

LETTER 2 **SMYRNA**



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE SMYRNA: **THE SUFFERING CHURCH**

Revelation 2:8-11

WORSHIP

Read Psalm 95:1-7.

Prayer:

Dear Father in Heaven, Please give us discernment in the face of troubling news reports. Give us discernment to know when to pray, when to speak out, when to act, and when to simply shut off our screens and our devices, and to sit quietly in your presence, casting the burdens of this world upon the strong shoulders of the one who alone is able to bear them up. Amen.¹

FELLOWSHIP

In last week's message to the church in Ephesus, we saw the importance of holding fast to "the love you had at first." Have you thought about this in the past week? What has been your first love these days?

DISCUSSION

Read Revelation 2:8-11.

1. "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!" (v. 9)

How can it be that they were "yet... rich"?

Have you ever known someone monetarily poor but spiritually rich?
What were they like?

2. The messages to the churches that we see here are, in part, geographical: the church in Ephesus, the church in Pergamum, etc. Smyrna was a port city with population as large as 100,000.

What does it suggest that this message was directed to such a large and diverse group (e.g. is there an expectation of awareness and unity of the Christians in that place)?

What might be Jesus' message to the "church in Lake County" or to the "Chicagoland church"? What are our afflictions, poverty, and riches?

3. What is it that the church in Smyrna is "about to suffer" (v. 10)?

What is the endpoint to which the Christians there are called to be faithful?

Do you think there are righteous things that the church in Lake County is doing that might someday prompt suffering at the hands of others? If so, what things?

4. The word "crown" in verse 10 can be thought of as a wreath placed on the head of a victor/winner in an athletic contest. How do you imagine the crowns that will be given to us someday?

5. In v. 11, how are Christians to be "victorious", and what is the promise if they are? How would you describe the meaning of that promise?

6. Who is "the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (v. 8)?

Why was this description particularly relevant to the Christians in Smyrna?

What relevance does it have for us today?

LETTER WRITING CHALLENGE

Write a letter to a person you know who is hurting or struggling.

PRAYER

As you pray together, consider praying along these lines:

1. That we be rich in the things that matter most, and faithful no matter the cost.
2. Persecution of the Church.

According to Voice of the Martyrs (www.persecution.com), Christians are persecuted for their faith in more than 40 countries worldwide. Today as in ancient Smyrna, they face harassment, arrest, torture, even death. As we pray for one another, please remember to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.