

life groups discussion guide

series: Revelation: a study of the seven churches



Thyatira: “Too Relevant for Christ”

Reading

Rev 2:18-29

Thyatira is a city struggling to fit in. The problem is they have compromised the standards of Christ. Jesus' words to them are strong, but full of hope. Repent and I will give you authority over nations. Continue to compromise, and there will be a bed of suffering. The letter briefly praises the love, faith and good deeds of the church, then quickly gets down to business.

John could have addressed this letter, “To the church that tolerates sin.” Thyatira was a city known for its large number of workmanship guilds. Each craft guild worshiped a god of their own (the worship often included sexual immorality). In order to fit into the city, the church not only didn't stand against this pluralism, but became intertwined with it as well.

A large influence in this church was a woman (or a symbolic woman) that encouraged the believers to engage in the city's sin. This woman is referred to as Jezebel to compare the sin and unfaithfulness of the early church to the wickedness of Jezebel in the Old Testament.

Read: 1 Kings 16:30-34. How do the sins of this time compare to the sins described in the early church?

Just as Ahab and Jezebel led the people of Israel to sin, so did the Jezebel in Thyatira. Even though the church practiced good deeds, no one had the conviction to stand against this wicked influence within the congregation. Jezebel was working within the church, and not perverting the unsaved, but “bondservants” or “my servants” (aka true believers). Read the passages below to see what God says about those who lead his children astray.

I Cor 6:15-16

Matt 18:6-8

The Jezebel in Thyatira may have encouraged sin within the church to blend into the community.

How do we still do this today?

WC Fields said, “A dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.” What steps can we take to ensure that we do not allow ourselves to “go along to get along” if a modern day Jezebel attempts to influence us? (Read Romans 12:2 as you discuss your answer).

Taking a stand for Christ is easy when the decision is popular. For instance, no one calls Christians archaic for believing that murder is wrong. However, as our world erodes, more and more of our beliefs are becoming outdated by societal standards. Discuss what elements of your walk you most UNpopularly cling to in this modern age.

Early church leader Athanasius, who was a part of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, is a great example of someone who would not stand for the Jezebel of his time. When heresy threatened the church and it appeared that the entire Roman Empire would laps into false doctrine, a colleague exclaimed, “The whole world is against you!” To which Athanasius famously replied, “Then it is Athanasius against the world.”

C.S. Lewis wrote about Athanasius by saying, “He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, ‘whole and undefiled,’ when it looked as if all the civilized world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius – into one of those ‘sensible’ synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times...

Another great example of standing for Christ lies just a few verses prior to our study, in the city of Pergamum. In Rev. 2:13. John writes, “I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.”

In all the Scriptures Antipas is only mentioned one time. We know virtually nothing about him. But we know that in the wickedest of places, where Satan had his throne, where undoubtedly temptresses like Jezebel abounded, Antipas stood for righteousness, even at the expense of his own life. What a wonderful example.

Question: As you examine your own life, can you say that you, like Antipas, are a “faithful witness”? Or are you like the weak members of Thyatira, easily lead astray in or not to ruffle any feathers?

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you for the example of Antipas. Please give us the discernment to know how to boldly stand for you. Help us not to fear men as the members of Thyatira, but stand as a faithful witness like Antipas. Amen.