



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 182 - Seven Letters

(Revelation 1-3)

Seven Cities

Jesus Christ dictated letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. None of these churches operated in a vacuum. They were affected by the communities surrounding them, and Christ intended them to have a positive effect on those communities. Here is a brief description of the cities surrounding each of the seven churches:

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
important city, wealthy seaport, emperor worship, cult prostitutes	prosperous city, emperor worship, Jews and Gentiles persecuted Christians, athletic games	largest library, multiple temples	trade city, multiple gods	once great, now basking in its former glory	center of Greek culture	wealthy city, black wool, banking and medical center, self-sufficient

Both individuals and congregations are greatly affected by the communities in which they are located.

- Describe the community in which you live and that in which your church is located.
- How does your community compare to the cities of each of the seven churches.
- Which aspects of your community are assets for your congregation's work of sharing the Gospel?
- Which aspects of your community might be considered obstacles?
- What special opportunities and challenges can you see for your church where it is?

Commendations

Jesus *commended* five of the seven churches for the things they were doing right:

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
hated the work of the Nicolaitans	endured tribulation and poverty	remained in Christ despite persecution	patient endurance, grew in works	none	kept Christ's Word	none

- Which of these things would Jesus commend your congregation for?
- Which are some goals you can work together for?
- How would you suggest reaching these goals?

Rebukes

Jesus *rebuked* five of the seven churches for their compromises with the world and for losing the fervor of their faith:

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
abandoned first love	none	allowed paganism	tolerated a false prophetess	no zeal or energy	none	lukewarm

- Which of these rebukes would your congregation be in danger of receiving?
- What part can you play helping your congregation remedy these shortcomings?

Warnings

Jesus knew if each congregation continued compromising and growing colder, their people risked losing their faith and falling under God's wrath. To guard against this, He specifically warned each as to what would happen if they didn't repent and amend their ways:

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
Christ will remove lampstand	none	Christ will come and war against Nicolaitans	will throw false prophetess, followers on sickbed	wake up, or I'll come like a thief in the night	none	Christ will spit them from His mouth

- How do these warnings remind you of the daily need to repent, believe in Christ's salvation, and obey God's will more fervently?

Encouraging Promises

Jesus closes out each letter with a gracious invitation and wonderful promise to everyone who perseveres and conquers through faith:

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
eat of the tree of life	Christ to give the crown of life	will give hidden manna and white stone	will have dominion over the nations	name to be written in the book of life	Christ to make him or her a pillar in heaven	Christ stands at the door and knocks

- How can the promise of God's presence, His abiding strength, and our ultimate victory empower us in our daily struggles?