



A Worship Discussion Guide for Individuals, Groups & Families for the week of February 23, 2025

Read the Bible passage aloud in your group meeting. This is a worship discussion guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for your meeting, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

Warm Up *The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia*

- **How do you need Jesus to give you strength to endure these days?**
- **Names.** Philadelphia was a relatively young city in modern day Turkey, founded in 189 BC. Its Greek name means “**City of Brotherly Love**”, but it has an important history linked reflected in its many names, renames, and nicknames. Often referred to as the “**Gateway to the East**”, Philadelphia sat at the juncture of major trade routes that linked Europe to Asia; The historian Strabo called Philadelphia the “**City of Earthquakes**”, and others “**Burnt Land**”; Philadelphia was known later as “**Little Athens**” as Philadelphia was brimming with pagan temples and religious festivals, and had an influential Jewish population.
- **Disaster.** An earthquake completely destroyed Philadelphia in AD 17, and Rome exempted Philadelphia from paying any taxes for five years. In light of the aid Philadelphia received from the Empire, The city was renamed “**Neocaesarea**” (the city of the new Caesar) for 25 years, and then “**Flavia**” around 75AD (after emperor Vespasian), and instituted emperor worship. By 90AD it had been rebuilt. However, the city walls were constantly cracking after repeated tremors made people move to the countryside, farm the rich volcanic soil, and attend to business in the city.
- **Persecution & Turmoil.** The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians, written in early 2nd century AD, tells us that the church at Philadelphia was dealing with schisms and Judaizers after the death of the apostle John.
 - As the **Gateway City**, Philadelphia was instrumental in the spread of the Gospel spread along the eastern trade routes. **What institutions and places appear to be Gospel gateways in our own culture?**
 - As the **City of Earthquakes**, Philadelphia lived in dread of disaster and inhabitants camped outside the city wall. **What effect might that have on you over time?**
 - As **Neocaesarea** and **Flavia**, Philadelphians were forced to bear the name of the Imperial god. **What impact might that have on you?**

Revelation 3:7-13 *I Will Keep You*

⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

- **How does Jesus introduce Himself to the church in Philadelphia (7)? Why is this significant? Read the verses below from Isaiah 22 & Revelation 19 for more insight.**

“I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

--Isaiah 22:21-22

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”

--Revelation 19:11

⁸“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have,

so that no one may seize your crown. ¹²The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

- **Jesus reflects back to Philadelphia the ways they are like Him. In what ways does this church reflect the glory of Christ? (8-10)**

- **What might be the “open door” (8) for the Philadelphian church?**

- **This seemingly insignificant group of believers see that they “have but little power” (8). But their weakness promises to be its own door for the Gospel. Why is powerlessness necessary for the Gospel? Read the verse below for more insight.**

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” --II Corinthians 4:7

- **The representatives from the “synagogue of Satan” (9) appear to be evidence of a shut door, but Jesus has something else in mind. What is it?**

- **What does it mean to “keep Jesus’ word about patient endurance” (10) in the midst of tribulation?**

- **Once again—what is repentance? How does Jesus call the church at Philadelphia to repent? (11)**

- **What must you believe to “hold fast”?**

- **How does Jesus renew hope for this church (12-13)? Read the verses from Revelation 21 & 22 blow for more insight.**

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God...And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb...They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads”

--Revelation 21:10, 22-23; 22:4

- **What makes someone a “pillar of the church”?**

- **Pray together in response to God’s Word.**

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Questions? Contact Pastor Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org

