to pray for Christians suffering persecution around the globe, particularly those in the Middle East.

If you haven’t had a chance to discuss it yet, talk about your group service project. If you’ve completed it since your last meeting, how did it go? What did you find challenging? What was fun?

Pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group. Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book.

WEEK 7

TO INDIFFERENT CHRISTIANS

≡ WARM UP

Share with one another how your week went.

What have you learned so far in this study that has made the biggest impression on you? Have you seen changes or growth?

≡ READ & PRAY

Open your Bible to Revelation 3:14-22. Pray that God will open your ears to hear what he says through these words.

Watch video #7 at www.tlc.org/theseven

≡ DISCUSS

1. The Laodiceans had it good. They were the richest and most comfortable of all the churches in The Seven. Yet what does Jesus say about them in these verses?
2. These seven letters say a lot to Christians facing suffering. But affluent Christians face their own challenges. How can comfort and a sense of self-reliance threaten a vital faith?
3. How are you doing in this area? Have you ever felt as if a focus on self-reliance and your own achievement has kept you from realizing your need for God? Does a love of comfort ever interfere with your commitment to serve God?

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4. If you have been revitalized from a period of being “lukewarm,” what happened? How was your heart turned toward him?
5. Jesus tells the Laodiceans to realize life’s true treasures. What are the “hidden treasures” that affluent people can sometimes undervalue?
6. Jesus also tells them to receive his correction. It’s easy in our pride to think every word of correction in the Bible applies to someone else, and not us. Why is this so? How can we overcome this tendency?
7. Jesus ends with an almost heartbreaking picture of himself, the Lord of the Universe, patiently standing at the door of our hearts, knocking, waiting for us to open up. What does this tell you about Jesus?
8. It’s interesting that this invitation to open the door to Jesus is written not to unbelievers, but to Christians. How is it possible to be saved, to be a believer, and yet not have fellowship daily with Jesus? Have you ever been there? What helped you?
9. What main images or ideas from this study have impacted your life? What do you hope to take with you on your life’s journey?

≡ WRAP UP

Pray about issues that were raised during this discussion with your group. Ask for prayer requests and write them down in the back of the book.