

## **Seven Letters to Seven Churches**

1. The 7 Churches addressed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 faced a violently anti-Christian culture.
2. The book of Revelation answers their question – King Jesus still walks with his church. Jesus, the crucified, risen and reigning King of kings, stands with his people. He knows them. He knows their unique situations and temptations. He knows how to help them survive and thrive in the face of persecution.

### **5 Parts to the Letters**

Praise (what's going right?)

Problem (What's not going right?)

Prescription (What you can do to make it right)

Promise (What will happen if you turn or don't turn)

Provision (What overcoming ones will receive)

### **Seven Letters 01**

Revelation 2:1-29 NLT

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive:

“I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:

“I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You

refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city.

“But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.

“But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality.

“Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.

“But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come. To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end,

To them I will give authority over all the nations. They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.

They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

## **Seven Letters 02**

Revelation 3:1-22 NLT

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars:

“I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.

“Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk

with me in white, for they are worthy. All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia.

This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David.

What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open:

“I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. Look, I will force those who belong to Satan’s synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love.

“Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation:

“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

### **What would Jesus say to our congregation?**

3. America’s culture growing more anti-Christian and persecution rampant across the globe.
4. Jesus has something to say to us as he did to the 7 churches of Revelation. Jesus is with us like he walked with them. He is not caught off guard by the changes in our society. He is not surprised by the shifts in morals and ideas that leave us spinning with worry and anxiety. Jesus has a message for us.

### **This is what Jesus would say**

This is the message to the Bay City Wesleyan Church family, from Jesus, the crucified, risen and reigning King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Head of the Church:

I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work. I know you are teaching children and students to pray. Whenever my people invest in the lives of young people I'm thrilled.

I know you are seeking my direction for the future. I know you long to discover how to bring new people into my kingdom. That's why I brought this congregation into existence. Keep seeking. You will find the answer.

I know you are open to all kinds of people. There is a diversity of generations involved in the work here already. There are people from many economic and educational groups in this congregation. You always welcome individuals from different ethnicities. You reflect my love for all kinds of people.

But I have this complaint against you.

Maintaining programs has undermined the mission of finding the lost, hurting people of your community. Some of you think you don't need to change. Others sit back and watch. Both groups are full of apathy and complacency. How can you be comfortable while thousands of people I died to bring back to the Father are living without me?

The fear of the unknown causes some of you to resist the essential, far-reaching changes needed to accomplish the mission I gave you. You have not been making obedient followers of my teachings.

Your fear makes some of you reluctant to pray for powerful messages accompanied by the Holy Spirit & deep conviction. Whether you tell the story of how I've changed your life, whether you lead a study for the kids or teens, whether the pastor preaches in worship, all of you need the Holy Spirit's power. Only he can transform a person's life.

Some of you exhibit a tendency to distrust each other. You are quick to think the worst about someone else's thoughts and motives. You are listening to the Accuser about each other.

Turn around! Expect great things from me. Hope conquers the maintenance mindset setting you free to expect to do new, awesome deeds for me. Remember my promises. I will burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in my presence! As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, my coming will make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for my fame!

When I came down long ago, I did awesome deeds beyond your highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked! For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like me, who works for those who hope him! (Based on Isaiah 64:1-4 NLT)

You have heard the report of what I did in the past; you are awed, by what I accomplished. In your time I will repeat those deeds; in your time I will reveal them again. But when I cause turmoil, I will remember to show you mercy! (Based on Habakkuk 3:2 NET)

By the action of my power that is at work within you, I am able to carry out my purpose and do superabundantly, far over and above all that you dare to ask or think. I can do infinitely more than your highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams.... (Ephesians 3:20-21 AMP)

Turn around! Trust Me! Faith conquers fear. Follow the example of the heroes of faith found in Hebrews 11. Every one of them obeyed my plans for them. Don't fall into the trap of those who refused to obey me when I brought them to the edge of the Promised Land. They saw giants and obstacles. They forgot my power and presence (Numbers 14). They never experienced the blessings I wanted to give.

Turn around! Love me and love each other. Love conquers thinking poorly of each other. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't keep score of the sins of others. Love puts up with anything, trusts God with everything, and always looks for the best in everyone.... (Based

on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 MSG)

Many of you have begun to turn around but if you don't finish turning around as a congregation the church will not be here. A group of religious people may meet in the building. They may do good deeds but they won't be a church. They will be functioning without the Spirit. They will go through the motions of worship but not one life will be changed. My glory will be departed.

To everyone who is victorious, to everyone who is overcoming I will make sure you experience the joy of seeing lives transformed by God's grace and the Holy Spirit's power. You will watch as I heal broken hearts and families. You will be amazed as I set addicts and bitter persons free to live for me. You will celebrate with me as I give people victory over their hurts, habits and hang ups.

Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to this church.

### **Sermon in a Sentence:**

Jesus knows the problems and possibilities of our church.

### **We Are NOT OK**

We act as though I'm OK and you're OK and if we're OK then everything is OK. And yet it's not OK.

A quick read of the news headlines proves that everything is not OK. I am not OK. You are not OK. But that's OK because Jesus is the one who can make us far better than OK. All we need to do is trust him and obey him.

### **Turn Around!**

First, admit that everything is not OK; that you aren't OK but you believe Jesus can make you more than OK.

Second, ask the Holy Spirit to make you a person of holy discontent - filled with faith, hope and love to the point that you long keep growing and changing.

Third, pray that your life will be seized by a pure and holy passion to know Jesus in a way that can help others know him too. Make time to read / listen to the Bible, to pray, to worship.