

Growing Deeper *Revelation*

Week One: *Fighting Fire with Fire* *Revelation 2:1-11*

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. As we dig deeper into our series in Revelation, we will begin this week with the victory of Christ, which he earned for us through his death and resurrection. Read Revelation 2:1-11. Who is speaking in chapter 2 of Revelation? What is the common feature of the reward given in verses 7 and 11?
2. Describe an experience when you have received a reward for something of your own doing. How did it feel?
3. Now describe an experience in which you received the benefit or reward of something that was not earned by you. How did it feel?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. How important is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead to our faith?
5. What does Paul hint about the reward we receive because of the resurrection in verse 19?
6. Ecclesiastes 3:11 reads, “He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.” Describe how God has set eternity in your heart. What does that mean to you?
7. In pursuing God and joining in his victory, we find our identity. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to grant you an eternal perspective throughout your life and meditate on what that would look like.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Watching the news can be depressing. Of all the current problems in society, which do you feel make you most unsettled?
9. Describe a time when you were able to make it through a tough experience. What kept you from giving up?
10. Throughout Revelation 2:1-11, Jesus commands us not to give up. To persevere in the churches of Revelation was to endure persecution. The evil one is either actively trying to destroy the church or subverting it and calling it to compromise. What are you being tempted to compromise on rather than uphold the message of Jesus?

11. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What is it that Paul boasts in? What “power” do you receive from Christ?
12. With all the things with which we are tempted, with all the ways in which we perceive people “getting away with things,” what is our motivation to continue to strive to do things God’s way?
13. Now read Matthew 16:24-27. What does it mean when Jesus says to “deny yourself”? How does the theme of perseverance relate to this passage?
14. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray for strength to endure temptation and love those who are hard to love. Also, that you see God’s bigger picture in the way we are motivated to follow him.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Reading Revelation 2:1-11 again, Jesus reminds both churches to remain faithful. What does faithfulness look like in your relationship with God?
16. Recall a time when you were surprised by someone’s faithfulness to you or to a cause. What made it surprising?
17. The faithfulness of people can be fickle at times. Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13. What does Paul say about God’s faithfulness?
18. How has God shown his faithfulness to you? How does his faithfulness comfort you about problems that you presently face?
19. One of ways we can define anxiousness is forgetting the faithfulness of God. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, turn over to God all you may be anxious about. If you cannot recall his faithfulness, recall his cross. Know that he loves you and know that he understands.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Define what you think purity looks like in culture. Describe someone who you have admired because they possessed the quality of purity.
21. Going back to Revelation 2:1-11, Jesus says he despises the practices of the Nicolaitians and those who follow Balaam. It is found that they mingled that which is supposed to be holy with practices (eating food dedicated to idols or temple prostitution) that, as Luther said, “Profane the name of God.” What do you think purity looks like to God?
22. In what areas does the world seem to teach and often encourage you to follow ways that are contrary to the life that

God desires for you? Identify the area with which you are most tempted to follow the world's standards.

23. We are all tempted; we all fall short. But like the churches in Revelation, we are called to repent. To turn away from the ways of the world and follow God. Recall your motivation for trying to do things God's way. What are other motivating factors someone might use to walk with God?
24. 2 Chronicles 16:9 records Hanani the seer's words to Asa, king of Judah. In this verse he says, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." How does this verse make you feel about God?
25. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What do we need to fix our eyes on? What do we receive in our time of need? How does this help us in our striving to remain "pure"?
26. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you to focus on his love for you and that all of his intentions for our life flow out of his goodness.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

27. When thinking about those who suffer in this world, to which group does your heart immediately go out? Why?
28. Think back to a time of suffering in your life. What do you think the benefit of that suffering, if any, may be?
29. After Jesus washes his disciples' feet on the night he was betrayed, he speaks of the trouble they will face in the world in John 16:33. What reassurance did he give them in this scripture?
30. How are these words similar to the reassurances Jesus gives in Revelation chapter 2?
31. Go back and read Matthew 16:24-27 again. What do you think it means to "take up your cross"?
32. Read the beautiful words of Revelation 21:1-7. What does our suffering look like in the context of reading these verses?
33. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, consider all that you have seen of how God has been faithful in the past and all the ways he will remain faithful. Consider Jesus, who was able to endure suffering and death for the "joy" set before him. Know that he considers an eternal relationship with you to be his joy.

Week Two: *No Rules Just Right*
Revelation 2:18-29

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Think of the unbelieving people in our country. What is an example of a moral teaching of God that they have rejected?
2. Now think about your own life's journey. What is a biblical teaching that you haven't followed?
3. Read Revelation 2:18-23. Who is the author writing to—believers or unbelievers? How do you know?
4. What “complaint” does the author make against the church in Thyatira? (Hint: see verse 20.)
5. What will be the consequences of their sexual immorality?
6. What have been the consequences of the times that you deviated from God's moral law?
7. Even if you have done it in the past, take time to talk to God about your own failings. “Repent” of ways you have fallen short of his teachings, and “lament” the consequences in your own life. Finish your FIFTEEN by thanking God for his unfailing love, no matter how many times we don't follow his word.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Put on your “empathy” hat. In as best a construction as possible, speculate on *why* unbelievers don't follow God's laws. What is their motivation?
9. Now, in contrast, think about yourself and believers you know and love—what are some rationalizations that we make when we don't follow God's teachings? We, who are children of God, why do we sometimes choose to ignore God's Word?
10. Read Revelation 2:18-29, especially verse 21. What is the problem at this church?
11. What does the author John ask the faithful believers to do instead? (See verses 24-25.)
12. What resulting promise does John make to those who submit to God's moral law?

13. In the meantime—in a world and church that often resists God’s authority—what would it look like for you to faithfully obey God’s teaching in your life?
14. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying that God would reveal any areas of disobedience and graciously reveal to you his better way!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. What do you think are the actual, earthly consequences for people who violate God’s law?
16. You can likely think of examples where bad things happened. You can also probably think of times where evil people seem to get off scot-free. Why do you think the consequences are so inconsistent?
17. Now you’re going to skim two Bible chapters, Revelation 8–9. The “trumpets” in this section unleash God’s judgments on a rebellious world. As you read, what are the specific horrors that happen in these two chapters?
18. Do any of these judgments sound familiar? Like something that happened previously in the Bible? (Hint: skim Exodus 7–10.)
19. It may not happen right away, but those who reject God ultimately will experience consequences for their choices. Read Revelation 9:20-21. How does this passage say those people will react?
20. If even God’s horrific judgment won’t soften a heart that is hardened against him, what do you think you can do to open the hearts of unbelievers that you interact with?
21. End your FIFTEEN by praying for God to give you a measure of his servant-hearted love even for those who hate or ignore him. Ask him to give you gracious influence in the lives of those who are on a dead-end path.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. What are your feelings about the Bible itself? Do you love it and read it eagerly every day? Are you intimidated by it and don’t know where to start? Do you consider it an obligation to know what’s in it? How do you actually engage with the Bible?
23. Read Revelation 10. Who are the main characters in this scene?
24. What is the angel holding? What do you think that object represents?

25. The angel tells John to “eat” the scroll. Why do you think he says that action, instead of telling John to simply “read” the scroll?
26. If the scroll represents the Bible, why do you think it is first “sweet” and then “sour”? In what ways does the Bible speak sweet things to us? In what ways does it reveal sour or harsh truths to us?
27. What can you do to regularly “eat” and truly internalize the Bible more in your life? Make one simple commitment today to take a next step in your journey with God’s Word.
28. Finish your FIFTEEN by praying for God’s Word to truly live in you and nourish you so that you have the energy to live the life that God prepared you for!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. How would you describe the reputation of the Christian church in our country today?
30. What attitude or posture of Christians has contributed to that reputation?
31. Now read about the “two witnesses” who represent the Church in Revelation 11:1-14. What powers do they have?
32. But what bad thing happens to them? And then what is their ultimate fate?
33. What consequences *will* face us, as a group of believers, if we bear witness to the truth of God in an unbelieving world?
34. What is it that gives you hope that your faithful witness and persecution will be worth it?
35. As you end your final FIFTEEN this week, pray for God’s strength and faithfulness to you. Ask his Spirit to give you the obedience, courage, and perseverance to represent him well until the end.

Week Three: *Survival in a Call-Out Culture*
Revelation 3:1-6

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. This week, we'll continue focusing on what it's like to live in a call-out culture. We'll also meditate on how Jesus would have us thrive individually and as a community. To start this off, we need to dive back into Revelation 3:1-6. What sticks out to you about this passage?
2. Does anything in this passage surprise you?
3. Why is Jesus "calling out" the church in Sardis?
4. What does Jesus promise to "the one who conquers"? Do you believe this applies to you?
5. What is your understanding of the term "reputation"? In our culture today, what things is our "reputation" based off of?
6. Often people have two views of themselves. One is their personal view of who they are. The second view, on the other hand, is a person's perception of how others see them. This could be described as their "reputation." With the growth of social media, this concept has heightened. For example, a person may see himself or herself as boring or "ordinary," yet their Instagram or Facebook account may highlight only the greatest of adventures they experience. Because of this, he or she knows that their followers probably see them as exciting and different. Have you experienced a difference between your own views of yourself and how others view you?
7. How has the difference between your reputation and your own self-view affected your life?
8. There is a third view of ourselves that we can and *should* always remember. This is not our view of ourselves, and it is not the world's view of us. Instead, it's the way we're viewed by our Heavenly Father. Because of what Christ has done, we are holy and righteous in the eyes of our Father. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN in prayer, thanking God for what he's done and how he sees us.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

9. Today we're going to talk about our "call-out" culture. Expert Pamela Paresky has written an article in which she talks about our society's way of judging others and exploiting their mistakes. She says, "In a call-out culture, witch hunts are back." We are eager to label others as either good or evil. What is wrong with this cultural pattern?
10. Where do you see this "call-out" culture the most in our society?

11. How have you experienced the effects of this “call-out” culture in your own life or seen it in the lives of others?
12. Read Luke 6:37-42. We know that all people have sinned and fall short of God’s standards (Romans 3:23). At the same time, Jesus warns us about the danger of trying to sit on the judgement throne. What is that danger?
13. How does the call-out culture contradict how God has handled our shortcomings?
14. End your FIFTEEN in prayer by thanking God for his grace that covers our imperfections. Ask him to help you treat others in the same way, through the Holy Spirit.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. Today we’re going to focus on the difference between truth and accusations. To start off, read Revelation 3:1-6 again.
16. As we talked about previously, living in a call-out culture means that we are quick to exploit the missteps of others. Is calling out others always a bad thing?
17. What do you believe is the difference between speaking truth and accusing others?
18. In Revelation 3:1-6, how does Jesus call out the church in Sardis? Is he speaking truth or accusing?
19. The truth is, Jesus does not sacrifice any truth with the church in Sardis. He cares too much about them to turn a blind eye and let the people drift away from his heart. However, he does *not* leave them to dwell on their mistakes. He continues by imploring them to turn back to him. He promises that they will inherit eternal life. Have you experienced Jesus’ call to turn and follow him? Reflect on this.
20. If Jesus speaks truth, who is the one who accuses?
21. Satan’s name literally translates to “the accuser.” While the Holy Spirit convicts, the devil accuses. Instead of making you want to turn to God and be restored, Satan tears you down with accusations of doubt, worthlessness, and a hopeless condition. What are some lies in your life that the devil has told you about yourself or your sin?
22. Read James 4:7-8. How can we respond to the devil’s accusations?
23. Sometimes, the issue with being judged or “called out” in society is that the devil uses those accusations to make us

believe lies about ourselves. Remember that when we resist the devil's schemes and invite Jesus into the situation, the devil must leave. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN in prayer, asking God to help you and your loved ones recognize the accusations the devil wants to plant in our minds. Ask God to overturn those lies and remind us of who we really are in him.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

24. As we talked about in Day One, our reputation weighs heavily on us. The church in Sardis likely felt that pressure. As people, why do we put so much weight on how we are perceived by others?

25. Read 1 Peter 2:12 and Ecclesiastes 7:1. Is there a balance to how much weight we put on our reputation? Should we not care at all?

26. Read Genesis 3:8-13. Once Adam and Eve realize their sin, they are afraid God will know what they've done. What do they do in response to this fear?

27. When we fear judgment and rejection, we hide. It's the natural response. What parts of your life have you tried to hide from God or others for fear of rejection or judgment?

28. All throughout the Bible, it's made apparent that *all* have sinned and fallen short. How does this change your feelings about rejection and the pressure to appear perfect?

29. Read Revelation 3:3-6 again. Just like us, the people in Sardis who "have not soiled their clothes" are not perfect. They too have sinned and fallen short. Why, then, does Jesus call them worthy?

30. Have you released the pressure to appear perfect, and given it to God?

31. How can you help others do the same?

32. Finish out your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you release the pressure to be perfect. Reflect on the fact that he sent his Son to pay the ultimate price for our imperfections. Thank God for this sacrifice, which clothes us in perfect righteousness.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

33. We have effectively "called out" the issues that come with living in a call-out culture. After taking some time to reflect and spend time in God's Word, what is a biblical way to address the shortcomings of others?

34. Unfortunately, our world is broken. We cannot expect people who do not follow Jesus to reflect his heart in the way they treat others. Read Ephesians 4:32. How can we respond when others are unfairly judging or exploiting us?

35. Have you let the fear of being judged keep you from living boldly and confidently for Jesus?

36. Reflect on Revelation 3:5. When you are in Christ, this is how the one true God sees you. How does this change your fear of judgment from others?

37. Can you help friends or family engage in a “call-out” culture in a loving, encouraging way? What might you say to them?

38. Finish our your FIFTEEN by asking God to forgive you for the times that you have not reflected his heart in the way you’ve judged others and engaged in this call-out culture. Ask him for the power to show honesty *and* grace, and to speak the truth in love. Pray that he will show you others who need guidance in this area as well. Thank God for all he’s given you and for renewing your mind so that you can show his heart to everyone he’s put in your life.