



# *The Letters to the 7 Churches*

**A 5 WEEK INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

**SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES**

*By Lisa Hughes and Becky Hintz*

## Welcome

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said,  
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?*

Nothing could be more true! There is no better foundation for a believer than the rock-solid Word of God. It's my prayer that your faith and love for the Lord will be strengthened as you study His Word in these lessons. I want your hunger for the Scriptures to grow as you study its truths. And more than anything else, I want you to know that you can live upon the Word of God.

Steadfastness, assurance, and hope are the characteristics of all those who build upon the unshakeable foundation of the Word of God. That's why I'm so thrilled you've found your way to this Bible study. Our Bibles contain all the wisdom and guidance we'll need for our daily life (2 Peter 1:3). God's Word is one of the primary means God uses to strengthen our faith and sanctify our hearts. That's why it's so important to dig in to the details of the Scriptures and mine the treasures tucked away for us there.

*Scripture Paths Bible Studies* are in-depth, inductive studies of the Scriptures. Each lesson endeavors to teach you how to feed yourself when you delve into God's Word. As you spend time on each lesson you will grow in Bible knowledge and understanding, learn how to apply the Scriptures to your life, and become more firmly convinced than ever that God's Word is authoritative, complete, without error, and sufficient for your life.

### **HELPFUL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT *SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES*:**

1. *Purposefully prepared.* Each lesson has a unique goal, whether it's to train you in the art of studying the Scriptures or to showcase the point of the passage. None of it is busywork—it's lifework for our souls.
2. *Plan ahead.* Adding a Bible study to an already busy life takes preparation. You'll need to figure out when you can complete your lessons. Do you like to set aside bits of time each day to work on the lesson or do you prefer to do it all in one sitting? Try experimenting with a method that works best for you.
3. *Persevere.* Keep going to the Lord for wisdom, for strength, and the desire to press on when life gets busy and you find it difficult to finish your lessons.
4. *Pray.* Ask the Lord to transform you through the study of His Word. Use your study time to get to know the Lord better.

5. *Prompt your memory.* Try to glean little nuggets of truth or application from each lesson, and then share them with someone. This will help solidify what you're learning and encourage someone else too.
  
6. *Put it into practice.* Nearly every lesson has questions for you to apply to your life. To study just to study is not our goal. Studying to grow in our understanding of the Scriptures, of the Lord, and how to live lives honoring to Him is what we're aiming at. Look for opportunities to apply God's Word.

There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger.

~Charles Spurgeon

## **THE GOAL AND PURPOSE OF THIS BIBLE STUDY**

John Calvin wrote, “We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing of man mixed with it.” It’s that premise which propels me to write and study the Bible for myself and for anyone else who wants to study along with me. God has revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture. The Bible is complete and authoritative and contains everything we need to live for His glory. It’s in the study of the Scriptures that we grow in our knowledge of God and are transformed into His likeness. A commitment to lean on and live in God’s Word is a distinguishing characteristic of a Christian as Jesus explained to a crowd of His followers in John 8:31-32: “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Because all “Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16) we study inductively in order to glean as much as we can from the Word of God. Inductive Bible study consists of observation, interpretation, and application. Simply put, *observation* is noticing what the author is saying; *interpretation* is finding out what he means; and *application* is utilizing those truths to your life.

As you study this book of the Bible it is my prayer that you will grow in your commitment to the Word of God as the source of life and godliness, and you will accept it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe (1 Thess. 2:13). As a young man Jonathan Edwards (one of America’s most famous theologians and preachers) made a list of resolutions he desired, by God’s grace, to do his best to live by. One of those commitments is resolution #28: “Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.” May you see the study of God’s Word making such a difference in your life that you bear the fruit of wisdom, knowledge, godly conduct, that you overcome sin and grow daily in your love for Christ.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,  
Lisa Hughes*

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Feel free to tailor this study to your needs. Some have found it works best for them to complete the lesson in one sitting, while others find that breaking up the lesson by answering a few questions each day works the best for them. Try experimenting with different ways to complete each lesson, you'll soon discover what works for you and produces the most spiritual benefit.

Some of the lessons have what I call "Eager Beaver" questions. They're rabbit-trail questions. They don't really fit with the theme of the passage, but they're interesting nonetheless. They're there for your enjoyment and growth.

Another feature of the Bible studies is the opportunity to do word studies. Whenever I want you to study a word further I'll include the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance number with it. The Strong's number is basically a reference number attached to most words found in the Bible. That number allows you to search for it in different reference works easily—even when you don't know Hebrew or Greek. I explain how to use those resources in an Addendum at the end of the study. These tools are valuable for any Bible study student, yet not mandatory for completing these lessons.

If you're new to studying the Bible then you may feel a bit overwhelmed, but I want to encourage you to stick with the study. Studying the Bible takes planning on your part and commitment, but the spiritual blessing and personal growth in Christ makes any "hardship" worth it. Remember, the goal of studying the Bible is that you would grow more in Christ, so start each lesson with a time of prayer asking the Lord for wisdom and His grace to study His Word, then continue to seek the Lord as you complete the lesson.

If you're a leader and you're introducing this study to your ladies for the first time, be sure to encourage them a lot! Though each lesson was written to achieve a specific purpose, you may find your ladies would fare best if they take two weeks to complete each lesson. If that's the case, feel free to do so. You want the ladies to enjoy studying God's Word, so keep encouraging them. Pray together, memorize a chapter out of the book, and dig in to each lesson. As you work on the lessons each week you will all gain a clearer picture of our great God, His will for us, and how to live for Him.

*And what could be better than that?*

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore, my soul observes them.  
 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.  
 I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.  
 Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Your manner with those who love Your name.  
 Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.  
 Psalm 119:129-133

# How to Do a Chapter Observation<sup>1</sup>

Begin with prayer, asking God to show you how His Word fits together. Ask Him to reveal the gems of His Word as you approach it. Pray for a clear mind and the ability to see the truths in His Word.

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1. Read straight through the chapter using the *Bible Text Handout*. This will show you the flow of the chapter. *Mark words or phrases by creating a symbol or using a certain colored pencil every time it appears.* This will enable you to see at a glance how often a word is used in the chapter or note a progression of thought. *God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit* are always key words. Mark *repeated* words or phrases. Mark any other words that seem *important* to the chapter or are strongly *emphasized*.
2. Next, *list* the phrase containing the key words on a separate sheet of paper. *This step will allow you to pull together the information you noted from marking the key words.* Be sure to *cite* the verse references when you list your key word information. For example, in James chapter 1, with *God* as your key word you would begin to make a list of the information you discovered every time God is mentioned in James. For Chapter 1, it would start with a list like this: Vs. 1—James, a bond-servant of God or God has bond-servants Vs. 5—ask God for wisdom. Vs. 5—God gives wisdom generously, without reproach.
3. Mark any *commands* that are listed in the chapter and any actions that are required of the reader.
4. Now, list them on your separate sheet of paper in the same way you did for the key words.
5. Mark words or phrases that are being *compared*. Words like *as, likewise, in the same manner, or like* will help you find these words or phrases.
6. Mark *contrasting* words: light/dark, love/hate; the word “but.” Look for phrases or thoughts that are being contrasted.
7. Now list what you discovered from the comparisons and contrasts on the extra paper you’ve been using or at the side or bottom of the *Bible Text Handout*.

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<sup>1</sup> This process for Bible study originated from the Precept Inductive Bible Studies method. Through the years, other people have adapted it or come up with similar methods on their own, just as I have for my studies. The method and process of observation in Bible study does God honor, as we stop, observe, and consider every one of His recorded Words, in their context, during Bible study.

8. Mark *transition* terms: *therefore, for, wherefore, finally*. Sometimes an author has his own kind of transition term that lets you know he is making a switch to a new topic, so be sure to look for those kinds of terms.
9. Mark expressions of *time*. Look for words like *shortly, quickly, soon, for a little while*.
10. Look for *lists* of words, phrases, or related thoughts. Number the lists within the Bible text, then record your list out to the side in the margin or on a separate sheet of paper. This will help you see the thought progression of the author or the results of some action. For example, in James 1:5-6 we find a list about how God responds when we ask him for wisdom. We discover 1) He gives wisdom generously; 2) He gives wisdom without reproach; 3) He desires that we ask in faith, without doubting. Be sure to mark or write down any “nuggets” you observed which you thought were interesting.

Remember, the purpose of this lesson is to observe and take note of what is in this chapter. You aren't making any interpretations or applications to your life at this time. Your task at this stage is to look for the treasures that God has put in the chapter.

## How To Do a Word Study

There's a couple ways you can do this. You can do your Bible word study using the internet or a Bible program like Logos. There are quite a few good Bible study websites available on the internet like [www.net.bible.org](http://www.net.bible.org); [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org); [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com); or [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Each site is set up a little different but you should find a section on "word studies" for each of them.

Or you can do your Bible word study in the time-honored tradition of using books! Below you'll find a step-by-step guide in how to do a word study from the Bible.

### Starting with the basics

You will need an *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [Strong's or Holman's] that matches the Bible you study out of – like NASB or KJV. Then you will need *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

### Now what?

1. In the main part of the Concordance find the word you wish to define. Example: *consider* from Hebrews 3:1.
2. Write down the number assigned to it. You will need this number for the dictionary. In our example *consider* from Hebrews 3:1 is Greek word #2657.
3. Now flip to the back of the Concordance. This section of the concordance is divided into Hebrew words from the Old Testament and Greek words from the New Testament. You will need to make sure you are in the Greek section so you can find #2657. Once you locate the right number then you can see the Greek spelling of the word as well as the English transliteration of the word. You will need to write down the English transliteration of the word [for our example it is *katanoeo*. You will also find a short definition of the word here in the concordance.

**2657** κατανοέω [*katanoeo* /kat·an·o·eh·o/] v. From 2596 and 3539; **TDNT** 4:973; **TDNTA** 636; **GK** 2917; 14 occurrences; **AV** translates as "consider" seven times, "behold" four times, "perceive" twice, and "discover" once. 1 to perceive, remark, observe, understand. 2 to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon.

4. Now you are ready to look up your word in *Vine's Dictionary of Biblical Words*. Make sure you are in the Greek section if you are looking up New Testament words or the Hebrew section if you are looking up Old Testament words. Go to the back of the dictionary and look up your word using the English transliteration of the word, in our example it is *katanoeo*. This step will show you the different English words the Greek word has been translated into. For example: *katanoeo* has been translated into *behold*, *consider*, *discover*, or *perceive*.



5. Now, look up the English version of the word. In our example we look up *consider*. Find the right definition for the word by checking the English transliteration and the Strong's number assigned to it. Check to make sure that the Greek number is the same and then read away. Remember, that context is what gives a word its meaning and variation of meaning. The dictionary will supply you with all the meanings and translations of the word and how it is used differently in different verses.

### **CONSIDER** [from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words]

1. *eidon* (Aor. of ὀράω, 3708), used as the aorist tense of *horaō*, "to see," is translated "to consider" in [Acts 15:6](#), of the gathering of the apostles and elders regarding the question of circumcision in relation to the gospel.

2. *suneidon* (συνειδῶ, 4894), *sun*, with, and No. 1, used as the aorist tense of *sunoraō*, to see with one view, to be aware, conscious, as the result of mental perception, is translated "considered" in [Acts 12:12](#), of Peter's consideration of the circumstances of his deliverance from. See KNOW, PRIVY.

3. *katamanthano* (καταμανθάνω, 2648), lit., "to learn thoroughly" (*kata*, "down," intensive, *manthano*, "to learn"), hence, "to note accurately, consider well," is used in the Lord's exhortation to "consider" the lilies. [Matt. 6:28](#).¶

4. *noeo* (νοιέω, 3539), "to perceive with the mind" (*nous*), "think about, ponder," is translated "consider," only in Paul's exhortation to Timothy in [2 Tim. 2:7](#). See PERCEIVE, THINK, UNDERSTAND.

5. *katanoeō* (κατανοέω, 2657), "to perceive clearly" (*kata*, intensive, and No. 4), "to understand fully, consider closely," is used of not "considering" thoroughly the beam in one's own eye, [Matt. 7:3](#) and [Luke 6:41](#) (KJV, "perceivest"); of carefully "considering" the ravens, [Luke 12:24](#); the lilies, v. 27; of Peter's full "consideration" of his vision, [Acts 11:6](#); of Abraham's careful "consideration" of his own body, and Sarah's womb, as dead, and yet accepting by faith God's promise, [Rom. 4:19](#) (RV); of "considering" fully the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, [Heb. 3:1](#); of thoughtfully "considering" one another to provoke unto love and good works, [Heb. 10:24](#). It is translated by the verbs "behold," [Acts 7:31-32](#); [Jas. 1:23-24](#); "perceive," [Luke 20:23](#); "discover," [Acts 27:39](#). See BEHOLD, DISCOVER, PERCEIVE.¶

6. *logizomai* (λογίζομαι, 3049) signifies "to take account of," [2 Cor. 10:7](#) (RV, "consider," KJV, "think"), the only place where the RV translates it "consider." See ACCOUNT.

### Companion Volumes

*Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*. This is arranged by book and moves through the text explaining and defining key words along the way.

*Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. Wuest died before he finished all the New Testament, but what is completed is a treasure for word studies. This is arranged in the same way as Vincent's book is arranged.

# Letters to the Seven Churches

## Lesson #1, Introduction and Chapter Overviews

You are about to begin the adventure of the *Letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation* Bible Study. May God grant you grace, understanding, and a desire to apply all you will learn from His incomparable and unfailing Word!

*Please don't faint when you take a look at this lesson! I know there's a lot here, but the process is so worth the effort. Try to break this lesson up into pieces so you won't feel overwhelmed. The goal is to help you gain a working knowledge of the opening chapters of Revelation before you dive into the rest of the lessons for this study. Understanding the flow of the book will help you understand what God intends for you to know, while guiding you in a proper interpretation of the book. Ask the Lord for insight into His Word as you answer the questions that follow.*

Using only the text of Revelation Chapters 1-3, try to answer the following questions. Be sure to note the Scripture references that show where you found your answer. At this point in the lesson, you may not be able to answer every question using *only* your Bible. You will have an opportunity a while later in this lesson to complete your answers using other Bible study sources.

1. *Who* wrote the book?
2. *To whom* is it written?
3. *When* was the book written?
4. *Where* was it written?
5. What is the *general tone* of the author in the first three chapters?

Now go back and answer the above questions using your study Bible notes, a Bible dictionary or Bible commentary to add details to your answers above.

6. From **Chapter 1** answer these questions:
  - a. Summarize the contents of this chapter.
  - b. What is the main point the author is trying to communicate to his readers?
  - c. List what you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter.
  - d. What do you learn about God in this chapter?
  
7. From **Chapter 2** answer these questions:
  - a. What are the contents of this chapter?
  - b. What's the main point John is trying to communicate to his readers?
  - c. List what you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter.

- d. What do you learn about God in this chapter?
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- 8. From **Chapter 3** answer these questions:
    - a. Summarize the contents of this chapter.
  
    - b. What's the main point John is trying to communicate to his readers?
  
    - c. What do you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter?
  
    - d. List what you learn about God in this chapter.
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- 9. Write down any observations or insights you have gained thus far in Revelation Chapters 1-3.

# Letters to the Seven Churches

## Lesson #2, Chapter 1

Read all the way through Chapter 1 before beginning this lesson. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

1. According to verse 1 what is the book of Revelation about?
2. Define the term *revelation* [Strong's #602]. Based on that definition what do you learn about God's purpose for this book?
3. Sort out the "who gave what to whom" tangle from verses 1-2. Explain the different roles of *God, Jesus Christ, John*, and the *bond-servants* as seen in verses 1-2.
4. John says you will be blessed if you do 3 things (verse 3). What are they? Explain the difference between each of the stages. What reason does he give for doing those things (verse 3)?
5. Revelation 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes or blessings in the book of Revelation. Be blessed as you look up and list the rest of the blessings. Any surprises? See 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.
6. Read Matt. 24:36-39 and 2 Pet. 3:3-9. Now look up the following verses from the book of Revelation: 1:1, 3, 7; 3:11; 22:6-7; 10, 12, 20. What do you learn about God's plan?

7. Who is John writing to and what is his greeting to them (verse 4)? In verse 4 which member of the Trinity, described as *Him*, is being discussed?

Most commentators agree that *the seven Spirits* referred to in vs. 4 is the Holy Spirit in His fullness since seven is used in the Scriptures to indicate completeness.

8. John also sends greetings from Jesus to the seven churches. How is Jesus described in verses 5-7?
9. After reading the description of Christ in verses 5-6, it is no wonder that glory and dominion belong to Him. Spend some time thinking on each of the qualities about Jesus listed here in verses 5-6 then write out a prayer of thanks and praise. See also Ps. 115:1 and Revelation 5:11-14.
10. In verse 8 Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega. What is an *alpha* and an *omega* and what does it signify about Jesus?
- a. Look up Revelation 1:17-18; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13. Now read Is. 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12. How would those sequence of verses show that Christ is God?
11. How does John describe himself in verse 9? Why was he on the island of Patmos?
12. In verse 10 John says, *I was in the Spirit*. What does he mean by that? See Revelation 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

- a. Read how the other biblical writers described this same occurrence: Ezek. 2:2; 3:12-14; 11:5; Acts 10:10; 2 Cor. 12:2-4.
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13. What did John hear (verse 10) and what was he told to do (verse 11)?
  
  14. What does John see after turning around to see who was speaking to him? See verses 12-13. You may have already guessed who this is, but if you haven't you can read what the figure has to say about himself in verses 17-18. Who is it?
  
  15. What do the golden lampstands represent? See verse 20. What is significant about *where* the figure was standing?
  
  16. How is Jesus described in verses 14-16?
  
  17. No longer a baby, the suffering servant, or a lamb led to the slaughter, we now see Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords who is ready to bring judgment to the world.
    - a. What do you notice about Jesus' eyes from these verses? See verse 14; 2:18; 19:12; Heb. 4:13.
  
    - b. How did His voice change from verse 10 to verse 15? See also Ezek. 43:2.

- c. What is the purpose of the sword in Jesus' mouth? See verse 16; 2:16; 19:15. The kind of sword He has in His mouth is called a *rhomphaia* [Strong's #4501]. See what else you can find out about this sword.
18. John called himself the one "whom Jesus loved" and felt comfortable enough to lay his head on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper, so how did John respond to this vision of Jesus (verse 17)?
19. John is not the only one who has fallen to his feet at the sight of the revealed glory of God. Look up the following verses to see the common way to respond to Jesus Christ our Lord and God when His glory is revealed. See Gen. 17:1-3; Ezek. 1:28; 44:4; Matt. 17:2-6.
20. How does Jesus encourage John in verses 17-18? How would those words be encouraging for John as he lays in a heap at Jesus' feet?
21. What does Jesus commission John to write (verse 19)?

Verse 19 provides a simple outline for the book of Revelation: the things which you have seen (Chap. 1); the things which are (Chaps. 2-3); and the things which shall take place after these things (Chaps. 4-22).

22. Finally, in verse 20, Jesus clears up any confusion we may have had about any of the *sevens* that He reveals in this chapter. What do the seven stars and the seven lampstands represent in the vision?



23. From your findings in Chapter 1 please finish the following sentences.

a. God is:

b. Jesus is:

c. I am:

d. These truths make me:

e. I need to:

## Letters to the Seven Churches

### Lesson #3, Chapter 2—Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum

My friend, Becky Hintz shared some of the writing tasks for this study in Revelation. Enjoy her insights as you work on this lesson. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

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

1. From verses 2-6, list the commendations Christ has for the Ephesian church.
2. We live in an age in which tolerance is considered a high virtue. Yet the Ephesian believers are commended for refusing to tolerate evil men! What does this indicate about God's view of tolerance? See also Psalm 139:19-22; 2 Jn. 7-11.
3. Christ rebukes this church for leaving its first love. After looking up Acts 19:1-29 and 20:17-38, describe the pedestal from which they fell.
4. The Ephesians replaced true love for God with doctrinal discernment, which in itself is a good and commendable thing! What "spiritual" activities or practices in your life can threaten to take the place of truly loving Christ? (See Luke 10:38-42 for another example of such an exchange.)
5. After detailing their sin, Christ gives the Ephesians a threefold command. What steps are they to take? What is threatened against the church if they do not repent (verse 5)?

6. If Christ were to look at your life, would He find that you, too, have in some sense “left your first love?” Following His command to the Ephesians, take a moment now to “remember from where you have fallen.” Was there a time in your walk when you were more zealous for the Lord? What did you do, feel, think about? What changed?
  
7. For the Ephesian church (and possibly for you) the next step is to repent—to return to a deep love for the Lord and the deeds that follow. But how does one do this exactly? Spend some time praying through Psalm 32, and record any insights you glean about how one can draw near to God.
  
8. Who is called to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (verse 7)? Who needs to pay attention to these letters?
  
9. At the end of each church’s letter, Christ gives a promise to “him who overcomes.” Look up 1 John 5:4-5 to see how John uses this designation. To whom are all of these promises made?

*Read the letter to the church at Smyrna starting at Revelation 2:8.*

10. From verses 9-11, what was this church experiencing? What were they about to endure?
  
11. When Christ calls them rich (verse 9), what does He mean? Read Matt 5:11-12, James 2:5, and Rev. 3:17-18 to see what it means to be rich in God’s eyes.
  
12. From verses 9-11, what encouragements, promises, and commands does Jesus give to the church at Smyrna?

13. Christ does not waste a single word. How could His self-description in verse 8 itself be an encouragement to these suffering saints?
14. What condemnations or rebukes does Jesus have for the church in Smyrna?
15. What is Jesus' purpose in writing to this suffering church? What is His tone and what strategies does He employ?
16. How can we follow Christ's example when we encounter suffering people? See Matt. 12:20; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:14.
17. As Christ's representatives on earth, we should always be ready to offer words of encouragement and hope to those enduring trials. What are some key Scriptural passages and promises that we can use to minister to the bruised and hurting? For starters, look up Ps. 145:14-20, Rom. 8:28, and 2 Cor. 4:16-18, and then add your own.

“Thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow  
Thou art the Lord who soothed the furious sea,  
What matter beating wind and tossing billow  
If only we are in the boat with Thee?

Hold us in quiet through the age-long minute  
While Thou art silent and the wind is shrill:  
Can the boat sink while Thou, dear Lord, art in it?  
Can the heart faint that waiteth on Thy will?”

~Amy Carmichael



25. How have you been tempted to be drawn into the mindset of the Pergamum church, perhaps tolerating sins either in your own heart or in those around you, and then justifying such tolerance? What would be the solution to this problem, and what would you need to change?

“Consider that no sin against a great God can be strictly a little sin.”

~Ralph Venning, *The Plague of Plagues*

## Letters to the Seven Churches

### Lesson #4, Chapters 2 and 3 – Thyatira and Sardis

Becky Hintz' diligence shines in this week's lesson. There's much to glean from these letters to the churches. May God bless you in your efforts to learn and apply these lessons.

*Read the letter to the church at Thyatira beginning at Revelation 2:18.*

1. As is His pattern, Christ opens with words of praise for the church in Thyatira. What were they doing right, according to verse 19?
2. This sounds like a great church! Yet Christ points out a major problem. What is it (verse 20)?
3. What do we learn about the woman "Jezebel" and her teaching from verses 20-24? What similarities does she have with the infamous idolater in the Old Testament? See 1 Kings 21:20-26.
4. Instead of overlooking the sin in their midst, what should the church have done with these immoral people? Review Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; Gal. 6:1. Why do many churches (including Thyatira, a church of otherwise solid believers) choose not to do this?

Thyatira was an industrial city controlled by guilds, or trade unions. These guilds held regular festivals in honor of pagan gods, involving sacrificing animals, eating the meat, and then indulging in immoral activities. All guild members were required to attend these festivals, and refusing to do so could mean forfeiting one's membership in the guild, resulting in unemployment. Christians who did not participate were considered social outcasts, and often found themselves in poverty.

5. In this setting, how could believers justify participating in these festivals, or at least tolerating others who chose to do so? In contrast, take a look at what the Scriptures say: Matt. 6:24, James 4:4, 1 Jn. 2:15-17.
  
6. What are some ways in which we can be tempted—or pressured—to compromise devotion to the Lord in order to fit in with the world in our day and age? What insight do the following verses provide in your struggle against temptation? Ps. 119:9-11; Matt. 5:30; Rom. 13:14.
  
7. What does the fact that God had already warned Jezebel to repent—and given her plenty of time to do so—demonstrate about His character? What do the following verses teach us about His attitude towards sinners? See Ezek. 18:30-32; Is. 55:7; 2 Pet 3:9.
  
8. Christ details the punishments that He will mete out to Jezebel and her followers. What will be revealed through the execution of these punishments (verse 23)?
  
9. Along these same lines, in His self-description in Rev. 2:18, Christ states that He has eyes like a flame of fire. Why does He highlight this attribute to this particular church? What does He want the wayward members to understand? See also Prov. 24:11-12; Jer. 17:10; Acts 5:1-11.
  
10. Few of us actually think we can hide anything from God, yet in practice many believers try to do just that—either by distancing themselves from God when they sin, or like some of the Thyatirans, refusing to repent altogether. How should an understanding of God’s omniscience cause us to deal with our sin? Look up Ps. 32:1-7; 139:23-24; Prov. 24:16; James 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:8-9.



11. What instruction does Christ give to those who have remained faithful (verses 24-25)? What blessings await them for their obedience (verses 26-29)?
  
12. Define the term *hold fast* (Strong's #2902). What else are believers to "hold fast"? See 2 Thess. 2:15; Heb. 4:14; 6:18.

*Read the letter to the church at Sardis beginning at Revelation 3:1.*

13. How does Christ describe Himself as He opens this letter, and what does He know about this church (verse 1)?
  
14. How can this church have a reputation for being alive, and yet be dead? See what insights you can gain from the way these terms are used in the following verses: Eph 2:1, 5; 5:14; 1 Tim 5:6; Titus 1:16. What sort of people filled the pews in this church?
  
15. List all of the actions that Christ commands the church of Sardis to take in verses 2-3.
  
16. What will happen if they fail to follow these commands (verse 3)? What is the intended impact of these words upon unrepentant sinners?
  
17. In contrast, if the Sardisians were walking in obedience, how would they view Christ's sudden return? See John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 4:16-18; Rev. 22:20.

18. When you think of the very real possibility that Christ could return even today, what is your gut reaction? Is your conscience pricked by any particular areas of your life? Take a moment to search your heart and confess any hidden or persistent sins to the Lord, so that you can honestly say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"
  
19. In verse 4 Christ shifts gear to highlight a different group within the church, those who have *not soiled* (NKJV *defiled*, Strong's #3435) their garments. Define this word, look up Rev. 14:4, and record any insights into what these people were like.
  
20. What promises are made to the few who have not soiled their garments (verses 4-5)?
  
21. Why should we care about the color of our heavenly apparel? Look up the following verses to see who wears these white garments and why they are so special. Matt. 17:2; 28:2-3; Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:7-8.
  
22. Look up the following verses to see what you can discover about the book of life: Luke 10:20; Rev 13:8; 20:12-15; 21:23-27.
  
23. What great things Christ is preparing for us in heaven! Write out a prayer of thanks to God for the inheritance that awaits us. Enjoy meditating on the glories of heaven today!

“A heavenly mind is a joyful mind; this is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort, and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at a fire and not be warm; or in the sunshine and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? O Christian get above. Believe it, that region is warmer than this below.”

~Richard Baxter, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*

“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, or the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” ~Rev. 21:23

## Letters to the Seven Churches

### Lesson #5, Chapter 3 – Philadelphia and Laodicea

*Read the letter to the church of Philadelphia beginning in Revelation 3:7.*

1. How is Jesus described in the beginning of the letter to the church at Philadelphia (verse 7)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When you are given keys to something what does that signify?
  - a. So when Jesus says He has the keys to David's house what does that mean? See also Is. 9:7; 22:22; Luke 1:32; Rev. 1:18.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How complete is His authority according to verse 7?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Jesus, with eyes like a flame of fire, sees all and proclaims, *I know your deeds*. In response to that knowledge, what does Christ do for this church (verse 8)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What does the open door mean? See 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why does He put an open door before this church according to verse 8?

6. Why are those 3 elements enough for effective service for Christ? See also 2 Cor. 12:8-10 and Phil. 4:13.
  
7. List what you learn about the Jews of Philadelphia from verse 9.
  
8. What promise is given to this church (verse 10)?
  
9. See 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; and 5:1-11, especially verses 4-5, 9 to see how God intends to accomplish the promise of Revelation 3:10. What do you learn?
  
10. Jesus tells this faithful church to be ready because He is coming quickly. What are they to do (verse 11)?
  
11. The meaning of the phrase, *hold fast what you have so that no one will take your crown* is explained by Col. 2:18, as well as 1 Cor. 9:24 and 2 John 8. What is the idea being expressed?
  - a. What is the crown that we will receive? See 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10.
  
12. How does Jesus encourage this struggling church to stand firm (verse 12)?

13. The church at Philadelphia was a faithful church. What little gifts they had, they used effectively because they were grounded in the Word and loved Jesus no matter what the cost. How is this church an encouragement to you in your own walk with the Lord?

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

14. How is Jesus described in the beginning of the letter to the church at Laodicea (verse 14)?
  
15. What does Jesus know about their deeds (verse 15)?
  
16. What does Jesus want for this church (verse 15)?
  
17. The physical location of Laodicea provides insight into what Jesus is communicating to this church. Laodicea received its water from Hieropolis, known for its famous hot springs, and from Colossae, which was known for its pure, cold water. However, by the time the hot water from Hieropolis and the cold water from Colossae flowed down the mountain to Laodicea, the water would be lukewarm. No time of refreshing would come from its tepid temperature. Note that the contrast Jesus is making is between the two kinds of water: *on one side*, cold water that would be refreshing to drink, and hot water that is good for bathing—and *on the other side*, the lukewarm water that was available to the Laodicean population. What is the problem with lukewarm water? How does Jesus respond to the church's lukewarm attitude toward Him? See verses 15-16.
  
18. The Laodicean's lukewarm attitude in the things of God can be traced to how they viewed themselves spiritually. How do they see themselves according to verse 17?
  
19. What is their true spiritual state (verse 17)?

20. What advice does Jesus give them (verse 18)? What spiritual truths is Jesus trying to convey to the Laodicean church? For help formulating your answer look up Zech. 13:9 and 1 Pet. 1:6-7; Is. 61:10 and Rev. 19:7-8; Matt. 13:10-17 and 2 Pet. 1:9.
  
21. Lest they grow discouraged by these things, Jesus reminds them of an essential truth. What is it (verse 19)? What further action does He urge them to do in verse 19?
  
22. Many believe that Rev. 3:20 is *only* a salvation call to unbelievers. The problem with that view is that Jesus has been talking to believers at the church of Laodicea (For example, Jesus disciplines them because He loves them according to verse 19). Based upon what you know about the church at Laodicea what is Jesus seeking from them in verse 20?
  
23. Jesus' words to this church should drive us to examine our own hearts. See Ps. 139:23-24 and 2 Cor. 13:5. What are some ways you can guard your heart from spiritual apathy?
  
24. In the chart below record what you have learned about each of the Seven Churches of Revelation.

The Churches	The description of Jesus to that church	What Jesus knows about that church	What Jesus has against that church	What Jesus' solution is for the problem in that church	Jesus' encouragement to the overcomers
Ephesus					
Smyrna					

The Churches	The description of Jesus to that church	What Jesus knows about that church	What Jesus has against that church	What Jesus' solution is for the problem in that church	Jesus' encouragement to the overcomers
Pergamum					
Thyatira					
Sardis					
Philadelphia					
Laodicea					

25. As you think over Jesus' message to the seven churches, what did you find the most encouraging, the most convicting, and the most motivating?