

REVELATION

NATURAL DISASTERS

VIOLENCE PERSECUTION

HOME CHURCH

REFUGEE CRISIS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

FALSE INFORMATION

ECONOMIC CRASH

PANDEMIC

FAMINE

WAR INJUSTICE

GLOBAL WARMING

STARVATION POVERTY

TERRORISM RIGHTS

CORRUPTION

RACISM WILDFIRES

THE END TIMES AND
THE NEVER REACHED

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

REVELATION



THE END TIMES AND THE NEVER REACHED

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
WHAT SORT OF WORDS?	5
THE CHURCHES OF EPHESUS, SMYRNA, AND PERGAMUM.....	8
THE CHURCHES OF THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, AND LAODICEA	12
NOT PROGNOSTICATION BUT PRACTICE.....	16
A BOLD SONG OF VICTORY.....	19
A NEW SOUNDTRACK.....	22
A HUMBLE SONG OF PRAISE	25
THE LEITMOTIF OF THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES.....	28
REREADING REVELATION AND RETHINKING MISSIONS.....	31
CONCLUSION	34

INTRODUCTION

Although the images and symbols of Revelation pose a daunting problem for interpretation, Revelation presents a clear and understandable message—a message that speaks to you right now, in your present circumstances. However, in our human tendency to get distracted by bright, shiny things, we often get so taken with the mysterious minutiae of Revelation that we miss the big picture. It’s the classic problem of losing sight of the forest because of all the trees. Thus, the first part of this book is designed to help you recognize the entire “forest” of Revelation.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is your favorite book of the Bible and why?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

What has been your experience with the Book of Revelation?

Are you at a point in your life where you feel drawn to the message of Revelation? If so, why? If not, why not?

Have you ever felt like you needed a reset button? In what ways did you need one?

How have you been involved in missions?

BIBLE READING

Read Mark 13:1–37.

PRAYER

God, I confess my fears about the present and the future to You. I know I need my perspective to change, but I don't know how to change it. Please help me. Use the message of Revelation to transform my worldview. Amen.

WHAT SORT OF WORDS? (Pp. 7-11)

GOING DEEPER

You may never have thought of Revelation as three types of literature: prophecy, apocalypse, and letter. Yet this is one of the most important concepts to carry in your head as you read this strange book. Think of these three types of literature as a three-legged stool. If one leg is too long, the stool becomes unbalanced and you fall. Similarly, many unbalanced readings of Revelation suffer from a failure to continually bear the threefold nature of Revelation in mind.

Some readers concentrate on prophecy, reading to unravel a code that will allow them to predict the future. These readers look at the news each day to find pieces of the code revealed in headlines. But this method means the Book of Revelation only has significance for the last generation of readers. Twenty centuries of believers gleaned nothing useful from the book because, from their vantage point, the prophecies concerned the distant future. Yet 2 Timothy 3:16 assures us that God has given us "all Scripture" for our growth and education, so surely Revelation spoke to the previous generations of Christians. When all the emphasis lies on the prophetic nature of Revelation, it becomes difficult to see Revelation's contribution to the Christian life in every generation.

Even though prophecy is the most likely area of overemphasis, it is also possible to put too much weight on the apocalyptic and letter aspects of Revelation. If we pay too much attention to the apocalyptic, Revelation can easily become a book of symbols with no connection to the real world. In the opposite direction, when all our focus zeros in on Revelation as a letter, we can relegate the message of Revelation to a matter of historical interest.

We need the prophetic perspective, because Revelation has an important message about the glorious future God has in mind for His church. We need the apocalyptic perspective, because when the world has gone crazy, we need to know a new world is coming and indeed has already begun to come. We need to read Revelation as a letter, because it has an important practical and timeless message that only becomes apparent in light of the book's historical context.

If we neglect or overemphasize any of the three genres, both we and the stool have become unbalanced! Every crazy, confusing, and false interpretation of Revelation can be traced back to a failure to keep the three genres in balance.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What first attracted you to Jesus? If you are a Christian, how did you become one?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

Have you experienced the kind of prophecy that calls you to a life-changing response to the proclaimed Word of God?

What does the word prophecy mean to you? If we understand prophecy has to do with both preaching and predicting, how might that change our expectations about the Book of Revelation?

Have you ever experienced receiving an encouraging piece of mail (electronic or paper) in the middle of hard times?

What did you find surprising or interesting in this chapter?

BIBLE READING

Read Revelation 7:1-17.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, I know You make it possible for me to understand the Bible, so I ask You to give me supernatural ability to understand Revelation as I study it. I pray also that You would give me the courage to respond in obedience to whatever Your Word would ask of me. Amen.

THE CHURCHES OF EPHESUS, SMYRNA, AND PERGAMUM (Pp. 13-15)

GOING DEEPER

Ephesus

The church in Ephesus excelled at doctrine, but they stopped preaching the gospel. Jesus warned them that if the church abandoned its mission, it would stop being the church.

However, witnessing isn't more important than good teaching. For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses really have the "witness" part down. But are they the church? No! Why? They do not believe Jesus is truly God. They believe salvation is earned through good behavior. Take away either good teaching or witness, and the church ceases to be the church. Both are essential.

Pergamum

Interestingly, Pergamum was doing the opposite: They were doing a great job sharing the gospel in the midst of difficult circumstances, but they were going overboard in their efforts to be relevant.

The problem was false teachers who were like Balaam. They were giving dangerous advice that led to idolatry and judgment. The passage specifically mentions food sacrificed to idols. Archaeologists discovered a dining room in Pergamum used to eat meals dedicated to various gods. Apparently, some teachers in the church in Pergamum were teaching that eating this food was a light matter. They were saying, "It's just food. We know these gods are not real, so just eat it, and don't worry." However, Revelation equates this to the advice given by Balaam—advice that, if followed, would make someone guilty of idolatry and an object of God's judgment.

The Ephesians were like the Amish. The Amish don't use modern technology or wear bright colors. They live a simple life of isolation. The Amish do this to protect their faith from the influence of a sinful world. However, the letter to the Ephesian church teaches us this is not pleasing to God. He wants us to bring the gospel to the world. He doesn't want us to run away from it.

In Pergamum, we see the other extreme. The church was so engaged with the world that they were being drawn into worshipping idols,

a practice completely incompatible with Christianity. Revelation reminds us that God pushes us into the world with the light of the gospel and calls us to reject certain aspects of our own cultures.

Smyrna

The church in Smyrna also dealt with the issue of meat sacrificed to idols. Revelation 2:10 intentionally echoes the Book of Daniel 1:3–16.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you might be tested and so you might experience tribulation for ten days.”

Remember that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego served in the court of Babylon as international students learning the science and wisdom of the Babylonians. They did not want to eat the king’s meat because it had been offered as a sacrifice to idols, so they asked to eat only vegetables. This made the king’s servant nervous. If Daniel and his pals started to look thin, it could cost him his life! So Daniel proposed a ten-day test. You may know the story. After ten days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the other young men who had eaten the king’s meat.

A couple of points from Daniel’s story clearly connect to Smyrna. First, the stories both take place in a university-type setting. Daniel and his friends did not shirk their studies in Babylon; rather, they excelled. In like manner, the Smyrnaeans did not give up on the scientifically and philosophically minded residents of their city. Instead, they doggedly engaged with them and their ideas, all the while preaching Christ. Second, both Daniel and the Smyrnaean Christians refused to compromise with idols. However, in the case of the Smyrnaeans, it seems like their test would end in prison and, very likely, execution.

On the other side of Jesus’ Cross, the Smyrnaeans possessed a great advantage over Daniel and his friends. Jesus points this out to them with a command bound to a promise: “Be faithful to the point of death! And I will grant to you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). For those who pass the test, who do not compromise with idols, and who do not give up on the mission, the reward of eternal life awaits. With this promise, Jesus encourages the Smyrnaeans to stay faithful. He encourages them to keep making their decisions on the basis of the promised future rather than their present fears.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

Have you ever been on a missions trip or traveled to another country or area? If so, what is a favorite memory from your trip?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

Have you had firsthand experience with the problem of knowledge without missions or missions without knowledge? Describe that experience.

How do false teachings endanger the mission of the Church?

What aspects of the gospel or Christian life do you feel are the most difficult for people to accept? Why?

What are some of the blessings of heaven that await you when you remain committed to missions?

BIBLE READING

Read Revelation 2:1–11.

PRAYER

Lord, I pray that You would restore to me a passion for the lost. Jesus, I pray You would make me like the Christians in Smyrna so that I, too, can share Your love without caring about what it costs me. Jesus, help me to have a balanced faith where I engage with the lost yet hold uncompromisingly to the message of the gospel. Help me to live a life of mission focused on the promise of the future rather than the fears of the present. Amen.

THE CHURCHES OF THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, AND LAODICEA (Pp. 16-26)

GOING DEEPER

Thyatira

While growing spiritually, the church of Thyatira faced a serious problem. Through its “Jezebel,” false teaching entered the church. In 1 Kings 16–20 you find the story of the original Jezebel, the infamous wife of King Ahab. Often considered the worst woman in the Bible because she led her husband and the nation of Israel into idolatry, she killed the prophets of God and instigated the murder of an innocent man to steal his land so her husband could have a vegetable garden.

Likewise, a female teacher in Thyatira led the church into idolatry. Specifically, she encouraged the church to compromise their exclusive commitment to Christ by attending idol feasts held by the trade guilds. In essence, she said, “Don’t worry about worshipping idols. You have to make a living, don’t you? After all, this is a private matter of business and no one else’s concern.”

Many hold this idea today: “It doesn’t matter how I make money as long as I give 10 percent to God.” Others say, “Church is about spiritual things. It has nothing to do with my private business affairs.” We desire to keep everyone in the dark regarding our finances—including God. However, this is impossible. Revelation 2:23 declares, “And in this way, I will make known to all the churches that I am the one who searches minds and hearts. And (you will all know that) I pay each of you according to your deeds.”

Why does God care about finances? Financial behavior reflects loyalties. Our relationship with money is hidden from others, so we think it is private. But it is *emphatically* not private. God searches our innermost thoughts. We cannot hide our finances from God.

Laodicea

The church in Laodicea also struggled with the issue of money. They believed financial success equaled spiritual success. However, they gave up in missions! They needed to make investments that last, investments in the kingdom of God!

Sardis

The church in Sardis faced different issues. Sardis's reputation for being alive sprang from its comfortable location. The letter to Sardis contains no references to persecution, probably owing to the large Jewish population of the city. No wonder the other churches assumed the Sardian church must be strong! After all, it was much easier to be a Christian there.

The church of Sardis teaches us a paradox: Comfort and ease are more dangerous to Christian mission than persecution. Revelation repeatedly encourages Christians to be willing to give up their money, homes, and lives for the sake of preaching the gospel. Most Christians in first-century Asia Minor needed to hear this message. But Sardis represents the minority who faced a different struggle. They could share the gospel with relatively little persecution yet had stopped, not because of fear, but because of complacency. They were content. They were happy, healthy, and wealthy. Being comfortable, they didn't want to stir things up by sharing the gospel. For this reason, even though from all appearances they looked like a successful church, Jesus pronounced them DEAD, like zombie Christians.

Ironically, in Sardis the pressure to commit idolatry was far lighter than in other cities. It was more like the modern world. For most of us, worshiping idols isn't a job requirement. Following Christ does not involve risking our lives and the security of our families. Yet even though it was easy to avoid idolatry in Sardis, it still ensnared many in the church. Why? They were not trying to save their money, their homes, and their lives. They just wanted more—more money, better homes, a more comfortable life. They were not compromising to save their lives but to improve their lives. However, Jesus warns that this kind of compromise comes at a high price.

Philadelphia

The Philadelphians were not zombie Christians; they were plodders. They committed themselves to a lifestyle of consistency in spite of persecution and economic hardship. Consequently, Jesus promised He would use their steadfastness to protect them from ongoing trials. They wouldn't be shaken because they already learned this kind of perseverance. Nonetheless, we also see that Jesus promised He would return quickly. Thus, the Philadelphians could take courage from the fact that their difficulties would have a definite end point.

After Jesus' promise of protection and His quick return, He warns the Philadelphians to hold fast so no one will take their crown. Typically, crowns were the rewards for winning athletic competitions, so here we have Coach Jesus saying, "Keep it up! Don't stop playing hard at the end, or you will lose the game!" In other words, keep being consistent in witnessing. We have to embrace the "boring" side of missions, weaving missions into our everyday lives. Keep prioritizing faithfulness over financial reward and comfort. To do otherwise is to abandon the Christian faith altogether.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

Do you like zombie movies? What is your favorite movie or movie genre?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

How does the way we handle ourselves at work impact our ability to witness about Jesus effectively?

How does thinking about our future in heaven affect what we do with our money?

Have you ever met or been a zombie Christian? How did you know?

What lesson about the missional life will you take away from looking at the success of the church in Philadelphia?

BIBLE READING

Read Revelation 2:12–3:22.

PRAYER

Lord, keep me from the lukewarm Christian life. Keep me from neglecting my call to be Your partner in the Great Commission. Jesus, I reaffirm my commitment to serve You by declaring Your name and Your salvation to my neighbors. I ask You to make me useful in taking the gospel to the never-reached, no matter where they may be. Amen.

NOT PROGNOSTICATION BUT PRACTICE (Pp. 27-30)

GOING DEEPER

If understanding Revelation as ethical and practical is difficult, think about it in terms of decision-making. How do you make decisions? People have all kinds of strategies for deciding about buying a car, buying a home, or choosing a spouse. The Internet absolutely teems with advice about how to make these big decisions. One website promises decision-making help by unveiling "Top 10 ways to make better decisions." Their No. 1 suggestion is, "Don't fear the consequences."¹ Basically, when you make a decision, you predict the future, anticipating which decision will make you happiest. Of course, the problem is that we are not terribly good at predicting the future!

What if we could know the future with absolute certainty? What if we could perfectly sort the things that bring only a temporary sugar rush of happiness from those that bestow everlasting joy? What if we could know instead of guessing? This is the practicality of Revelation. We really are supposed to decide about cars, houses, spouses, vocations, and vacations based on what God has told us about the future in the Book of Revelation. Missionaries have been doing this for generations. They have carefully considered the pain, suffering, and cost of leaving home and security and deemed the sacrifice worthwhile based on the certainty of the future that God promises.

Consider the experiences of Lavada Leonard moving to China.

On arriving in China I was not taken to a beautiful home, but to the field of Sainan. The streets were dirty and the gutters filthy.... The rain came through the house we lived in. Tin cans were setting [sic] round on the floor to catch the rain. There were cracks in the walls and the whole place looked as though it was just ready to tumble down.

One day as I sat studying I heard the blowing of bugles and beating of drums. Rushing to the porch I saw a sight that I shall never forget. Soldiers were leading a poor man, bound with chains, down to the sand to shoot him down for stealing. Perhaps he had stolen only something to eat. There was no trial. The poor

¹ www.newscientist.com/article/mg19426021-100-top-10-ways-to-make-better-decisions/ Accessed 3/23/2021.

man was looking from side to side, looking for a way of escape. I have never been able to get away from the picture of horror on his face, seeing him facing eternity without Jesus Christ. In a few minutes I heard the firing of guns. I could not study any more that day. My heart was burdened for the perishing multitudes who were going out into eternity without God and without hope, while we were taking life easy. Their souls are just as precious to the Lord as are ours.²

The promise of salvation and judgment in Revelation lay behind the practical steps taken by Miss Leonard. She left home. She lived in crude and difficult conditions. She witnessed unspeakable violence. Yet she did not waver in her commitment. Why? She wasn't guessing about the future. She knew her decision to stay in China or run home would have eternal consequences. She believed what Revelation taught her about the future and acted upon that knowledge. The Book of Revelation is practical.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is one country you would like to visit? Why?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

What encourages you when you face difficulties?

² "The Perils of Missionary Life in South China: Miss Lavada Leonard at the Springfield Missionary Convention," *Pentecostal Evangel*, July 7 (1923), 2.

What is the main point of Revelation? What can distract us from it?

How has the Book of Revelation challenged you to change the way you live?

How have you answered the call of Revelation to stay committed to missions?

BIBLE READING

Read James 1:22–25.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, as I study the Book of Revelation, I pray that You would open my ears to hear what You are asking me to do. I also ask You to give me the strength and ability to respond to the Word with obedience. Amen.

A BOLD SONG OF VICTORY (Pp. 21-41)

GOING DEEPER

Until now, we have focused on Revelation’s big picture. The churches of Asia Minor faced a crisis in mission as they read their letters. They were asking themselves, “Will we stay committed to mission when doing so will cost us our money, our homes, and our lives?” Everything in the Book of Revelation was crafted to help the churches answer this question with a resounding and unreserved, “YES, WE WILL!” Revelation asks modern-day Christians to take practical steps in response to its message and to expect those steps to relate to missional living.

Keep this big picture in mind in Part 2 as we begin to explore a key passage—perhaps the key passage—of Revelation. We will be taking a deep dive into Revelation 7:9–12, where the big picture of Revelation is compressed into a single moment of cosmic history. That moment features two songs that capture everything Revelation has to say to the Church. You will notice that both of these climactic songs reinforce the big picture. Consequently, I hope that as we work through the songs in detail, you will gain more confidence in a missional understanding of Revelation.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is something that encourages you?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

Describe a time when you felt encouragement through worship.

How does the promise of victory put the cost of the missional life into perspective?

Why do you think Revelation puts so much emphasis on diversity? Do you think this emphasis has any practical implications for the Christian life? If so, what are they?

Whom do you want to see as part of the singing crowd?

BIBLE READING

Read Psalm 111:1–10.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for this vision of the nations worshipping around the throne of God at the end of time. I pray this image would sink deeply into my mind. May it become part of the operating system of my life so I see it as the goal of everything I do. Amen.

A NEW SOUNDTRACK (Pp. 43-64)

GOING DEEPER

One of the most interesting things about the Sermon on the Mount is its curious mixture of what seems practical with what seems impossible. Jesus' words in this grand sermon, in one sense, come to us without ambiguity or mystery. He gives us a series of clear and concise instructions: Pray like this. Don't retaliate when people treat you badly and unjustly. Don't worry about daily necessities. Many read Jesus' practical instructions and conclude it's just too hard. What seems practical is in fact impossible! "We can't really give to everyone who asks us!" they complain. "We can't really be expected not to worry about food and shelter!" they object. "No, no, these aren't real instructions," they conclude.

The sermon's commands are very practical and very specific, but they are also radical! Jesus asks us to do things no one in this world could expect of others. Does He really mean it? Jesus demands too much if we think by the rules of normal human society. However, if we begin to live by the rules of another world, what at first looks crazy and too difficult begins to make sense. This is the most basic truth of the Christian life. As Christians, we no longer live according to the values, rules, and expectations of our countries and cultures of origin. We live by the rules, values, and expectations inherent in God's kingdom—His rule. His rule is both present and coming, so we live by the future now. To those on the outside, we look crazy. We act in a way that seems impossible and incomprehensible. Empowered by the Holy Spirit living in us, we actually can live out the Sermon on the Mount.

Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–7:29). Pay particular attention to the balance of present and future. What about the rule and reign of God do we presently experience? What are we still awaiting about the rule and reign of God?

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is one of your favorite songs? Why?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

What song is the soundtrack of your life at the moment?

What message do you need to hear over and over again right now?

What do you think it means to be a missional person in the midst of a crisis, whether it's a pandemic or something else?

What fears do you face right now? What would it look like for you to make decisions based on future victories instead of present fears?

BIBLE READING

Read Philippians 4:4–7.

PRAYER

God, if I am honest with You, the soundtrack of my life keeps changing, like a radio scanning through stations. Would You change the music of my life? Would You help me to hear the song of victory when I need it most? Please give me the discipline to stick to its music even when I'm tempted to find a different soundtrack. Amen.

A HUMBLE SONG OF PRAISE (Pp. 65-77)

GOING DEEPER

The Bold Song of Victory and *The Humble Song of Praise* work together as movements of music in a symphony—a symphony orchestrated for the never-reached. Within this symphony, *The Humble Song of Praise* compels us to ponder the relationship between God’s character and the future He promises. What Revelation asks us to do is frightening! It asks us to risk everything. It asks us to be willing to lose it all: our money, our homes, and our lives. These are big asks!

These risks only make sense to the degree that the promised victory portrayed in Revelation seems likely to become reality. But if you stop and think about it, the entire Christian life consists of risk. Every Christian makes sacrifices. Every Christian gives up things for the sake of serving Christ. She says no to opportunities. He chooses worship over recreation. They spend a summer in Mexico caring for orphans instead of earning money for college. With every sacrifice, with every opportunity rejected, Christians essentially make a bet that God keeps His promises. Christians bet on His faithfulness. But is this a safe bet?

The Humble Song of Praise answers this question on the basis of God’s character. But this answer transcends Revelation 7. The entire Bible reveals God’s character. The promise to Adam and Eve that death would come from eating the forbidden fruit is part of the same revelation. Their death and the death of every human since proves God’s trustworthiness. God’s character is established in the land promised to Abraham that his descendants possessed. God proved His never-ending faithfulness when David’s heir rose from the dead and took His place on an eternal throne.

The entire Bible stands as witness to who God is and how He acts. He always keeps His promises. He lacks nothing in the way of power. For this reason, betting everything on the future is the safest bet you will ever make. Putting your faith in God is never a blind leap of faith. When we trust in God, we trust in One who has both revealed and proven His character through the ages.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is one concert you would like to attend? Why?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

How does both understanding and experiencing God's character help you to trust Him and to believe in the future He has promised?

List the things in your life for which you find yourself being most thankful to God. What does your personal experience of thankfulness teach you about who God is?

How does doubt about the future reflect doubts about God's power? Can you cite any firsthand experiences of God's power? If so, what are they?

How has doubt impacted your involvement in missions both near and far from home?

BIBLE READING

Read Exodus 33:17-34:9. What does this passage reveal about God’s character?

PRAYER

Jesus, reveal Your character to me as You did to Moses. As I walk with You and live my life for You, show me who You really are. And when I doubt, let Your promise-keeping nature, Your reputation, and Your omniscience steady my heart. Amen.

THE LEITMOTIF OF THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR LIVES (Pp. 79-90)

GOING DEEPER

Understand that faith isn't a one-and-done kind of thing. Abraham is called the father of all who believe (Roman 4:11). He is the paradigm of what it means to trust God, what it means to believe, and what it means to have faith. Read Genesis 15:1–6, and you will see why.

Even though Abraham and Sarah were already too old to have children, Abraham took God at His word and believed His promise. But this does not mean Abraham never doubted again. Read Genesis 16:1–6, one chapter after his great confession of faith.

Clearly, Abraham's faith wavered. Instead of waiting for God to fulfill His promise, Abraham followed Sarah's plan to help God. Abraham and Sarah doubted God's power to fulfill His promise. But their doubt did not negate God's promise. God fulfilled it through Isaac. By the way, this was not Abraham's only failure to trust God. He doubted God and failed to trust Him at several points, yet his place as the father of faith remained secure. Why? Because Abraham's story didn't end in doubt. He learned to know God's character. And in spite of doubt, he always returned to obedience.

When you have moments of doubt about the future, know this is part of the walk of faith. Doubt brings new opportunities to learn God's character. In dark moments of uncertainty, let the truth of God's character bring you back to faith. Ultimately, knowing His character dispels darkness and uncertainty.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is a missionary story, either from this book or another place, that you find inspiring?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

Do you find God's character to be a comfort and source of strength?
How so?

How do you make sense of the suffering that touches even the faithful?

How can you cultivate the kind of relationship with God that makes praise your reflexive response in moments of darkness and doubt?

Is there anything for which you would risk everything? If so, what is it?

BIBLE READING

Read Acts 6:8–7:60.

PRAYER

Father, I know You are completely good and all-powerful, but there are some things I just can't understand. Help me to be faithful in the midst of suffering and doubt and to have confidence in Your character, even when I am walking through difficult seasons. Amen.

REREADING REVELATION AND RETHINKING MISSIONS (Pp. 91-105)

GOING DEEPER

So far in our time together, we have learned to see the forest of Revelation without getting distracted by the strange and often incomprehensible trees. You know this book concerns the missional life. You know Revelation addresses a church in the midst of a crisis in mission and that with every word, its message beckons that church to risk everything for the sake of the never-reached. With this understanding, you know how the big picture helps make sense of the climactic scene of Revelation 7:9–12.

In all of this, it has become evident that Revelation is practical and not theoretical. The vision of the future changes our lives as Christians in the present. When missions becomes costly—when missions costs our money, our homes, and our lives—the future calls out to us, “The cost is worth paying!” As the message of Revelation sinks deeply in our souls, we can act based on the promise of the future rather than the fears of the present.

Revelation is practical, and it’s missional. Thus, we cannot walk away from the Book of Revelation without thinking about what a practical response to its message might look like. Spend some time exploring the implications in your life.

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What are three things you highly value? Why do you value them?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

What kinds of things have you heard people saying about Revelation and its implication for the present time?

What are other examples of denouncing, domesticating, and embracing missions that you have encountered among those who go?

Do you view yourself as one who goes? Why or why not?

Has this study challenged you in any way to be more radical as a sender in the mission of the Church? If so, how?

BIBLE READING

Read 1 Corinthians 9:15–27.

PRAYER

Jesus, open me up. Look deeply into my life. What has my attitude been toward the mandate You have given me to share the gospel with a lost and dying world? Have I denounced, domesticated, or embraced missions? Lord, I ask You to conform my thinking and actions on this subject to Your Word and to Your will. Give me Your heart for the lost. Amen.

CONCLUSION (Pp. 107-108)

ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

What is something about yourself people might find surprising?

RESPOND AND REFLECT

How has reading this book impacted your thinking about Revelation?

How has reading this book challenged you in regard to missions?

What will you take away from this study that you didn't know before you began?

What will you do differently because of what you have learned?

BIBLE READING

Read Luke 14:25–43.

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for the Book of Revelation and its message about missions. Thank You for calling me to be Your coworker in the gospel. I choose to count the cost of serving You. I choose to pay what You are asking of me. I will carry Your gospel to whomever You send me. I will do it even when it costs me my money, my home, and my life. Amen.



GET THE BOOK AND MORE RESOURCES AT
[ASIAPACIFICMISSIONS.ORG/REVELATION](https://asiapacificmissions.org/REVELATION)

AGWM
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
WORLD MISSIONS