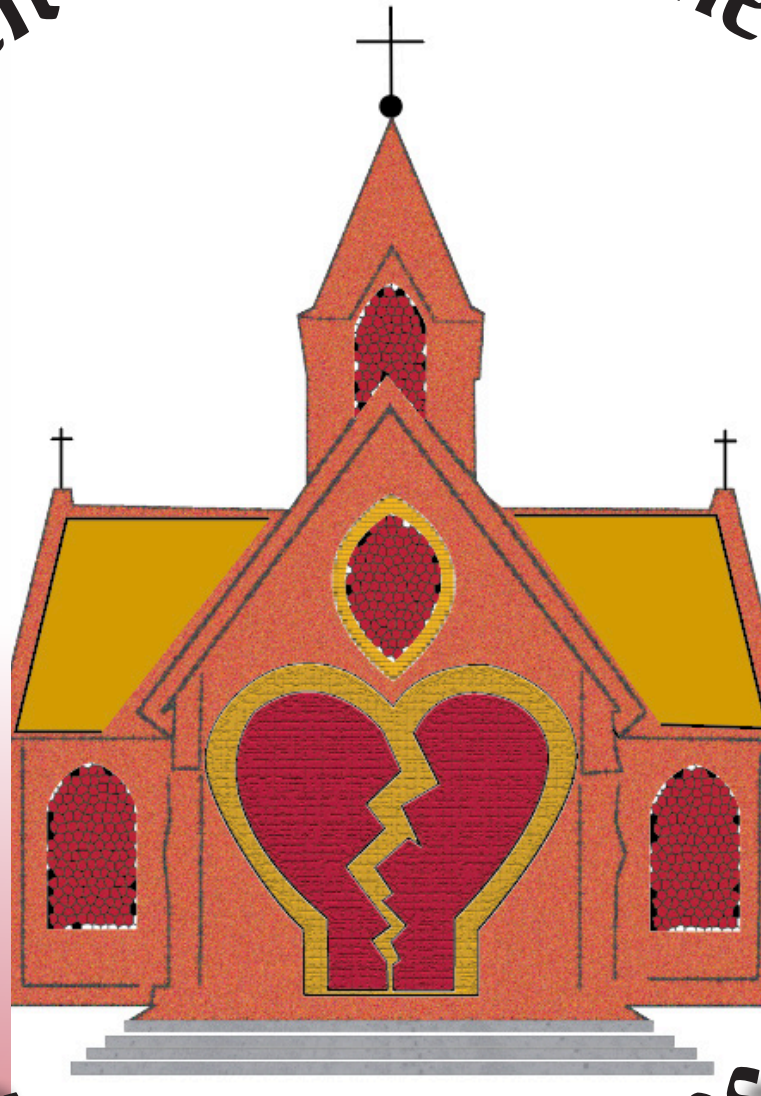


The Seven Churches of Revelation



Jesus Words to a Loveless Church

Revelation 2:17

Feb. 4, 2024

Welcome!

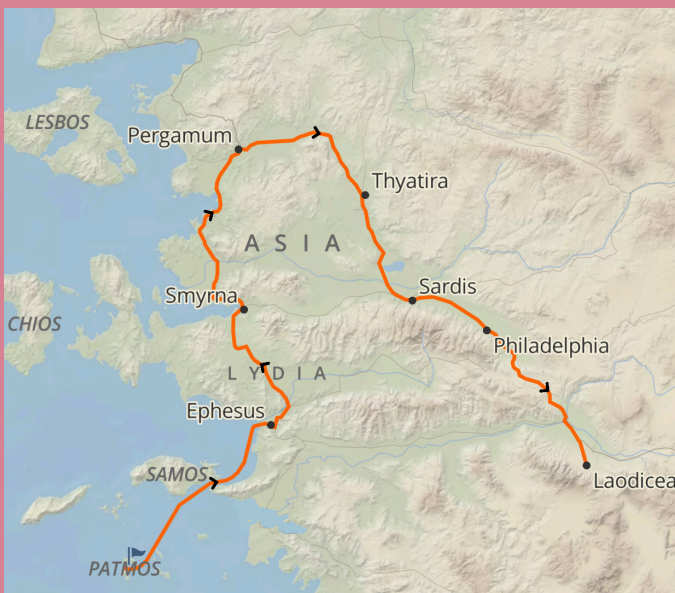
Welcome to the Winter 2024 Life Group Series! For the next seven weeks, we will be learning about the Seven Churches of Revelation.

First CRC of Hanford is in the midst of transition, and has been through quite a lot over the last few years. We've weathered political discontent, a pandemic, the loss of our Senior Pastor who'd served twenty years in the role, watched, prayed, and cried as we've lost beloved members of our church family.

All churches have struggles, and according to the book of Revelation, they always have. Join us in this seven week study as we examine ancient churches in their strengths and struggles.



Map of the Ancient Churches



Tips for Reading the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation, written by the Apostle John, is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. It's full of strange imagery that's unfamiliar to modern readers. However, the careful reader will discover patterns in the text that help us interpret it.

Our texts roughly have the following pattern.

1. Setting - the church under discussion.
 2. Title - a title of Jesus.
 3. Commendation - what the church is doing right.
- Complaint - what the church is doing wrong.
Correction - what the church needs to do to get back on track.

Before You Come to Life Group

1. If you're bringing a new person to the study, we recommend getting them study materials ahead of time so they can feel prepared.
2. Pray that the LORD will open your eyes and heart to receive the lessons he has to teach you in the study.
3. Read the scripture focus for the study.
4. Go through the questions and think about how you might answer them. We've provided space in the study for you to write down your answers if you'd like.

Chatechism Corner

Lord's Day 2

Q & A 3

Q. How do you come to know your misery? A. The law of God tells me.¹

Q & A 4

Q. What does God's law require of us? A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”² This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’³ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Q & A 5

Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.⁴ I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.⁵

1 Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25

2 Deut. 6:5

3 Lev. 19:18

4 Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10

5 Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

What We Believe

1. Read Revelation 2:1-7. What title does Jesus have in our text? What does the title mean?

2. What commendation does Jesus have for the church in Ephesus? Do you think Jesus would commend the First CRC of Hanford for a similar reason?

3. What complaint does Jesus have for the church in Ephesus? Do you think Jesus has a similar complaint against the First CRC of Hanford?

4. What correction does Jesus give to the church in Ephesus? What's the outcome if they correct themselves? What's the outcome if they don't correct themselves?

Ephesus Facts

On the west coast of Asia Minor. Made the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor by Augustus (27 BC—AD 14). Ephesus is the setting for Acts 19. Paul taught daily there for two years (Acts 19:9). The elders from Ephesus came to see Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17–18), and in 1 Cor 15:32, Paul says that he fought the beasts there. The city was originally founded ca. 1000 BC by the Greeks. It came under Roman control in 133 BC.

Seal, D. (2016). Ephesus. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Kloppenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

God Speaks to Us

1. The Ephesian church is staunchly orthodox (right belief) in their doctrine. How important is doctrinal orthodoxy? Explain your answer.

2. Prof. Jeffery Weima of Calvin Seminary, in his book “The Sermons to the Seven Churches of Revelation” says that the Ephesian church had become one of “loveless orthodoxy.” They had the right doctrine, but their zealotness for right doctrine didn’t bear witness to the love of Christ in the world. How has the church shown “loveless orthodoxy”? What can we do to ensure our orthodoxy isn’t loveless?



Ephesian theater

Cross References

See how our text fits into the story of the Bible by seeing how the Bible references itself!

Revelation 2:1 - Revelation 1:16-20

Revelation 2:2 - 1 John 4:1, Psalm 1:6

Revelation 2:3 - John 15:21, Hebrews 12:3-5, Matthew 24:9

Revelation 2:4 - Jeremiah 2:2, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 24:12

Revelation 2:5 - Matthew 3:2, Hebrews 10:32, 1 Corinthians 10:12

Revelation 2:6 - Psalm 139:21

Revelation 2:7 - Genesis 2:9, Genesis 3:22-24



He who seeks truth must be content with a lonely, little-trodden path. If he cannot worship her till she has been canonized by the shouts of the multitude, he must take his place with the members of that wretched crowd who shouted for two long hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" till truth, reason, and calmness were all drowned in noise.

- Frederick William Robertson

God Speaks to Our Families

1. The world is always changing, so the church is always facing new challenges to our doctrines. As a group, name three doctrinal issues facing young people in the church today that the church didn't face 50 years ago.

2. How can we model love-filled orthodoxy for our children and the young people in the church?





God Speaks in Worship

1. What are the essential doctrines of the church? How are those doctrines communicated in worship?

2. The Christian Reformed Church adheres to doctrines that most American evangelicals do not subscribe to - infant baptism, and predestination being the most prominent. How important is it that we communicate those doctrines in worship? Should we prioritize unity with our fellow believers over strict Reformed doctrinal standards? Explain your answer.

The Gospel Call

1. Many unbelievers say the doctrine of hell is a great reason not to be a Christian. Should Christians talk about hell when witnessing to others about Jesus? Why or why not?

2. What doctrines of the church are difficult for you to understand and communicate? Is ignorance of Christian doctrine a good reason not to share our faith with others? Explain your answer.

“...nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and to keep the light of knowledge choked up within his own breast.”

- John Calvin

