



## Facing Pressure

### WEEK 2 DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### OVERVIEW

Last week we learned that the book of Revelation is divided into three sections: Chapter 1 is *What was*, Chapters 2 and 3 are *What is*, and Chapters 4-21 are *What is to come*. In this lesson, we will look at Chapters 2 and 3 to discover what John wrote to the seven churches in Asia Minor as they were embroiled in a culture whose values ran counter to God's will and Word.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As we study these seven churches, we'll see they demonstrated four responses amidst intense pressure.

1. The passion test.

##### **THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (Revelation 2:1-7)**

Under all the pressure their culture was placing on them, the Ephesians grew **cynical**. Though they were still helping the weak, caring for the poor, and reaching the lost, their heart for Jesus dimmed and they ended up just going through the motions. The Ephesians were doing the works *of* Christ, but they lost their passion *for* Christ. Verse 2:5 says, "*Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works...*" If we fail the passion test, then we are to repent and return to our first love—Jesus Christ.

- How do we return to our first love if we find ourselves going through the motions without a passion for Jesus?
- Cynicism is described as being motivated by self-interests. In what ways does self-interest interfere with Christian service?

2. The purity test.

**THE CHURCHES AT PERGAMUM & THYATIRA (Revelation 2:12-29)**

The churches at Pergamum and Thyatira had good deeds but poor doctrine and even poorer lifestyles. These churches were in the most pluralistic of cities. **Pluralism** means there were a multitude of faiths, and it diluted their beliefs.

- When the faithful Christians in both Pergamum and Thyatira were persecuted for their purity, they remained steadfast; however, others started asking questions like:

*Does God really say these activities are wrong? It seems like everyone's doing it.*

*Is there a way I can be accepted by both groups?*

*Does anyone really have the opportunity to tell what is wrong or right anyway?*

How do these questions tempt people to be both followers of Jesus as well as partakers in the immoral practices of culture?

3. The purpose test.

**THE CHURCHES AT SARDIS & LAODICEA (Revelation 3:1-6, 3:14-22)**

The churches at Sardis and Laodicea got lost in comfort and convenience, and they stopped caring and living intentionally. They were well known for **syncretism**—the merging together of opposing religions and philosophies.

- Syncretism occurs when world religions are mixed with self-made religion. Christianity is what God did for us. Every other world religion is what people do to try to reach God. Can you identify examples of modern day syncretism? How is the Christian church protected from syncretism?

4. The faith test.

**THE CHURCHES AT SMYRNA & PHILADELPHIA (Revelation 2:8-11, 3:7-13)**

The Christians of Smyrna and Philadelphia were faithful no matter the cost, and they chose to not give up or give in. They refused to compromise their passion, their purity, or their purpose.

- How did the Christians at Smyrna and Philadelphia pass the faith test?

## LIFE CHALLENGE

How do we keep our passion, purity and purpose? It starts with one thing—daily fill our minds and hearts with God's Word and presence. Purity, passion, and purpose all stem from our relationship with God. Our daily connection is the key. What can we do to be filled daily?

## PRAYER REQUESTS & CLOSE IN PRAYER