

Letters Week 2 Study Guide

Letter to Smyrna

1- On Sunday, we focused on the letter to the church in Smyrna. The city of Smyrna had a unique culture. Listen to these descriptions:

- One of the oldest cities: built in 4th century B.C.
- Had a harbor on the gulf
- Free city
- Assize town (most prominent court cases)
- Famous stadium & library
- Rich trade in wines
- Often called the glory of Asia for its beauty
- Temple of Apollo, Zeus, Caesar & Dea Roma (goddess of Rome)
- Only city among 7 churches that still exists. It is called Izmir today.

Which detail(s) impress you?

2- Read Revelation 2:8. In this verse, Jesus introduces Himself as the 'First and the Last' & the 'One Who was dead and came to life'. Which verses from Revelation chapter 1 contain these descriptions of Christ? What are some reasons that these titles might resonate with the Christians in Smyrna?

3- Smyrna held an annual celebration of worship to Caesar. They viewed Caesar as the Lord of all other gods. Every citizen was required to participate in the ritual of placing a pinch of incense on the altar to Caesar and proclaiming that 'Caesar is Lord of lords'. After doing this, each citizen received a certificate to keep as proof that they are a faithful citizen. The Christians of Smyrna refused to blaspheme Jesus Christ in this way. Read Revelation 2:9. What are

some truths that Jesus is saying? How might these truths strengthen the church in Smyrna?

4- Do you find it easy or difficult to relate with the Christians in Smyrna?

5- Although we may not be forced to worship our nation's leader, we do experience cultural tension because of our faith. What are some tensions in our culture that can tempt us to forsake Jesus?

6- Read Revelation 2:10. Remember the significance of numbers in the books in the Bible. Numbers were often used to represent something else. The numbers 3, 7, 10 & 12 represent 'wholeness' or 'completeness', and each carry a different focus. For example, the #12 represents 'completeness', specifically in the realm of God's people. The number ten represents 'completeness' in the realm of Divine order or God's will. What significance does the #10 bring to this verse?

7- Read James 1:12. What does the 'crown of life' represent?

8- Why would Jesus allow His people to experience suffering? How can suffering benefit our lives? Would someone like to share a personal experience when Jesus used suffering as a blessing?

9- Read Revelation 2:11 & Revelation 21:8. What is the 'second death'? What feelings or thoughts do you experience whenever the 'second death' is mentioned?

10- The Christians in Smyrna were called to conquer through their difficulties. Read Revelation 2:8-11 one more time. What are some action steps that Christ provided for them to do in order to conquer? (Do not be afraid, Expect suffering, Be faithful, Expect victory)

11- Who remembers the story of Polycarp? Seth shared his story on Sunday. See who can share some details of Polycarp's faithfulness to Jesus Christ. What thoughts or feelings do you experience when hearing a story like his?

12- Most of us would like to think that we would be faithful to Jesus, even to the point of death. This level of devotion requires choosing to follow Christ faithfully each day. It also requires acknowledging areas of our lives that lack faithfulness to Him. Share some time in prayer.