

TO: Whoever has ears,  
let them hear...

# Letters to the CHURCH

FROM (the):  
Book of Revelation

# STUDY GUIDE

## Week 4



# WEEK 4 - SMYRNA

## Monday

**Read:** Revelation 2:8, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 6:10, Isaiah 40:29

The church in Smyrna was known as the 'suffering church'. Smyrna was a deeply pagan city, where spirituality and society were so deeply interconnected that failing to worship the Roman gods meant social isolation, economic exclusion, imprisonment, and sometimes death. If they refused to participate in ritual sacrifices or worship, they would be blamed for the gods being displeased, and therefore any natural or economic hardship was their fault. Jesus begins this letter reminding the church of Smyrna who they are fighting for, the 'one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive'. He sees their suffering, and His first move is to encourage them that they are not alone.

**What do these scriptures reveal about Jesus?**

**Where in your life has God revealed that He is with you, even in the midst of suffering or trial?**

**Ask Holy Spirit to reveal who in your world might need this same encouragement. Step out in faith and remind and encourage them that God loves them, is for them and is with them today.**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that I am not alone. Thank You even when I face challenges and difficulty You are always with me, and You have power over all. Please remind me of this in times of struggle, and help me to remind others of this same truth when I see them struggling. Help me to remember that the battle I fight is Your battle, and You already hold the victory. Amen.



**This week in your Discipleship Group discuss a situation where you have needed reminding of who God is, and how God encouraged you. Was it through his Word, His Spirit, or the body of believers? Discuss how you can be that same reminder for others in your life, especially those who don't know Christ.**

## Tuesday

**Read:** Revelation 2:9, John 3:17, John 2:13-16, Luke 10:25-37

In today's key passage these words to Smyrna may sound condemning, but they are more than meet the eye. In the city of Smyrna, Jewish people were afforded special exemptions, so they did not need to worship the Roman gods. Some of them chose to compromise their own beliefs entirely so they could be full members of the trade guilds - exchanging their spiritual beliefs for societal acceptance. As the Christian Jews risked the position of those Jews trying to be part of society, they were often persecuted by their own people. That situation would have been very confusing to the Christian Jews, who would've had trouble knowing who they could trust. When Jesus says that the Jewish synagogue belongs to Satan, he is pointing out that they cannot be trusted, as they are inadvertently doing Satan's work persecuting Christians. Jesus will never condemn those who sin, but He will point them out, such as the woman at the well in John 2:13, or the hypocritical religious leaders in Luke 10:25-37. He does this either so they can change themselves, or so those around them can see their poor influence and choose to follow God's way instead. That is what He is doing here - he is telling the members of the church that the Jewish people who compromise their beliefs to fit into society are not the people the church should listen to.

**What stands out to you about these scriptures?**

**Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where this might be the case in your life - Are there people or places that you shouldn't trust or follow, not because they are beyond saving but because they are not a good influence on you, but are instead encouraging you to compromise your beliefs and values?**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that You meet us where we're at, but love us too much to leave us there. I'm sorry for where I've ignored Your warning, and I ask that You help show me the influences that I've allowed to lead me astray. Please forgive me of my sin, and help me to be a good influence on those around me, standing firmly on Your Word and what I know to be true. Amen.

## Wednesday

**Read:** Revelation 2:10, 2 Corinthians 12:8-11, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

As we see all throughout scripture, God does not promise us an easy life but a fulfilled one. The church in Smyrna is known as the 'suffering church', yet through their suffering, the members of the church remained spiritually strong and fulfilled. Tough times are an inevitability, but they can also be some of the times where we have the most growth. The church in Smyrna could not become spiritually strong without anything to fight against, just like how we cannot gain the attributes we want without being challenged. If you ask God for wisdom, he will put you in a position where you need to apply wisdom. Ask God for patience, and He will give you a chance to grow patience through a specific situation. That is how we grow - not by simply being given these good traits, but by seeking God in our weakness. And if we remain faithful to Him in those challenging situations, we will be rewarded.

**What stands out to you about these scriptures?**

**Reflect on a time in your life when you've experienced hardship and come out the other side of it stronger. Maybe there's a situation that grew you in ways you didn't even realise until you look back on it. Remember that when the tough times come, there is always an opportunity to grow deeper roots in God, that might bear fruit in years to come.**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that Your ways are higher than my ways. Thank You that I can trust You to strengthen and guide me during tough times, and that there is always a lesson I can take from them. Please help me to see Your light in every season and continue to be faithful to You always. Amen.

## Thursday

**Read:** Revelation 2:11, John 4:1-42, Matthew 8:28-34

Jesus continues his letter to the church in Smyrna by saying 'Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches'. He doesn't say 'anyone from the churches'. He doesn't say 'anyone living under Roman rule.' He says 'anyone with ears to hear'. This is very deliberate wording, as it tells us that these words are relevant and important today, two thousand years after they were written. If they weren't relevant, they wouldn't have been included in the Bible. Jesus often spoke to specific people, encouraging them and meeting their need, such as the woman at the well and the man suffering from demonic influence. But that doesn't mean that what He taught them was only for their benefit. He taught the woman at the well that He saw her deepest flaws – and sought her out anyway, out of love. He taught the man suffering from demons that nothing

**What stands out to you about these scriptures?**

**Have you ever zoned out of a sermon because you don't feel you can directly relate to the topic that's being preached? Or skipped over parts of the Bible because you've read them before? How can you look at God's word in a new way in light of today's revelation?**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that Your word is real and alive and meaningful for all of us. Please help me to remember that everything You say is important and will produce fruit in my life if I let the seed take root. Help me to approach Your Word with fresh eyes and ears that I might hear Your Spirit speaking to me. Amen.

## Friday

**Read:** Revelation 2:11, 1 Corinthians 15:57, John 16:33

For the church in Smyrna, 'victorious' would've been the last thing they felt. In a situation of extreme suffering and oppression, the church in Smyrna would not have felt victorious. Isolated from society and often physically harmed, their lives were extremely difficult. Building the church would have been incredibly hard considering



the constraints they had to live under, worshipping in secret while still trying to evangelise to their community. By most standards, they were not winning. However, they could be confident that they were victorious because they were doing what God asked, and they were operating under His banner. They were not victorious by earthly standards, but God celebrated their every achievement, no matter how small. He saw their continued faith in hardship and was so proud of them.

**What is Holy Spirit revealing to you through these scriptures?**

**You may feel like you aren't where you want to be in life - be that in your finances, your career, your relationships. But victory is not dependent on Earthly measures of achievement. God sees your heart, and knows that if you are faithful to Him, you hold His victory.**

**Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal that you already have victory in Christ and hold onto that truth with confidence.**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You that my earthly achievements are not a reflection of my value to You. I am valuable because I am Yours, and my greatest achievement is doing what You ask of me, no matter how 'big' or 'small' it may feel in the moment. Thank You that I can trust in Your victory, not my own. Amen.

## Saturday

**Read:** Revelation 2:11, James 4:14, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Romans 8:18, Hebrews 1:11

Though the people from the church in Smyrna knew they were victorious in Christ, they still had to deal with a lot of pain and suffering here on Earth. They needed to be reminded that their suffering on Earth was not the end. Their first death would not mean pain and suffering, for if they continued to trust God and believe in Him, they would experience eternal joy. They could be confident that even if they were isolated and persecuted in their earthly life, they would be free when they got to Heaven, unlike their persecutors.

**What is Holy Spirit revealing to you through these scriptures?**

**Our life on earth is very real, but it is not our end goal. How might your life change if you consistently lived with Heaven in mind?**

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I thank You that regardless of my life on earth, Heaven is waiting for me. I pray that You will help me to be more like You while on earth, so that I can make my temporary time here matter and echo into eternity. Amen.