



+INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter, Jesus is depicted as glorified, radiant, and unapproachable, as seen by John's reaction of falling facedown in fear. (Rev. 1:17) Curiously, in the following two chapters Jesus is further revealed as quite personal, in that he is portrayed as, walking among the seven churches [Rev 2:1], and the author of several personalized letters addressed to them.

The New Testament reveals a picture of God who has devoted himself intimately and personally to those whom he has redeemed and saved, while not negotiating his holiness. It's precisely for these reasons, Jesus writes these letters. Containing a mixture of commendation and in some cases correction, Jesus is vividly seen as the true shepherd and caretaker of his flock. It's true, as the pithy statement says, "Jesus loves you". However he loves us enough to not leave us as we are, but rather He leads us on towards righteousness and holiness, as He himself, is.

The first of seven letters is addressed to the church of Ephesus. This coastal city held a dominant position of influence as it was the

main portal to all the major trade routes for the east + west. Known worldwide for its 425ft. golden statue of Diana (1 of the 7 wonders of the ancient world), and it's massive 25,000 seat theater, Ephesus was a culture setting city. The church there was originally planted by the apostle Paul (Acts 19) and became very strong and influential and was the recipient of one of the most insightful new testament letters, penned. (see Ephesians)

Though, this doctrinally sound + socially active church started strong, yet over the years their love waned + they grew cold. (Rev. 2:5). It's because of this departure from love, that Jesus admonishes them, to remember from where they withdrew, and return.

God wants our hearts to be fully engaged + loving toward Him and others. We err + sin when we heartlessly + routinely go about our activity, regardless of how right it is. Love, is not primarily a feeling, but rather an attitude leading to proper action. Believers are to carefully guard their hearts in order to ensure that, love for God and his people is what fuels their service + activity.

+READ

Revelation 2:1-7

Read this passage out loud together as a group/family before asking any of the below questions.

+OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

Read, Acts 18:18-20:38, to learn about how this great church began.

How did it start? What do you think the early believers in this church felt about the culture and spiritual environment around them? Why do you think that within time they drifted away from love?

As you read through each of the 7 letters to the churches observe how each follows or deviates from the basic pattern below:

1. Address (what is the letter addressing?)
2. A title/s of Jesus (what title from chapter 1 is repeated here?)
3. Commendation (what does Jesus commend them for?)
4. Criticism (what does Jesus criticize them for?)
5. Counsel (how does Jesus counsel them?)
6. Command (what command/s does Jesus give to them to follow?)
7. Promise (what is promised to them?)

+APPLICATION

How can you keep, "love for God, and others" preeminent in your life?

What practical steps can/should you take to do this?

Pray for one another that your love for God and others would be restored

+MEMORY VERSE

Rev 1:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.



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+What is a community group?

Community groups are small gatherings of believers (non-believers are welcomed too!) that meet regularly for accountability, friendship, study of the word of God and prayer. Community groups are an essential part of the mission of Calvary SLO Church. They're a place where we learn more about the life Jesus wants us to live together. They're the place where we wrestle with the truths of the Bible and encourage one another toward the life God intends. Each community group is unique and molded by the people who attend it. Most community groups gather weekly and involve food, dialog, prayer, discussion for applying the Bible to practical living, and loving service to one-another. They're meant to be an organic and authentic expression of the church, actively acting like the body of Jesus.



+Why should I join/start a community group?

God is a Trinitarian God who is one & three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. We have been made in the image of God, which means we have been designed for community & friendship. Often times we suffer when we are not actively in community, because life in our broken world is complex and and there are many temptations to go at it alone. Our encouragement is for you to gather with a small group of friends, family or roommates on a weekly basis and use the study notes provided to press into the Bible by having a time of discussion and prayer. Mix it up a bit, these times together should be encouraging to each other.

+Why should I consider becoming a part of the Calvary SLO Community Group Team?

We are enthusiastic about all levels of community, however there are definite benefits to leading a Calvary SLO Community Group, such as but not limited to: leadership counsel and guidance / spiritual covering, equipping and training, promotion of your group thru means of website, bulletin, special Sunday announcements, etc. We love having groups available in all areas of the county, available for all walks and seasons of life, and the variety of various structures and styles. Simply contact Pastor James at james@calvaryslo.com, or 805.543.8516 x3.

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+Resources

There are many resources available to help you study the book of Revelation. At the same time there are many resources espousing misguided apocalyptic views, which fuel more of a sense of fear & paranoia than praise, directed toward Jesus. Aside from that there are many different lenses by which Christians have historically viewed this book, most of which are born from diligent study and a high regard for the inspiration of the bible.

The books listed below are only a small handful of helpful resources, pastor Bryan has found beneficial in his studies of this great book, and happen to view Revelation through the lens of a historical pre-millennium view (more on the various millennium views to come).

EASY



Be Victorious by W. Wiersbe

INTERMEDIATE



Because the Time is Near by J. MacArthur



Revelation: The Christians Ultimate Victory (study guide) by J. MacArthur



Revelation by D. G. Barnhouse

EXPERT



The Book of Revelation Robert H. Mounce

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