

The Book of Revelation, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum

Revelation 2:1-17

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

What is doctrinally at stake in these three letters is nothing less than the conditional, persevering nature of salvation. The risen Christ walks among His lampstands as Judge and Physician, commending, rebuking, and threatening to remove a congregation's very lampstand if it will not repent (2:5). Every letter ends with a promise reserved "to the one who conquers" (2:7,11,17). This refrain, which will sound through all seven letters and frame the whole book, directly refutes the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." A sound church can abandon its first love and be in danger of judgment; a Christian must overcome, must be faithful unto death, must not make peace with the teaching of Balaam or the Nicolaitans. The teacher must hold this firmly while staying tender, for the same letters that warn also comfort the persecuted and crown the faithful.

There is also a great deal of comfort at stake. Smyrna teaches the suffering saint that Christ is "the first and the last, who died and came to life" (2:8), that earthly poverty can mask heavenly riches, that the duration of trial is limited (the symbolic "ten days"), and that beyond faithfulness unto death lies the crown of life and freedom from the second death (2:10-11). Read symbolically and amillennially, these letters proclaim that the Lamb already reigns, that persecution has boundaries He has set, and that final victory is sure for those who endure.

Beyond the doctrine, this lesson aims at the spiritual formation of the student. The goal is not merely that members learn that love can cool or that endurance matters, but that they actually examine their own hearts, repent of lukewarm love, count the cost of faithfulness, and refuse compromise with sin and error. Press every truth toward transformation: from informed to faithful, from busy to loving, from comfortable to overcoming.

Question 1

Student Question:

How does Christ describe Himself to the Ephesians as the One who holds the seven stars and walks among the seven golden lampstands (2:1), and what does this picture of His present nearness say about His relationship to His congregations today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Christ opens His letter to Ephesus by reaching back into the vision of chapter one: He is "him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands" (2:1). The seven stars are the angels or messengers of the churches, and the lampstands are the churches themselves (1:20). The number seven, throughout Revelation, signifies completeness; these seven historical congregations stand for the whole church in every age.

The picture is one of intimate presence and sovereign authority. The risen Lord does not view His churches from a distant heaven. He walks among them, in their very midst, holding their messengers securely in His right hand. Nothing in the assembly escapes His notice. This is the same Christ who promised, “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20).

For congregations today the comfort and the warning arrive together. He is near to strengthen, but also near to inspect. The same eyes like a flame of fire (1:14) that comfort the faithful will expose the unfaithful. Because Christ walks among the lampstands now, His authority over His church is present and active, not deferred to some future earthly reign. The kingdom is here; the King is among His people.

Teach this as the foundation of the whole lesson. Everything Christ says to these churches flows from the fact that He sees them truly. The phrase “I know your works,” repeated to every congregation, rests on this opening image of the Lord who walks and watches and holds.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The seven lampstands are the churches and the seven stars their messengers (1:20); seven signifies the completeness of Christ’s church in every age, not merely seven isolated towns.
- Christ’s walking among the lampstands affirms His present reign and presence with His church now (Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20), consistent with the amillennial truth that He reigns from the Father’s right hand today.
- Christ’s nearness is both comfort and accountability: He is present to strengthen and present to judge.
- The repeated “I know your works” rests on this image; Christ’s knowledge of His congregations is exhaustive and personal.

Discussion Prompts

- How does it change the way we gather for worship to remember that the risen Christ is literally walking among us as we meet?
- Why is it significant that Christ holds the messengers of the churches in His own right hand?
- What does the symbolic completeness of “seven” tell us about how these first-century letters apply to our congregation?

Question 2

Student Question:

Christ commends the Ephesians for their hard work, patient endurance, and refusal to bear with evil men (2:2-3). Where in your own walk are you working hard and standing firm, and is it possible to do all the right things and still drift from the right heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Christ's commendation of Ephesus is lavish and specific. He praises their "works," their "toil," their "patient endurance," their refusal to "bear with those who are evil," their testing of false apostles, and their hatred of the works of the Nicolaitans (2:2-3,6). This was a doctrinally vigilant, hardworking congregation that had borne up under pressure and had not grown weary.

This is worth dwelling on because it dignifies faithful labor. The Lord notices toil that the world overlooks. He honors the patient endurance of members who keep serving when serving is hard. And He approves of churches that take truth seriously enough to test teachers and reject error (compare Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1).

Yet the lesson presses a sobering question into the student's own walk: is it possible to be right and still be drifting? Ephesus proves that it is. A person can hold sound doctrine, work hard, and resist evil, while the warmth of first love quietly fades. Use this question to help students locate the places where they are doing the right things, then prepare them for the turn in question three, where Christ names what was missing.

Guard against two errors here. Do not let students despise hard work and doctrinal vigilance as if they were the problem; Christ commends them. But do not let them rest in activity as if busyness equaled devotion. Right works and right heart belong together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Christ genuinely commends hard work, endurance, and doctrinal discernment; faithful labor matters to Him (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- Testing teachers and rejecting false apostles is praiseworthy, not unloving (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1; Galatians 1:8-9).
- Sound doctrine and diligent works are necessary but not sufficient; the heart can grow cold while the hands stay busy.
- Self-examination is a Christian duty; we must test ourselves, not only others (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Discussion Prompts

- What are some good, right, biblical activities that can be done with a cold heart?
- Why does Christ commend doctrinal vigilance before He rebukes the loss of love?
- How do we honor hard workers in the church without making activity a substitute for devotion?

Question 3

Student Question:

What does Christ mean when He says to Ephesus, "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (2:4), and why would He treat the cooling of love as a serious offense in an otherwise sound congregation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the heart of the Ephesian letter: “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (2:4). After all the commendation, Christ levels a single, searching charge. Their love had been left behind. The word suggests something forsaken, abandoned, set down and walked away from, not merely diminished by accident but neglected over time.

What love is meant? The text does not sharply divide it, and we need not either. The first love of a new convert burns warmly toward Christ and overflows toward the brethren. It is the love that does not count cost, that delights in the Lord, that serves gladly. Ephesus still had the activity but had lost the affection that once animated it. Right deeds remained; the first warmth was gone.

Why does Christ treat this as a serious offense, serious enough to threaten removal in the next verse? Because love is not a decorative extra in the Christian life; it is the heart of it. Jesus named love for God and neighbor as the greatest commandments (Matthew 22:37-40). Paul wrote that without love the most impressive works are nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). A congregation that loses its first love is a lamp running low on oil. The light may still flicker, but the flame is dying.

Teach this gently and personally. Many faithful members will recognize themselves here: still attending, still serving, still doctrinally sound, but no longer aflame. Christ’s rebuke is the rebuke of a husband to a wife whose heart has wandered, and it is spoken so that the marriage may be restored, not ended.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Love for Christ and for the brethren is the first and great commandment, the animating heart of all obedience (Matthew 22:37-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- Love can be “abandoned” by neglect over time even where doctrine and works remain intact.
- Christ takes the cooling of love seriously enough to threaten judgment, which shows it is no minor matter.
- A right relationship with Christ is more than correct activity; it is a living, warm devotion (John 14:15,21).

Discussion Prompts

- What does abandoned first love look like in a long-time member who still does everything right?
- Why does Christ compare the loss of love to a fall, and what does that comparison imply about its seriousness?
- How can a congregation guard the warmth of its love and not only the soundness of its doctrine?

Question 4

Student Question:

Christ tells Ephesus to “remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first” (2:5). What specific “first works” of love did you once do that you could deliberately take up again this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Christ does not leave Ephesus to despair; He gives a clear path back: “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first” (2:5). The cure has three movements: remember, repent, and return to the first works. This is the gospel pattern of restoration applied to a drifting Christian.

Remember calls them to honest recollection. There was a time when love burned hotter, when prayer was sweeter, when sacrifice came more easily. Repent calls for a deliberate turning, not a vague wish but a decision. And do the first works calls them to action, because love is not merely felt but enacted. The way back into warm love often runs through the doing of loving deeds.

This is where the student must get specific. Generic resolutions to “love more” rarely change a life. Press them to name the first works they have quietly stopped doing: the open home, the encouraging note, the bold invitation, the daily Scripture, the secret prayer, the visit to the sick, the gift to the poor. Christ does not say feel your way back; He says do the works you did at first.

Help students see the hope in this command. The lampstand is not yet removed. The door of repentance still stands open. The same Lord who diagnoses the disease prescribes the cure and stands ready to receive the returning heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Repentance is the prescribed remedy for a drifting Christian, not merely for the lost (Acts 8:22; Revelation 2:5).
- Biblical repentance includes remembering, turning, and resuming concrete obedience (“do the works you did at first”).
- Love is enacted as well as felt; doing loving deeds rekindles the heart (1 John 3:18).
- The call to repent is genuine and the door stands open, refuting any fatalism about a believer’s condition.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific “first works” did you do as a new Christian that you have let slip?
- Why does Christ command action (“do the works”) rather than merely command feeling?
- How does remembering where we have fallen help fuel genuine repentance rather than mere guilt?

Question 5

Student Question:

To Smyrna, Christ presents Himself as “the first and the last, who died and came to life” (2:8) and calls them rich in their poverty (2:9). How does the resurrection of Christ reframe the way a suffering, slandered, impoverished church should understand its true wealth?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

To suffering Smyrna, Christ identifies Himself as “the first and the last, who died and came to life” (2:8). This is deliberate. To a congregation facing imprisonment and possible martyrdom, the Lord presents Himself as the One who has already passed through death and out the other side. He is the eternal One, the first and the last, and He is the risen One who conquered the grave. The death that terrifies Smyrna is the death He has already defeated.

Then comes the great reversal: “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)” (2:9). By every earthly measure Smyrna was poor, materially impoverished, perhaps stripped of goods by persecution, slandered by those Christ calls a synagogue of Satan. Yet Christ declares them rich. Their wealth was laid up where rust and robbers cannot reach (Matthew 6:19-20). Compare this with Laodicea, which thought itself rich but was wretched and poor (3:17). Smyrna is the mirror image: poor in the world, rich toward God.

The resurrection reframes everything. If Christ truly died and rose, then the worst the world can do to His people is not final. Poverty is temporary; the riches are eternal. Slander is temporary; the verdict of the risen Judge is what stands. Even death is not the end but a doorway, for the One who speaks has already walked through it and lives.

Lead the student to count wealth the way Christ counts it. A persecuted, impoverished, slandered church that holds fast to the risen Lord is richer than the most comfortable congregation that has made peace with the world. Help members see that their true assets are not on any earthly balance sheet.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Christ’s title “the first and the last, who died and came to life” anchors the suffering church in His resurrection victory (2:8; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22).
- True riches are spiritual and eternal, not material; Smyrna is poor yet rich, Laodicea rich yet poor (2:9; 3:17; Matthew 6:19-20).
- The resurrection means the world’s worst weapon, death, is not the final word for the faithful.
- Slander and earthly loss do not define the believer; the verdict of the risen Christ does.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the resurrection of Jesus change the way a poor or persecuted Christian should measure his wealth?
- Why does Christ introduce Himself to Smyrna specifically as the One who died and came to life?
- What would it mean for our congregation to be “poor, yet rich” rather than “rich, yet poor“?

Question 6

Student Question:

Smyrna is told, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (2:10). What are you most afraid of suffering for the sake of Christ, and how does His command not to fear speak to that exact fear?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (2:10). Christ does not promise Smyrna escape from suffering; He promises His presence in it and commands them not to fear. He is honest about what lies ahead: some will be thrown into prison, and they will face tribulation. Yet the first word from the risen Lord is, do not fear.

This is the consistent voice of Christ to His people. "Fear not, little flock" (Luke 12:32). "Do not fear those who kill the body" (Matthew 10:28). The command not to fear is grounded not in the absence of danger but in the character and victory of the One who commands it. Because He died and rose, the fearful thing has lost its sting.

Press the student to name the specific fear. For some it is the loss of a job or reputation for taking a stand. For some it is rejection by family or friends. For some it is physical danger, and in many parts of the world today that is no abstraction. Vague courage helps no one; Christ addresses a specific suffering with a specific command. Help students bring their real fear into the light and hear Christ speak to that exact fear.

Note the pastoral order: Christ comforts before He commands endurance. He does not shame the fearful; He steadies them with His resurrection and His promise. Teach the class to do likewise with one another, to be a congregation that drives out fear with the love and victory of Christ (1 John 4:18).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Christ commands His people not to fear suffering, grounding courage in His resurrection, not in safety (Luke 12:32; Matthew 10:28).
- Faithfulness may cost the believer dearly; Christ does not promise exemption from suffering but presence within it.
- Fear is to be named honestly and answered with the specific comfort of Christ's victory (1 John 4:18).
- The Lord comforts before He commands, modeling how the church should care for the fearful.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific cost of following Christ do you most fear, and why?
- How does grounding courage in the resurrection differ from simply trying to feel brave?
- How can our congregation help one another face fear rather than face it alone?

Question 7

Student Question:

Christ urges Smyrna, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10), and says the tribulation will last "ten days." Reading Revelation symbolically, what do the "ten days" and the "crown of life" teach us about the limited length of suffering and the certain reward of endurance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10). This is the great promise of the Smyrna letter, and it frames the whole question of endurance. The call is faithfulness all the way to the end, even if the end is death itself. The reward is the crown of life, the victor's wreath given to the one who finishes the race (compare 2 Timothy 4:7-8; James 1:12).

The tribulation is said to last "ten days." Read symbolically, as Revelation intends to be read (1:1, "signified"), this is not a literal week and a half on the calendar. Ten in Revelation signifies a full but limited and complete measure. The point is comforting: the suffering is real and full, but it is bounded. God has set its limits. It will not last forever, and it is not without end. The persecutor is on a leash.

This guards the student against two errors. It guards against minimizing suffering, for the ten days are real days of tribulation. And it guards against despair, for the days are numbered by God Himself. Beyond the limited trial stands the unlimited reward. The crown of life is not earned as a wage but given by grace to the faithful, and it is sure. He who promises is the first and the last who already conquered death.

Connect this to the book's refrain in the next breath: "The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death" (2:11). Faithfulness unto death secures life beyond death; the second death, final separation from God, has no claim on the overcomer. This is the amillennial hope: not a future earthly utopia, but the certain reward of endurance held out to every faithful saint.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- "Ten days" is symbolic of a full but divinely limited period of suffering, consistent with Revelation's symbolic numbers; never a literal calendar count.
- The crown of life is the promised reward for faithfulness unto death, given by grace to the one who endures (2:10; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8).
- Persecution is bounded by God's sovereignty; the persecutor cannot exceed the limits Christ sets.
- The overcomer is not hurt by the second death (2:11), the amillennial hope of final vindication beyond the grave.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does reading the “ten days” symbolically actually increase, rather than weaken, its comfort?
- What does it mean that the crown of life is promised specifically to the one who is faithful “unto death”?
- How does the certainty of the reward strengthen us to endure a suffering whose end we cannot yet see?

Question 8

Student Question:

Pergamum dwells “where Satan’s throne is” (2:13), yet Antipas held fast and did not deny the faith even when it cost him his life. Where do you live, work, or move among people who are hostile to Christ, and what would holding fast to His name look like for you there?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

To Pergamum Christ says, “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is” (2:13). Pergamum was a center of pagan worship and emperor cult, a city saturated with idolatry and hostile to the faith. Christ does not pretend the environment is neutral. He acknowledges plainly that His people live where Satan keeps his throne, surrounded by spiritual darkness.

Yet even there, Christ commends them: “you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (2:13). Antipas paid the ultimate price, and Christ honors him with the same word He uses of Himself, faithful witness (1:5). The congregation held the name of Christ in a place designed to make them let go of it.

Bring this home to the student’s actual environment. Most believers do not face a literal emperor cult, but every Christian lives somewhere: a workplace, a campus, a neighborhood, a family, an industry where Christ is mocked or ignored and where holding fast His name carries a cost. The question is not whether we live near Satan’s throne; in a fallen world we all do in some measure. The question is whether we hold fast there.

Holding fast may look like a quiet refusal to laugh at the crude joke, an open acknowledgment of Christ when it would be easier to stay hidden, a steady integrity that will not bend to the practices everyone else accepts. Help students name their Pergamum and resolve, with Antipas before them, to hold the name of Christ wherever they dwell.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- Christ knows and acknowledges the hostile environments His people inhabit; He does not call us out of the world but to faithfulness within it (John 17:15-18).
- Antipas is honored as a “faithful witness,” the same title given to Christ (1:5; 2:13); martyrdom and steadfast confession are precious to the Lord.

- Holding fast Christ's name and not denying the faith is required even where it is costly (Matthew 10:32-33).
- Every believer lives in some "Pergamum" and is called to hold fast there, not to wait for an easier place.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is the "Pergamum," the place hostile to Christ, in which you spend much of your life?
- What does Antipas teach us about the worth Christ places on faithful witness, even unto death?
- What would holding fast Christ's name look like, concretely, in your workplace or neighborhood this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Christ rebukes Pergamum for tolerating "the teaching of Balaam" and "the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (2:14-15), and warns Ephesus and Smyrna that the promises come only "to the one who conquers" (2:7,11), telling Ephesus to repent "or I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (2:5). Taking these conditional promises and warnings together, what do they teach about whether a Christian who falls into sin or false teaching can simply presume to be eternally secure?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the lesson, and the teacher should give it the most care. Three threads from these letters converge to dismantle the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." First, to Pergamum Christ says, "I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam" and "some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (2:14-15). Balaam taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel, luring them into idolatry and immorality (Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16). Pergamum was tolerating teaching that led God's people into sin, and Christ holds the congregation responsible for tolerating it.

Second, every letter ends with a promise reserved "to the one who conquers" (2:7,11,17). The tree of life, escape from the second death, the hidden manna and the white stone are not granted automatically to everyone who once professed faith. They are promised to the one who overcomes, the one who endures, the one who remains faithful. The very grammar of the promises is conditional. If perseverance were guaranteed and salvation could never be lost, this drumbeat of "to the one who conquers" would be empty.

Third, and most pointedly, Christ tells Ephesus, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (2:5). Here is the risen Lord warning a genuine, doctrinally sound congregation that He will remove its lampstand, that is, unchurch it, cut it off, if it does not repent. You cannot threaten to remove a lampstand that was never lit. The warning is real because the danger is real.

Bring in the wider witness of Scripture, which speaks with one voice. The believer who deliberately keeps on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth faces a fearful judgment (Hebrews 10:26-31). Those who were once enlightened can fall away (Hebrews 6:4-6). One who is severed from Christ by seeking justification elsewhere has “fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Those who escaped the world’s defilement can be again entangled and overcome, the last state worse than the first (2 Peter 2:20-22). Christ Himself will blot a name from the book of life if one does not overcome (3:5). The Scriptures simply do not teach that a Christian, once saved, is incapable of being lost.

Teach this without harshness and without compromise. The point is not to rob the faithful of assurance; the obedient, persevering believer rests securely in Christ’s promises. The point is that assurance belongs to the one who conquers, not to the one who presumes. A Christian who has fallen into sin or embraced false teaching cannot wave away the danger by appealing to a past decision. The remedy is the same one Christ prescribed to Ephesus: remember, repent, return. The door is open, and the crown awaits the one who overcomes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The repeated promise “to the one who conquers” (2:7,11,17) is conditional; the rewards are for those who endure and overcome, not automatically for all who once professed.
- Christ threatens to remove Ephesus’s lampstand unless it repents (2:5); a genuine congregation can be cut off, which refutes “once saved, always saved.”
- Tolerating false teaching (Balaam, the Nicolaitans) endangers a church; doctrinal purity is a matter of spiritual life and death (2:14-16; Numbers 25:1-3).
- Scripture broadly teaches a Christian can fall away and be lost (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Revelation 3:5).
- Repentance, not presumption, is the path back for the fallen; remember, repent, return (2:5).
- Assurance is real for the faithful and persevering, but it belongs to the one who conquers, never to the one who makes peace with sin.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the repeated phrase “to the one who conquers” by itself undercut the idea that salvation can never be lost?
- Why is Christ’s threat to remove the lampstand impossible to square with “once saved, always saved”?
- How do we hold out both genuine assurance to the faithful and genuine warning to the wayward without contradicting ourselves?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across all three letters, where Christ commends, corrects, comforts, and calls each congregation to conquer, name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to form you into a more faithful overcomer, and what is the first step you will take?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks the student to gather up all three letters and let the risen Christ do His forming work. Across Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum, Christ commends, corrects, comforts, and calls each congregation to conquer. The same Lord who walked among those lampstands walks among ours, and He addresses each of us with the same searching love.

Help students resist the temptation to keep the lesson abstract. The goal of these letters was never information but transformation, that the hearer would actually repent, actually hold fast, actually overcome. So press for one specific thing. Perhaps a student recognizes Ephesus in himself, a faithful but cooling heart, and the Spirit is calling him to remember, repent, and resume a first work of love. Perhaps another sees Smyrna, a fear of suffering that Christ is steadying with His resurrection. Perhaps another sees Pergamum, a compromise quietly tolerated, that must now be confronted.

Whatever the area, ask for a first step. Not a vague aspiration but a concrete, doable action this week: a prayer renewed, a habit resumed, a conversation had, a sin confessed, a name held fast where it would be easier to hide. Formation happens in such steps. The one who conquers is simply the believer who keeps taking the next faithful step, by grace, toward the end.

Close the class by returning to the refrain that frames the whole book: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The promises stand open: the tree of life, no harm from the second death, the hidden manna and the white stone. They belong to the one who conquers. Send the students out to conquer.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues
- The aim of all three letters is transformation, not information; hearing must lead to doing (James 1:22-25).
- Each believer fits somewhere in these letters and is called to a specific response of repentance, courage, or holiness.
- Christian formation advances through concrete, repeated steps of faithfulness, not vague resolve (Philippians 2:12-13).
- The promises "to the one who conquers" frame the whole book; overcoming is the believer's lifelong calling (Revelation 2:7,11,17; 3:5,12,21).

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the three congregations did you see yourself in most clearly, and why?
- What is the one specific first step Christ is calling you to take this week?
- How can we as a class hold one another accountable to actually become overcomers, not merely hearers?