

Revelation Devotional



**Friendship
Vallejo**

The Church For The City

You can be fearless

Read Revelation 1

Remember when you thought your parents were the strongest, most powerful people in the world? As kids, we felt invincible in their care. If anything went wrong, they would pick us up and pull us from harm's way. We felt safe and protected.

Revelation 1:13-18 describes the vision John received from Jesus. This was not the meek and mild Sunday School Jesus most of us imagine. This Jesus was remarkable and awesome. His eyes were like blazing fire. His voice was like the sound of rushing waters, and His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. Seeing Jesus in all His glory was so powerful John fell at His feet in awe.

Seeing Jesus as He is changes our perspective. When we understand how powerful Jesus is and that He is on our side, we live with the same fearlessness and confidence we had as kids. We don't have to fear death or what happens when we die, because Jesus overcame death and gave us the gift of eternal life.

When we admit Jesus is Lord and believe that He really did rise from the grave, we get to live with Jesus's power on our side!

Reflect:

- How is John's description of Jesus similar or different from the way you've pictured Jesus in your mind? What's one thing you will do differently today knowing the Jesus of Revelation is on your side?
- Have you ever asked Jesus into your heart? Maybe now is the time for you to make Jesus your Lord.

.

Stop going through the motions

Read Revelation 2:1-7

Serving in the church is a good thing. But what happens when excitement becomes exhaustion, when there is no satisfaction and much less joy? Are we supposed to keep serving no matter what?

In Revelation 2, Jesus told the church at Ephesus that He'd seen their serving and He was not impressed. They had forgotten why they served.

"You have forgotten your first love," Jesus said. Their deeds were empty because the desire behind them was empty.

It is easy to be a slave to Christian service instead of being in love with the one we serve. When we forget the price paid for our salvation and let self-centeredness, even apathy, steal our joy, our work in the church becomes empty and displeasing to Jesus. What we do will never be as important as who we serve. If we're too busy doing things for Jesus that we're not spending time with Him then we're no different from the church at Ephesus.

Our relationships with Jesus grow as we read the Bible and talk to Him in prayer. Through time together, we learn who Jesus is and what He wants for us. And as we do, we'll find ourselves falling more in love with Him each day and better able to serve with enthusiasm, love, and joy.

Reflect:

- Are you as in love with Jesus now as you were when you were first saved? What's changed?
- We have all been given unique talents, skills, and abilities. What are yours? How are you using your gifts to serve the church?
- If you are serving in the church, does serving feel like a joy or an obligation? What can you do this week to remember your first love?

How to overcome your worst fears

Read Revelation 2:8-11

Suffering can look different for each of us. Sickness, financial strain, and infertility are all unique types of suffering.

Whatever suffering comes our way, we have two options: We can run or face it head-on.

The word that Jesus speaks to the church in Smyrna is a hard one, but it raises an important question: How do we overcome our worst fears?

Sometimes God doesn't deliver us from the trial. Instead, He saves us through it. Jesus promised his followers before the crucifixion, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In fact, the Bible tells us that Jesus himself learned obedience by what He suffered (Hebrews 5:7-8).

Just because we're in pain or going through a difficult season doesn't mean we are being punished for past or present sins or that God is against us. God uses difficult seasons to teach us important lessons and to show us new sides of His character. After all, when we are weak, we are the most aware and dependent on His strength (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

In our suffering, God gives us things we've never had before because we've never needed them before. Let's not miss it. Seek God, who has overcome all of our troubles, and trust Him more.

Reflect:

- Are you in a difficult season of life right now? What is something that God could be teaching you through this season?
- Think back to a difficult season you've overcome. What helped you overcome that season? What lessons did God teach you through it?
- How does God want to use you to help someone you know through a difficult season right now?

How to overcome temptation

Read Revelation 2:12-17

Have you ever felt like fighting sin is pointless? Every day, we're faced with opportunities to return to what's comfortable and familiar, to the way we lived before we knew Jesus.

Some days, it might feel like giving in to temptation is worth it. If you've ever felt this way, you're not alone.

Jesus describes living in Pergamum as living in the shadow of Satan's throne (Revelation 2:13). In Pergamum, cult activity was the norm and people worshipped the Roman emperor as a god. To be a Christian in that society wasn't just unpopular, it was downright dangerous. People were killed for their faith in Jesus.

We don't live in Pergamum, but we still face the temptation to fit in and go along with the status quo. Sometimes, we'll allow words to be spoken without correction or rebuke, not because they're right but because it's easier to let them go. This is often how we start losing sight of Jesus.

"Repent!" Jesus says. The Message paraphrases Revelation 2:16 as, "Enough! Don't give in to them; I'll be with you soon!"

Resisting temptation can be costly. It could cost you business, a relationship, or even your reputation, but it will always be worth it in the long run.

Resisting temptation sets us apart from the world we live in, just as it will set us apart on the day we meet Jesus face-to-face. It's not natural to resist temptation while the rest of the world indulges in it. But we have been given Jesus' supernatural Spirit as our guide. When we are tempted to sin, remember that the Holy Spirit, Jesus' Spirit in us, gives us the power to say no to what the world offers and look toward the greater reward Jesus offers. The knowledge that Jesus has something greater in store for us in resistance can give us the strength to walk away. Jesus conquered death and with Him, we will conquer temptation.

Reflect:

- What temptations do you face daily? What is something you can do today to resist temptation?
- Do you ever think giving in to temptation will be better than what Jesus has for you? Why or why not?
- Do you question Jesus's ability to help you overcome temptation in your life? Why or why not?

Look how far you've come

Read Revelation 2:18-29

Jesus celebrates the believers in Thyatira for growing in good deeds. Not for having the best worship services or seeing most salvations, although many people came to faith there.

Instead, Jesus celebrates their service and perseverance, the fact that there's been movement in their spiritual lives over time.

Salvation is a big deal. Heaven celebrates when one person repents of sin and starts a relationship with Jesus (Luke 15:7). But salvation isn't the end goal for believers in the church. It's just the beginning.

Like the church in Thyatira, we are to grow in love, faith, and acts of service. This isn't something that happens overnight. Spiritual growth happens over time as we pursue a closer relationship with Jesus each and every day.

As we allow Jesus to show us new ways to think and live, our actions and attitudes begin to change. We begin to want the things Jesus wants, and we start to do the things Jesus would do. Like a tree that grows bigger and bears more fruit each year, over time, our lives show the fruit of someone walking in step with Jesus' Spirit.

Rather than giving into "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy," we start to bear the spiritual fruit of "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:19-26).

No one is capable of changing that much on their own. But as we persevere in our relationships with Jesus, He changes us from the inside out.

Reflect:

- With the fruits of the Spirit in mind, what is one way you've seen yourself grow since meeting Jesus?
- The believers in Thyatira were doing great things in many areas, but they were ignoring sin in one area of the church. Is there any area of your life where you aren't allowing the Holy Spirit to initiate change?
- If you're not producing any of the fruits mentioned in Galatians or if closeness with God doesn't make sense, your next step could be starting a relationship with Jesus.

Do you work out? Read Revelation 3:1-6

Like standing in a garage doesn't make a person a car, just showing up to the gym doesn't make a person stronger. To see change, we must consistently use the equipment provided for us. The same is true for our spiritual lives.

Revelation 3:2 says, "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die..." Much like our physical bodies would deteriorate if we didn't take care of them, our faith will wither if we don't take steps to strengthen it.

The gym for our faith is anywhere we can meet with the Lord. The more time we spend with Jesus, the better we can hear His voice and understand His purpose for our lives. This happens in the church and in small groups as we learn more about Jesus and worship with prayer, song, and thanksgiving. This happens when we serve others as Jesus served us and connect with Him one-on-one through reading the Bible and prayer.

We already have everything we need to grow stronger in our faith. The question is whether we're using all the tools God has given us.

The same way we can have a gym membership and never experience its benefits, if we aren't working out our spiritual muscles, we'll miss out on the spiritual benefits that come from working out our faith (Philippians 2:12).

Reflect:

- What's one way spending time with God has grown your faith?
- How has your time with God been lately?
- The same way that your physical workouts can benefit from a change in routine, our time with God doesn't have to always look the same. Is there anything you want to start doing or stop doing to freshen up your relationship and grow your faith?

Are you making the most of what you've been given?

Read Revelation 3:7-13

The thing that set the church in Philadelphia apart wasn't what they had, but what they did with what they had.

What the church in Philadelphia lacked in strength, they made up for in obedience. They kept Jesus' word and did not deny Him, enduring patiently as they gave their time, talent, and treasure to follow Jesus and build His kingdom.

In Isaiah 49:23, God promises that "those who hope in me will not be disappointed." That was true for the church in Philadelphia, and it's true for each of us.

God has given all of us different gifts, skills, and abilities to help build His church. Whether you've been following Jesus for five months or 50 years, every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. And like the church in Philadelphia, we are to hold on to our gifts and use them to build God's kingdom (Revelation 3:11).

Many people make the mistake of thinking that they need a little Christian "seasoning" before they can be useful to the church and others. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We are all at different places in our journey with Jesus. God just wants each of us to take the opportunities before us each day to use our various gifts and influence for Him — however big or small those resources may be.

Using the gifts and abilities God gave us to build our own reputation or kingdom might be profitable for a season. But as the churches who went before us know, when we use those gifts and abilities for God, we build something that lasts into eternity.

Reflect:

- What are you passionate about? What do you do well? If you aren't sure, ask people around you. These answers could help identify your spiritual gifts.
- How can you use your gift(s) to build God's kingdom?

How committed are you to following Jesus? Read Revelation 3:14-22

Have you ever been to the pool at the beginning of summer when the water is just a little too cold to jump in? You stick your toes and legs in slowly, but there is no way you are ready to jump.

This is how the church at Laodicea felt about Jesus. Revelation 3:15 says they were neither “cold nor hot” but “lukewarm” in their relationship with Jesus. They weren’t ready to fully commit.

The Bible warns about in-name-only Christians. Becoming a Christian is not a box we check; it’s the start of a relationship that changes everything.

When you go swimming, others can tell. You’re dripping from head to toe, and your hair and skin carry the chemical scent of chlorine or the saltiness of the ocean. Likewise, when we’ve got a relationship with Jesus, it shows.

Describing His followers, Jesus said, “By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:16). Our lives — our actions, behaviors, and thoughts — change as we spend time with Him.

Jesus doesn’t require us to be perfect. He knows we could never be! If perfection were possible, we wouldn’t have needed Him to save us.

Jesus knows we will fail. He knows we’ll struggle more in some seasons of life than others (Hebrews 4:15).

However, Jesus didn’t die to give us a label. He died so we could have a relationship. He loves you! He is not lukewarm in His pursuit of you. In these words to the church at Laodicea, Jesus says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.”

Are you ready to jump in?

Reflect:

- Is there any area of your life you’ve yet to fully surrender to Jesus?
- What are some ways your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors have changed since you started following Jesus?
- Is there any area of your spiritual life that might be lukewarm?

Worship doesn't just happen on Sunday

Read Revelation 4

Revelation 4 offers descriptions of some rather interesting creatures. Scholars have argued for centuries about what these creatures represent, but rather than focusing on their differences, the focus ought to be on what they have in common.

Each creature is praising God. No matter how different they are, their purpose is the same: to glorify God. This is our purpose as well. We exist to worship God — not just one hour a week or one day a week, but with every thought and breath.

We often think of worship as something that happens once a week on Sunday morning. We listen and sing, and given the right combination of emotions, we might even put our hands up.

Going to church and singing are part of worship, but too often we lose sight of the fact that every facet of our life is to be committed to worshipping God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” Our work, hobbies, spouses, and children are gifts from God and opportunities to worship God.

Like the six-winged creatures in Revelation 4:8, day and night our lives are to declare, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

How we spend our time and talents and treasure speaks to what we worship. Who or what will you worship today?

Reflect:

- Look back at your decisions yesterday. What do they say about what you worship?
- Is your life committed to many good things, or to the only good thing?

Jesus alone is worthy of worship

Read Revelation 5

If you've ever toured a historic home, you know you are not allowed to open some doors or walk on certain staircases. Since you don't have the authority to open them, what lies inside remains a mystery.

In Revelation, John speaks of a scroll "no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open" (Revelation 5:3). John cries because the contents are hidden to him and all. One of the elders comforts John by saying that Jesus can open the scroll. Creatures and elders around Jesus sing, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..." (Revelation 5:9).

No one is worthy to open the scroll but Jesus who sacrificed Himself for all. Jesus alone is worthy to be worshipped and in control. No one is able to offer us the gift of life but Him.

We don't have the power to know all the hidden things of life but He does. There will be "whys" we can't answer. There are next steps we may not see. There is a future we can't imagine. We don't have to fear or worry about the unknown, because Jesus holds all of this in His hand.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12)

Reflect:

- What are you trying to control? What step can you take this week to trust Jesus with this area of your life?
- Have you ever committed to following Jesus?

Is judgment day for real? Read Revelation 6

The end of the world is an idea so thoroughly explored, it could have its own category on Netflix.

But Judgment Day is more than a fanciful idea or story premise. According to Revelation 6, Judgment Day is 100% real.

In Revelation 6:1-12, God begins the final judgment of humanity. Each judgment builds in intensity: thunder, conquest, war, famine, widespread death, and massive destruction on the earth. No wonder Hollywood execs see Revelation as a perfect script for edge-of-your-seat movies!

Here's good news: When we give our lives to Jesus, we are rescued from God's wrath and receive Jesus' righteousness. Jesus' death covered the penalty for our sin, now and forever. We no longer have to fear the end of this world because we know we're spending eternity with Him.

God in His great mercy withholds His wrath to give us time and opportunity to repent and follow Jesus. God's patience with us should not be misinterpreted as permission to continue destructive behaviors. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

The destruction described in Revelation 6 could begin today, or 100 years from now. Either way, we all have an opportunity today to know for sure that when destruction comes we don't have to fear, "since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us" (Romans 5:1, NLT).

Reflect:

- Does the thought of God's judgment disturb you? Why or why not?
- If you've asked Jesus into your heart and committed to following Him, you don't have anything to fear on Judgment Day. Has there ever been a day when you committed to following Jesus? Take some time to remember where you were and how far you've come.

This is the most important person trying to get your attention today

Read Revelation 8

It is 5:30 in the afternoon, and your phone is beeping for the third time in 5 minutes. You have 10 unread emails, and you know from the subject line that one is from your boss about a project due tomorrow.

When does it ever stop? There is always someone or something demanding our attention.

In times like these, urgent often trumps important. The same is true in our spiritual lives. The most important person wanting our attention is our heavenly Father. Amid the busyness and chaos, God does not necessarily demand our attention, but He desires it more than anyone else ever will. As we draw near to God, we remember who we are and what really matters (Psalm 16:11).

In Revelation 8, John's vision shows God working to get the attention of people on earth in numerous ways — silence in heaven, trumpets, fire, thunder, and lightning. Even now, God makes His presence known through other believers, the Bible, and the earth He created.

Psalm 19 reminds us, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." The decrees of the Lord "are more precious than gold" and "sweeter than honey." They guide us and make us wise.

One day, all the hustle and bustle we call life will end, and God will have our complete attention. He doesn't want to be a stranger when that day comes. So He continues to make Himself known, urging us to enjoy life with Him now and into eternity.

Reflect:

- What is one way God has been trying to get your attention?
- What is one thing fighting for your attention today?
- Is there anything you need to say no to so you can prioritize time with your heavenly Father?

This is the only effective way to deal with sin

Read Revelation 9

Sin is more than a bad decision made at the moment.

Most of the time, sin stems from a pattern of behavior we aren't addressing. It's rare that we don't know something is sinful or recognize we were entertaining sin. Most of the time, we know better. We just refuse to be honest with ourselves or those who will hold us accountable.

How many times have we told only half of a story or sugarcoated our actions to avoid being told we were in the wrong and at fault for what happened? The more we excuse our behavior or overlook where we are, the more second nature sin becomes.

This is what happened to the people in Revelation 9.

Revelation 9:20-21 says, "The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts." Their sin didn't happen overnight. It was a pattern of behavior developed over time. They avoided accountability, and it led to destruction.

We can move past our sin if we're willing to confess our sin to other believers and change our behavior. James 5:16 says; "admit to one another that you have sinned. Pray for one another so that you might be healed."

God sent someone to heal all of us from sin. His name is Jesus, and His death on the cross paid for our sins past, present, and future. If you've asked Jesus into your heart, you don't have to live in sin anymore. If we admit that we've sinned, Jesus promises to forgive our sins and give us a new beginning (1 John 1:9).

Reflect:

- How have you seen sin leave long-term effects on your relationships? your finances? your walk with Jesus?
- Is there anything in your life you know does not honor Jesus and needs to change? What is it?
- Is there anyone in your life that you can confess to? If not, maybe your next step is to join a small group.

How much do you need to know? Read Revelation 10

Have you ever watched a movie and at the end of a scene you think to yourself, “What just happened?” You either rewind and replay to try to make sense of the events, or you turn to someone and ask them to explain.

That’s probably how John felt in Revelation 10. An angel appears, speaking loudly and holding an important scroll. When he goes to take notes, he’s told to stop. When he’s handed the scroll, he’s told to eat it.

The content of the scroll is never revealed, but what we learn from this exchange is important. It wasn’t time for Jesus’s return, but He would be coming soon. There will be no more delay, and the mystery of God will be accomplished (Revelation 10:6-7). Throughout history, people have wondered about the end of the world, and God reveals some of that in Revelation. We don’t get the details about when Jesus will come back or what the afterlife will entail. But we do know that God wants us to be ready (Revelation 10:11).

The best preparation for Jesus’ return is to truly examine where we’ve put our faith. If our faith and trust are in Jesus, we have nothing to fear because the end of this world means the start of forever with Him!

But if we’re looking to anyone or anything else for our peace, security, or hope, we’re investing our lives in the wrong places. That’s the reason this word was sweet in John’s mouth and sour in his stomach. For the believer, God’s word brings encouragement. But for the non-believer, God’s word is a promise of judgment that’s coming.

Reflect:

- If Jesus came back today, do you know that you would go to heaven? Why or why not?
- Do you tend to crave details or go with the flow? How do you balance trusting God with the need to know everything?
- Does it give you peace to know that God understands and sees more than we do? Why or why not?

What you need to know when hope seems lost

Read Revelation 11

When life gets crazy, it's easy to question God. The weight of our pain and disappointment make the enemy's lies more enticing. Instead of leaning toward God, we turn away from Him. We blame God and are tempted to walk away from our faith. How can we trust that He is in control when we are drowning in failure and defeat?

In Revelation 11, God sends two witnesses to make an enormous impact on the world. They are given the power to do mighty works and are committed to telling people about Jesus. Despite their dedication and devotion, they are beaten and left for dead. What went wrong? Absolutely nothing! The Bible says the bodies of the two witnesses lie dead in the street, but when all hope seemed lost, "they stood upon their feet" (Revelation 11:8-13).

God is in control. He already knows the outcome, and He tells John what is going to happen each step of the way. So in those moments when life doesn't make sense, we can walk forward with the confidence that Jesus wins.

As believers in Christ, we may not fully understand why we go through the things we do, but we can be sure that we will overcome! 1 John 5:4 says, "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

Reflect:

- How can trusting God in your circumstance assure you the victory and peace God has promised? (Read 1 Corinthians 15:57, 2 Peter 3:9, Psalm 29:11, and Romans 15:13.)
- What is one way you can build your faith in knowing that God is in control of your life?

What you need to remember when Satan attacks

Read Revelation 12

We have a real enemy whose aim is to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). As soon as we were born, Satan began his attacks. He whispers lies and looks for opportunities to deceive us (John 8:44).

Satan knows he won't be able to attack us forever, so he's making the most of the time he's got. Revelation 12:12 says Satan "is filled with fury, because he knows his time is short."

When we put our trust in Jesus, we receive the power to overcome Satan's attacks. And one day, when Jesus returns in all His glory, He will kick Satan out for good (Revelation 12:10). In the meantime, we worship our way to victory and share the Gospel so others can overcome Satan's schemes.

When we're following Jesus and doing what He says, no attack from Satan can knock us off our feet. And when our trust is in Jesus, no attack from Satan can separate us from His love.

That's a promise from Romans 8:38-39 — "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Reflect:

- In what areas of your life are you most likely to be tempted by Satan?
- When you are tempted, what are some ways that you can avoid giving into sin?
- What steps are you currently taking to grow closer to Jesus?

Where do you find your joy? Read Revelation 13

We are more easily distracted by newness and power than we like to admit. When the beast appears in Revelation, people worship it because they believe there is no equal. Jesus warned His followers about this long before John's vision of the beast, saying, "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Something new and more powerful shows up, and our love is tested. This happens in Revelation 13, but it also happens every day of our lives.

Every day, we hear a voice that says who we are and what we have is not enough. If we listen to those lies long enough, we'll start to believe them.

In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus experienced the same temptation we face today. He overcame Satan's deception and lies by recalling what's true.

In the Bible, God reminds us that lasting joy, love, and contentment come from our relationship with Him. The world wants us to pursue temporary satisfaction, chasing power, and possessions that are here today and gone tomorrow (Matthew 6:19-21). But as we read God's Word, we see that there's more to life than this world. God is building a spiritual kingdom that will last forever, one "where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20).

Reflect:

- Where do you derive your happiness? Where does the Bible tell us we'll find lasting happiness?
- What things other than Jesus are you pursuing to find joy? How can we avoid being led astray?

Christianity isn't a magic wand

Read Revelation 14

Many believe that becoming a Christian is like waving a magic wand over all life's hardships. Once we accept Christ, all of our problems go away, right? Wrong. Christianity is not an immediate fix to life's problems. Christians are not promised an easy life. In fact, Jesus tells us in John 16:33 "...in this world [we] will have trouble." So, if we are promised trouble and get no free pass to avoid hard times in life, why would we choose Christianity?

We have a choice every day to do things the easy way or to do things God's way. To obey God's commands and remain faithful to Jesus requires patient endurance, but the reward is worth the work (Revelation 14:12).

Though we aren't promised a life of ease, as Christians, we are promised a life of hope, grace, and mercy. We are promised an unconditional love from a God who will never leave or forsake us. Even in our hardest times, we can be sure that God is with us — guiding, teaching, and protecting us. He can use even the toughest situations for His glory and our good.

John 16:33 doesn't end with the fact that we will have trouble. Jesus goes on to say, "But take heart! I have overcome the world!" Christianity isn't a golden ticket to easy street, but it is the only way to access true peace, joy, and contentment. Remaining faithful to Jesus and who He has called us to allow us to live fully in the joyful life He has planned for us.

Reflect:

- Have you accepted Jesus' love for you? If not, what's keeping you from living in the joyful life He has planned for you?
- In what areas of your life are you choosing the easy way over God's way? How does this impact your relationship with Christ and with others?
- In what tough situations have you seen or are you seeing God's protection, provision, and guidance? In what ways can God take something bad in your life and use it for your good?

Just wait, things are going to get better

Read Revelation 15

We live in a fallen world. We don't need anyone to tell us evil and sin exist. Just watch the news for 5 minutes or look back at your thoughts over the course of a day.

The hope of every Christian is that one day, evil will be eradicated and we will reign with Jesus in a new kingdom where there is no more evil, no more sin. We'll join those who went before us in singing, "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 15:3).

So why all the waiting? Peter, one of Jesus' close friends and followers, writes, "... do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Sin and all of its consequences show us how much we need Jesus. Without the option to do wrong, the choice for Jesus would not mean anything. It would be like an election where one person is on the ballot. God gives us the option of either serving ourselves or serving Him. He takes His time so everyone might have an opportunity to choose Him. John 1:12-13 says that everyone who chooses God by believing in Jesus, "he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Evil is real, and we are free to choose it if we want. But only God's ways are "just and true" (Revelation 15:3). What God promises will always come to be, and it will always be good for those who love Him and follow His ways.

Reflect:

- Are any areas of your life not surrendered to God?
- What do you need to give to God and trust Him to take care of for you?
- When we put our trust in Jesus, all of God's promises become promises to us. If you have yet to give your life to Jesus, what's stopping you?

Jesus is a good judge and righteous king

Read Revelation 7:15-17, Matthew 25:31-33, Romans 8:18

We have come to accept suffering, hunger, and pain as part of life. While they may not be the norm in your life, these problems are universal. It seems that if we are not in a season of suffering, we know someone who is.

Suffering shows up in the hopelessness of infertility, the chains of addiction, the pain of illness, or the heartache of divorce. Each of these agonies can consume our present and obscure our future.

But in Christ, we have a promise for more. When we're suffering, we can take comfort in the fact that what we experience on earth is temporary. Our forever home is with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who will lead us there.

Although we desire an immediate fix, Romans 8:18 promises that the difficulty of our current situation is nothing compared to the goodness that is to come.

In eternity, there will be no hunger, thirst, or pain. Jesus will wipe away all of our tears, and we will not suffer anymore (Revelation 7:17). When we view our lives from God's perspective and through the lens of eternity, we can trust the best really is yet to come. Regardless of where we find ourselves presently, Jesus is sitting on His throne. He is a fair judge and righteous king who reigns supreme always. He is our healer who brings restoration physically and spiritually. And, God, as our heavenly Father, loves us giving us continual mercy and grace.

Reflect:

- When the Lord separates those before Him as a shepherd separates his herd, on which side will you be?
- Who do you know who needs the reassurance of eternity to battle their present struggle?
- How does your view of your problems change when you see your life with a heavenly perspective?

The making of a martyr Read Revelation 17

Revelation 17 describes a woman "drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

Jesus told us His followers would be persecuted, and Revelation 17 gives us an idea of just how bad it gets. "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God," Jesus said (John 16:2).

Nothing solidifies our priorities more than thinking about what we would die for. Every year, thousands of Christians around the world are murdered because they confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

It's hard to predict how we might respond if asked to lay it all on the line. Peter told Jesus he would follow Him anywhere — even die for Him! But when pushed to pick a side, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

Roughly 33 years later, Peter really did lay down his life for Jesus in Rome. What made the difference? What made the same man who wouldn't admit to knowing Jesus boldly proclaim the Gospel and die for his Master?

Jesus' resurrection transformed Peter, and it's still transforming lives today. Peter, crushed by guilt, mourned Jesus' death and experienced His forgiveness firsthand (John 21). That the grave could not hold Jesus made everything else He said worth staking his life on. That one fact and our willingness to let it change our perspective is the thing that will transform us from Jesus' acquaintances to actual disciples who are willing to die as martyrs.

Reflect:

- How does the thought of laying down your own life for Jesus change your perspective on your day-to-day existence?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:31. How do we prepare ourselves for something like Peter faced?

What's the purpose of wrath? Read Revelation 16

A child is pushing his mom's patience toward her limit. She says, "If you don't stop, I'm going to"

Moments later, she says, "If you don't stop right this minute, I'm going to ..."
Then, finally, she says, "You know I mean it, you better stop right now or"

Delivering consequences are one of the hardest parts of a parent's job. No parent enjoys it, but every parent knows it's necessary.

To not follow-through would be unjust and unkind. If parents never follow through with a consequence, the child's heart never changes. Rather than learning patience and self-control, the child's sin nature is rewarded.

Revelation 16 could be read as a description of a future global battle between good and evil. But, it also must be read as a personal explanation of the consequences of sin. God is not making empty promises. He is serious about dealing with sin because He knows how destructive it is.

God is so serious about our sin, He sent His Son to atone for it and gives us His Spirit to help us live in freedom from it. But to receive these gifts is a choice we all have to make.

The wrath poured out in Revelation 16 is the consequence of refusing these gifts. With each bowl, God gives man an opportunity to repent and see Him as He really is. God cannot be loving without being just, and there will come a time when all of mankind will have to reckon with his sinfulness.

God's wrath doesn't have to be our consequence. Every day that there's breath in our lungs, we have the opportunity to turn from sin and turn toward Him.

Reflect:

- What has God given you to help you turn away from sin?
- What is the Holy Spirit telling you to confess and repent of today?

Get rich quick or be rich forever Read Revelation 18

Commercials promise more happiness when we buy their product: *If you're sad, surely, it because you don't have one of these yet.*

No matter how much we already have, the message is clear — more is better.

Revelation 18 provides a picture of what happens when people set their focus on prosperity as an end in itself. Babylon pursued riches and worldly conveniences, and in a moment they were gone. When Babylon lost its wealth, merchants cried because they lost their income and their identity (Revelation 18:11-15). This chapter in Revelation stands as a warning to focus on the things that last.

The Bible says to set our eyes on things that are of God, not things of this earth (Colossians 3:2, Luke 12:15). Money will be worthless in eternity. But our relationship with God and our relationships with others will make a difference in this world and in the one to come.

When our eyes are set on the things of earth, we pursue what culture values: wealth, power, perfection. We'll put profit over people, and cut corners believing that the ends justify the means. But one economic downturn, one bad financial decision can leave us empty and wondering, *What was it all for?*

Money itself is not bad, but it's a terrible god. We are not what we have, and we are not what we do. That's why Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

When our eyes are set on God, whether we have a little or a lot, we won't be shaken when the world as it is comes to an end. We won't be crushed because we know that our God is with us. He is our treasure, not the things that we own or the positions that we hold (2 Corinthians 4:7-9).

Reflect:

- What treasures does your heart value?
- What does God treasure?

Don't worship the messenger

Read Revelation 19:1-10

Before the final strike of the auctioneer's gavel, selling the old worn violin for a paltry \$3, the gray-bearded man stepped forward. He cleared the dust, tuned the strings, and began to play "as sweet as the angel sings." Mesmerized by the melody, the crowd cheered, and the old violin sold for thousands.

In the poem "The Old Violin" by Myra Brooks Welch, some in the crowd cried after hearing the master play, and she notes the change in the value was because of the "touch of the master's hand." It was never about the violin; it was always about the master.

In Revelation 19, John hears a roar from heaven shouting and praising God — "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God ... For our Lord God Almighty reigns..." John is awestruck by the supernatural events occurring as the emotion builds like an ocean wave. Then, in the midst of the thunderous shouts and roars, the angel speaks and John falls at his feet to worship him. But the angel corrects him: "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you ... Worship God!"

Whether it's a master musician playing the violin or an experienced preacher delivering a Sunday sermon, it's easy to become captivated by the talent of the messenger. Just as the angel reminded John not to be consumed by the supernatural events in Revelation, when we focus on the message God has for us rather than the messenger, we receive the full blessing He wants for us. Our master, Jesus, is the only one worthy of our worship.

Reflect:

- Think about people who can captivate your attention and admiration. Are you able to maintain a proper focus on the message being delivered?
- What talents do you possess? Do you remind others that it's God who deserves the praise for your skills and abilities?

Is your understanding of Jesus growing up with you? Read Revelation 19:11-21

Jesus isn't like Santa Claus. He doesn't double-check a heavenly list so He can punish the "naughty people."

We all grow up with different ideas about who God is. Some come from philosophy and others from history. Some we were taught and others we just made up. Our parents promised, "Jesus loves us." Our friends said God steals our fun. Our pastor shouted, "Don't break God's rules!" Our AA group said our "higher power" is whatever we want it to be.

The apostle Paul, one of the godliest men in history, grew up with his own sincere views of God based on Old Testament law and tradition. Then, Paul met Jesus face to face. The first words from Paul's mouth proved he really knew nothing of God at all. "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:1-5).

We all start out a little unsure about who Jesus is. As we mature, so does our understanding of who Jesus is and what He wants for us.

We learn to see Jesus as the Creator. He made everything, then He became human like us (Luke 2:1-7). We read about Jesus the rabbi who was murdered only to rise from the grave as Messiah and Savior.

Jesus is faithful and true to His Word. He came to earth first as a suffering servant, but He promises to come again as king and judge. Then He will decide what is good on earth and wage war against all evil (Revelation 19:11). As king and lord over all, Jesus has complete control over everything.

Reflect:

- If someone asked today, who would you say Jesus is?
- Are you still interpreting the Bible based on your experiences in life and culture? Let God define your experiences based on His word. What is the truth about what you believe?
- Jesus is coming again and will reward all goodness and destroy all sin from across human history (Revelation 22:12). Does this cause you fear or excitement? Why?

Satan will meet his doom

Read Revelation 20

We have all had that one pesky fly that seems determined to drive us insane. We find ourselves waving our arms like a lunatic, cursing the insect, and wondering how such a tiny creature could cause so much chaos.

Satan works like that maddening fly. He will wear us down and petty us to death. He wants to “steal, kill and destroy” every good thing God offers us: joy, peace, love, and even sanity (John 10:10, Galatians 5:22-23).

We tend to think of Satan as God’s adversary, but remember — especially during challenging times — they are not equals. God is all-powerful. He is all-knowing. He is everywhere. Satan’s power is limited. God created Satan, and God will one day swat him out of existence like one does an annoying fly (Revelation 20:10).

God has the victory! When we are with Him, we are victorious, too. So when we call on Jesus when we’re faced with trials and temptations, we give Him the power to take control — to protect us and drive Satan away (Ephesians 6:10-20). Our own fears diminish when stop relying on ourselves and begin relying on the one whom Satan fears.

Reflect:

- How do you respond when faced with trials and temptations?
- What could you do today to experience victory in an area where you’ve previously struggled?

Not everyone experiences heaven

Read Revelation 21

In Revelation 21, John tells us of a glorious heaven where God and Jesus will live among us. But John warns us that not everyone will enter, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

In heaven, those who love God will live forever with no more death, pain, sorrow, or crying. God promises in Revelation 21:5, "I am making everything new...write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

We don't have to be naive about what's to come. Jesus references this kingdom that is to come more than 110 times in the gospels (Luke 13:18-30). He tells us that the only way to experience this new life is through Him (John 14:6).

God isn't hiding things from us or making Himself hard to find. He gives us lots of insight into what eternity will be like so that we might join Him there forever. Why not accept Jesus today? Not only for the promise of eternal life with God and His Son, but also for His promises that He will never leave or forsake us here on earth.

Reflect:

- In heaven, God and Jesus will live among us. What might that look like? How might the people in heaven behave? How might those heavenly surroundings compare to our earthly surroundings?
- If your name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, where will you spend your eternity? What does that place look like?

Are you ready to meet with Jesus? Read Revelation 22

Life on earth is temporary. All of our lives will one day come to an end.

While we don't like to think of life ending, Revelation 22 teaches us to be constantly ready. The Lord says in Revelation 22:7, and again in Revelation 22:12, "Look, I am coming!" Since we don't know when our earthly life might end, Jesus tells us to be ready now and to stay ready at all times.

Instead of reading the last chapter of the Bible as a distant prediction of a vague future, we should read it as a specific description of a personal appointment we each have with the Lord. Revelation 22:1-5 gives us a glimpse of what heaven will be like. While this is encouraging for the future, it should also be motivating us to act now.

Revelation 22:12-15 tells us the choices we make will determine what happens after this present life ends. Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life ..." Those who have committed to following Jesus on Earth will live on eternally in heaven with Him.

The decision is ours.

Reflect:

- Do you know that you have "the right to the tree of life" as described in Revelation 22:14? If not, your next step might be salvation.
- How can you apply the teaching of Revelation 22 to your life right now, to be ready to meet Jesus at any time?