

WEEK TWO

SMYRNA: NO FEAR

GETTING STARTED

Choose one of the following discussion starters:

- Share a childhood fear you once held. How did you overcome it?
- What was a circumstance that was beyond your control? What was your response?

The challenge for the church at Smyrna was external, not internal. We can't always control the chaos. How can we be fearless in the midst of life's scariest stuff?

1. *Name your fears.* What are some prominent fears that we face in our culture today? Name a few and focus on one for the next two points.
2. *Rely on Christ's strength.* What does it look like to rely on Christ in this situation?
3. *Avoid future worry.* How can we demonstrate faithfulness in our approach to future challenges and concerns?

Read Revelation 2:8-11.

Watch the video for week two.

I AM . . .

The first and the last. In Revelation 2:8 Jesus says, "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'"

See page 41 for more insight.

- In the Monday daily devotional, J. K. says, “Jesus alone was *before* all gods and goddesses, and he alone would remain long *after* their departure. He was, is and forever shall be ‘the first and the last’” (p. 42). For further insight on this topic read John 8:53-58 and Colossians 1:15-20.
- How does Christ’s proclamation of being “first and last” give us hope today?
- The gospel we proclaim communicates an inclusive invitation to all who would hear what Jesus speaks, which is exclusive (only through Christ). In a culture that celebrates tolerance and pluralism, have you found this gospel message difficult to share and receive? Explain.

I KNOW . . .

Your tribulation, poverty and being slandered (Revelation 2:9).

See J. K.’s segment of the video teaching.

- Jesus knows all of our challenges and allows them. Does this surprise you? Why?
- Have you ever chosen not to rescue someone from their troubles while having their best interest in mind? Explain.
- In our video teaching today, Mike mentioned 1 Peter 5:7, which reminds us to cast “all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” Notice that this same caring God allows us to suffer along with people “throughout the world” (1 Peter 5:9-10). What is promised in the second half of verse 10?

I HAVE . . .

Nothing against you (Revelation 2:10).

See page 45 for more insight.

- “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

- It has been said that “we don’t fight for victory, but from victory.” How does this perspective help you to remain faithful in your struggles?
- Read Romans 5:3-5 and discuss the value of suffering.

I SAY . . .

Do not fear (be faithful) (Revelation 2:10).

See page 47 for more insight.

- J. K. says, “Fearlessness and faithfulness belong together” (p. 47). Has it ever occurred to you that your moment of tribulation is also a moment to express “fearlessness and faithfulness”? Discuss situations when you have had the opportunity to overcome rather than lose heart.

I WILL . . .

Allow you to be tested (Revelation 2:10).

See page 49 for more insight.

- “Jesus tests that we might be overcomers. The devil tempts that we might be overcome.” Why might this distinction matter to a Christ-follower?

I PROMISE . . .

To give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

See page 51 for more insight.

- First Corinthians 9:24-25 describes the kind of crown victorious athletes were awarded in the first century. It also suggests that such a crown was perishable. In contrast, we have been promised the “crown of life,” which is imperishable and assures us that we won’t be “hurt by the second death” (Revelation 2:11; see also James 1:12).
- Is the promise that you will receive a crown of life enough for you?

- How can we encourage one another to not just survive but thrive through these challenging times?
- Pray together as a group, giving thanks for the promised crown of life and for the Holy Spirit within us to strengthen us in tribulation. Consider praying Romans 12:9-16 over one another as you conclude this study.