



Letters to the Seven Churches

Revelation 1-3

A 3 Part Series

Sunday School Lesson for the Week of May 17

There seem to be three main themes throughout the letters from Jesus to the seven local churches in the beginning of Revelation. They all seem to be calling the churches back to Him in one way or another.

Three Themes

Love Jesus Passionately

Trust Jesus – Stand Firm in Trials

Strive for Holiness because Christ is holy.

In each letter...

Jesus promises something to each church if they are faithful to do what He is calling them to. He makes promises to us, too. He promises that He will be with us, that He will protect us, that He will love us...

The list goes on and on.

A Note to Parents...

Below you will find 3 family devotions. In each one you will read one of the letters to the churches. Two things:

- There will be other themes that you see in each of these letters. There is a LOT in these letters and they could be unpacked for a long time. Keep in mind that these are what stood out to me (after several weeks of prayer and study). YOU TELL THE "CURRICULUM" WHAT TO DO. You are in charge. You know your kids and what phases they are in and what they need to hear from the Lord. Teach them what you want and how you want. These are just to be helpers and if you love them and want to use them word for word, great!
- Sexual immorality was a big part of what was happening in these times. Jesus warns about it two times in these letters. Be sure you look ahead to see what they say and how you want to discuss it (if it is even noticed by your kiddos). It is only mentioned once in this material on page 5.

Explaining Sexual Immorality to Children... (page 5 – Revelation 2:14 – letter to Pergamum)

You know your children best. In our classroom we talk about the fact that God created a man and a woman to have one husband or one wife. As such, you could explain "sexual immorality" like this: the people were acting like they were married to more than one person. Also, in this case, the church was acting like they were married to more than the one true God by worshiping other gods.

Love Jesus Passionately

Read: *Take some time to discuss the meaning of the bold items.*

Revelation 2:2-7 To the church of Ephesus

"I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. **You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**

Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken the love you had at first.** Consider how far you have fallen! **Repent and do the things you did at first.** If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. " ~NIV

- ♥ Define "persevered" and discuss what types of hardships we might face as followers of Jesus. Explain that this was Jesus' way of *praising* the church.
- ♥ Define "forsaken" and discuss what it means to forsake the love we once had. What would that look like for us? *Forgetting to pray, not reading God's Word when we should, being angry or sad or frustrated more often).*
- ♥ Define "repent." Jesus said it so clearly that we should *repent* or turn from our ways and do what we did before. What would it look like to love Jesus fully? *Pray often throughout the day, treat everyone with kindness/Jesus love, be choose joy more often, etc.*

Sword Drill: *have a race to find these verses. Read and discuss.*

- ♥ Deuteronomy 6:5
- ♥ John 14:21

Craft/Activity

- ♥ Make a paper chain: Cut strips of paper, write one reason why you love Jesus on a strip. Form in into a ring and staple or tape in place. Add a new link and a new reason each day. As we add reasons we will not only watch, but I believe experience our love for Jesus grow.

Trust Jesus - Stand Firm in Trials

Read: *Take some time to discuss the meaning of the bold items.*

Revelation 2:9-11 To the Church of Smyrna

I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the **slander of those who say they are Jews and are not**, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, **the devil will put some of you in prison to test you**, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. **Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.**

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death ~NIV

- 👑 Explain that rich doesn’t mean money. The church in Smyrna was filled with mostly quite poor people. However, because of their faithfulness, they were rich in treasures in heaven.
- 👑 Define “slander.” The Jews in Smyrna were not well liked. There were people who said they were Jews who were not and these people were mean to the actual believers.
- 👑 Explain that the devil will put some of them in prison and that they would suffer at the hands of the people because Satan wants to trick all people. He wants people to worship him instead of Jesus. He wants to make us think that Jesus makes hard things happen in our life or that Jesus can’t help us when we need Him. We have to choose to love Jesus and trust that He is good and knows what’s best, even when life seems impossible.
- 👑 Explain the more faithful we are the more rewards there will be for us in heaven. We will talk more about that in our next lesson. But trust that it is very VERY good.

Sword Drill *have a race to find the scriptures. Read and Discuss.*

👑 Isaiah 26:3-4

👑 Psalm 56:3-4

Activity

👑 Salt and Pepper Object Lesson

MATERIALS:

- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Pinch of pepper
- Small cup saucer
- Plastic spoon

DURATION:

Approximately 5 minutes



WHAT YOU WILL DO:

You will pour a small mound of salt (about 1/4 of a teaspoon), representing God's people into the middle of the saucer. Then you will drop a very small amount of pepper over the mound of salt. The pepper represents the devil's many tricks and lies that he uses to deceive God's people. Next, you will rub a plastic spoon vigorously over a piece of clothing to create static electricity. Then, you will wave the spoon over the mound, and the pepper will attach itself to the spoon, thus being removed from God's people.

WHAT YOU WILL SAY:

Today, I will show you how we can always trust in our Lord to protect us, even when circumstances seem hopeless. This saucer represents the world, in which we all live. I am going to take some salt and place it on the world. This salt represents God's people. Now, as we know, the world is full of evil. The devil is always trying to deceive God's people. Let me take some of this pepper, and put it on top of the salt. This pepper represents the tricks and lies used by the devil, and they are right on top of God's people.

How can we avoid these tricks and lies and remove them from God's people? *(Allow for responses and explain how most suggestions would be hopeless or take forever.)*

It is impossible for us, but God can do miraculous things. Let me show you. This spoon represents our loving God. *(Take the spoon and rub it to create static electricity, and then lift off the pepper.)*

You see, sometimes we may have no clue of how to escape the grasp of the devil, but God is always there for us. He will keep us safe in His arms no matter what the devil tries to do.

👑 Give Your Hardships to Jesus: get small pieces of paper and write or draw something that is difficult for you on them. Think of things that we really need to trust Jesus with, but may be difficult. Then pray together as a family over them and destroy them together. Do something fun or creative like trashcan basketball or a bon fire.

○ Examples:

- When someone we know is sick, we have to trust God to heal them.
- When we can't figure out how to get along with our sibling, we trust God to help us learn.

Strive for Holiness because Christ is Holy

Read: *Take some time to discuss the meaning of the bold items.*

Revelation 2:13-17 To the Church of Pergamum

I know where **you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name.** You **did not renounce your faith in me**, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who **hold to the teaching of Balaam**, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed ~~sexual~~ immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, **I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.**

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

- ✍ Explain that to live where Satan has his throne means to live in a place where you are surrounded by sinful people. Yet the church continues to worship God. This is Jesus' way of *praising* the church.
- ✍ Explain that to “hold to the teaching of Balaam” means, not only are they not worshipping God alone, but they are also doing the sinful things that Balaam teaches like eating food that has been sacrificed for idols.
- ✍ Explain God's warning. God warns that He will punish them if they do not listen. However, this warning is followed by a promise to those who are victorious and overcome these temptations. There is blessing when we serve God by being holy and pure – like treasures in heaven.
- ✍ Define “holy.” God is holy, meaning He is pure and set apart...He wants us to be holy too. Otherwise we cannot have a relationship with Him. Because He is holy, He cannot be in or around sin. The only way that we can be holy is if we let Him live through us. We do this by looking to God and scripture in all things.

Sword Drill *Have a race to find the scriptures. Read and Discuss.*

- ✍ 1 Peter 1:15-16
- ✍ Leviticus 11:45

Activity

- ✍ Molded Like Jesus: (need a piece of foil for each child that is big enough to cover their face)
- Instruct children to put the foil over their face and carefully press it into their face to try and make a mold.
 - Carefully remove the foil and examine it together.
 - Talk about how they could change it to make it look more like them.
 - Discuss how we are to look like Jesus. Talk about His holiness and what we could change about ourselves to make ourselves look more like Him. For example:
 - Choose to only say nice words.
 - Listen only to music that pleases Him.
 - Choose to watch only things that are glorifying to God.

***Remember. We cannot and will not ever be completely holy. Not until we get to heaven. Until then, thanks to Jesus' death on the cross and the gift of the Holy Spirit in us, we can try to be holy and when we mess, up we have forgiveness.

Gospel Moment

Do you want to be like Jesus? Holy and pure so that you can have a relationship with God who is holy and pure? Because Jesus died on the cross for us, to forgive our sins, we can have a right relationship with Him. When we ask Jesus for His forgiveness and to be our savior, He sends us His Helper – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us and helps us to know right from wrong and even gives us the strength to make the right decisions. If you don't already know that Jesus is your Savior and the Holy Spirit is your Helper, you can... right now. If you're ready to commit to living your life for Jesus, commit to striving for holiness and trying to do only good things, and commit to knowing that you will go to heaven to be with God when you die, then let's pray...

Pray together like this:

- ✍ Admit that you are a sinner and NEED Jesus to forgive you.
- ✍ Admit that you need help to live your life for Him.
- ✍ Ask Him to forgive your sins and help you to be like Him.
- ✍ Thank Him for His love and kindness to you.