

God's Warning to Seven Churches

BIBLE PASSAGE: Revelation 2–3

MAIN POINT: Jesus sent messages to the seven churches.

KEY PASSAGE: Revelation 21:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What will happen when Jesus comes back? Jesus will make all things new.

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Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Revelation opens with John's description of a vision. In the vision, Jesus gave John messages for seven local churches. Jesus told John to write these messages on a scroll and send them to the churches.

In most cases, Jesus commended the church for their good work, warned them about the areas in which they needed correction, and urged them to return to Him. Among other things, He warned the churches not to forget their love of the Lord. He encouraged them not to be afraid of being tested. He urged those who were surrounded by evil to not deny their faith. Each time, Jesus promised to reward those who remain faithful to Him.

The church is made up of people who have trusted in Jesus, who are committed to one another, and who meet together to worship Jesus and share the gospel. Jesus loves the church as His bride. (See Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9.) Jesus' message called the churches to turn away from their sin and remain faithful to Him. The Lord is slow to anger (Ex. 34-6-7) and patient, wanting everyone to repent (2 Pet. 3:9).

Jesus warned specific churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), but the problems they faced can still be found in churches today. Help preschoolers understand some of the problems the early churches faced: They did not love like they should, they believed false teaching and did wrong things, and they were lukewarm—useless to the cause of Christ.

We can pray for our churches to be faithful, effective instruments in spreading the gospel. We should love the church because Jesus loves the church. Through the church, Jesus helps believers work together to do God's plan. Finally, Jesus warned believers to stay alert because He will come like a thief when no one is expecting Him. Believers—then and now—must always be ready!



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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

God's Warning to Seven Churches

Revelation 2–3

- **Move with it:** Draw simple church images on paper and label each church with the name of a church in today's Bible story. Tape the pictures in various spots around the room. As you read each church's letter, stand next to the church's name.
- **Read letters:** Write the words to each church on a piece of paper and put it in an envelope. Open each letter and read it aloud during that church's part of the story.

John was on a small island when he saw a vision of Jesus. Jesus told John to write down a message for the churches in these seven cities: Ephesus (EF uh suhs), Smyrna (SMUHR nuh), Pergamum (PUHR guh muhm), Thyatira (THIGH uh TIGH ruh), Sardis (SAHR diss), Philadelphia (FIL uh DEL fih uh), and Laodicea (lay AHD ih SEE uh).

John obeyed Jesus. This is what he wrote: **“To the church in Ephesus: You keep working hard and are sad when people do evil things. You used to love God more, though. You need to love Him like that again.**

“To the church in Smyrna: You are poor and hurting, but really you are rich! I know that people say mean things to you. You might be put in jail or be killed, but do not be afraid.

“To the church in Pergamum: Your neighbors do evil things, but you are faithful. You tell others about Me even when it is hard. But not everyone in the church is doing what is right. Turn away from your sin and turn to Me!

“To the church in Thyatira: I know you are loving and faithful. You serve others. But some of you believe the lies you hear, and I will punish you. Keep believing the truth.

“To the church in Sardis: You used to love Me and be faithful to Me. You stopped serving Me and loving Me. Be ready for Me to come again. Stop sinning and remember the good news about Jesus.

“To the church in Philadelphia: You are a small church, but you listen to Me and obey My word. I am coming soon. Be ready and keep believing.

“To the church in Laodicea: You are not hot or cold, so you are not good for anything. I will spit you out of My mouth! **You think you are rich, but you are actually poor,** blind, and naked. **Come to Me, and I will make you rich.** I will make you see, and I will put clothes on you.

“I am here! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you will eat with Me.” **Jesus will reward every faithful and obedient believer.** John wrote, “Anyone who has ears should listen to the Spirit’s message to the churches.”

Christ Connection: Jesus loves the church. He warned seven churches and told them to turn away from their sin and follow Him. Jesus works through the church to help believers work together to do God’s plan.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD’S WORD?
GET
MORE!**

Invite preschoolers to check out this week’s devotionals to discover how God’s Word can help them grow in the gospel. Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Introduce THE STORY

SESSION TITLE: God's Warning to Seven Churches

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KEY PASSAGE: Revelation 21:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What will happen when Jesus comes back? Jesus will make all things new.

Welcome time

- “I Stand Amazed” song
- offering basket
- Allergy Alert download
- favorite toys related to the Bible story theme

Play the unit theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church's security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page

- “Finish the Pattern” activity page, 1 per child
- pencils or crayons

Guide the preschoolers to look at the church building images in each row and circle the picture that comes next.

SAY • Good job deciding which church building came next.

In today's Bible story, Jesus had a special message for seven different churches. Jesus had something important to say to each church. These are important messages for our church today, too.

Play “Loud Telephone”

Invite the children to sit down in a circle. Inform children that you are going to play a game of “Telephone,” but instead of whispering, the children are to repeat the message they hear to their neighbor in a normal voice. Choose one child to begin the game, and give her the message “Jesus is alive!” Encourage the first child to repeat the message to



the child on her right. When the message goes around the entire circle, choose another child to begin the game and give him a new message to share.

SAY • Each of us told our neighbors something true about Jesus! In our Bible story, Jesus had a seven different messages for seven different churches. We'll learn more in our Bible story.

Play a matching game

Print two copies of “Warning Signs” on heavyweight paper and cut them out. Mix up the cards and lay them faceup. Let the children study them as you read and explain each one, and then flip them over. For younger preschoolers, keep the cards faceup. Invite a preschooler to turn over two cards at a time. If a preschooler uncovers a match, he gets another turn. If not, the next player gets a turn. Continue play until preschoolers find all matches.

SAY • Good job matching the warning signs. These signs warn us about what is coming. In today's Bible story, Jesus had messages for seven churches. Jesus loved these churches. He wanted to encourage them to love Him most of all. He also wanted to warn them about some things they were doing wrong.

- “Warning Signs”
printable, 2 copies
- scissors

Transition to tell the story

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite the preschoolers to pretend to write letters as they walk to Bible study.

- countdown video
(optional)

Teach THE STORY

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Introduce the Bible story

SAY • Have your parents ever told you to look both ways before you crossed a street? Your parents and family love you and want to protect you from danger! In our Bible story, Jesus had a message for seven different churches. He wanted to encourage them to love Him most of all and to warn them about some things they were doing wrong.

Watch or tell the Bible story

Place a bookmark at Revelation 2 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • We can trust the Bible because it is true! God gave us His words in the Bible. Today's story comes from the Book of Revelation.

Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

Talk about the Bible story

SAY • **Jesus sent messages to seven churches** because Jesus loves the church and wanted them to turn away from sin. The churches were disobeying God in different

- Bible
- bookmark
- "God's Warning to Seven Churches" video (optional)
- Bible Story Picture Poster

- Main Point Poster
- Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

ways, but Jesus wanted each one to remember the truth, turn from sin, and follow Him.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline or big story circle as you ask the following review questions:

1. Who gave messages to John? (*Jesus*)
2. How many churches did Jesus have a message for? (*seven*)
3. What message did Jesus give to the churches? (*Answers will vary. Guide preschoolers as needed.*)
4. What did Jesus promise to do for every faithful and obedient believer? (*reward them*)
5. Who did John say should listen to the messages? (*anyone with ears*)

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Our big picture question is, *What will happen when Jesus comes back? Jesus will make all things new.*

While we wait for Jesus to come back and make all things new, we can listen to His messages to the churches and follow Him. We need Jesus' help to follow Him, but Jesus loves us and will help us.

• Big Picture Question Poster

Practice the key passage

Open your Bible to Revelation 21:5. Read the key passage aloud several times. Sing together the key passage song, "Making Everything New."

SAY • Our key passage tells us that Jesus is going to make everything new. Jesus will undo all the ways sin has hurt the world He made and the people He loves. We can look forward to that day!

• Key Passage Poster
• "Making Everything New" song

Transition to experience the story

Experience THE STORY

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LOW PREP

Turn away from sin

Guide the preschoolers to stand in the middle of the classroom. Inform children that you are going to read out a series of choices and if it is a right choice, they should continue to face you. If it's a wrong choice, the children should turn towards the back. After each choice, remind the children to return to facing you. Consider using the following statements as choices:

- Obeying your parents
- Not coming when your mom calls your name
- Not being nice to your friends
- Sharing your toys with your friends

SAY • In our game, we turned away from the wrong choices! **Jesus sent messages to seven churches.** One of the churches was in a town called Sardis. The church in Sardis had stopped serving Jesus. Jesus warned them to turn away from their sin.



LOW PREP

Shout it out

Invite children to repeat the names of the churches in different voices: loud, soft, deep, opera singing, squeaky mouse, and so forth. Ephesus (EF uh suhs), Smyrna (SMUHR nuh), Pergamum (PUHR guh muhm), Thyatira

(THIGH uh TIGH ruh), Sardis (SAHR diss), Philadelphia (FIL uh DEL fih uh), and Laodicea (lay AHD ih SEE uh).

SAY • Jesus sent messages to seven churches. Jesus loves the church. He warned seven churches and told them to turn away from their sin and follow Him. Jesus works through the church to help believers work together to do God's plan.

Experiment with a thermometer

Fill a pitcher with very warm water (not scalding) and another pitcher with cold water. Show preschoolers the thermometer and explain that the red line goes up when something is warm and down when something is cool. The number at the top of the red line is the temperature. Place the thermometer in the empty cup and wait a few seconds.

Explain that the thermometer is now showing the room's temperature. Add water from one of the pitchers to the cup. Observe the new temperature. Invite preschoolers to predict what will happen to the temperature of the water when you add cold water, warm water, or ice.

SAY • Jesus sent messages to seven churches. Jesus told the church at Laodicea that they were not hot or cold. Jesus was not talking about their temperature, though. Jesus was talking about what they did for His kingdom. Jesus loved the Laodiceans. He wanted them to turn from their sin and follow Him.

- thermometer
- plastic pitchers, 2
- cups
- ice

Tip: Be sure your water is not hotter than your thermometer can read.

Prepare a meal

Provide toy food, toy plates, and toy utensils for the children. Instruct the preschoolers to find a partner. One partner should gather a couple pieces of toy food, a plate, and some utensils. Once the first partner returns with the

- toy food
- toy plates
- toy utensils

supplies, encourage the children to pretend to have a meal together. When the children “finish” their meal, instruct the first partner to return the supplies, and allow the second partner to come and gather supplies for a second meal. Play as time allows.

SAY • Just like we shared a meal with our partner, Jesus promised to eat with those who let Him in. Jesus wants to be with the church. **Jesus sent messages to seven churches** to warn the churches because Jesus loves the church! Jesus knows that trusting in Him and following Him is the best choice for everyone.

Make church art

- construction paper
- envelopes
- jumbo craft sticks
- markers
- glue

Give each preschooler a sheet of paper and an envelope. Show a preschooler how to glue her open envelope to her paper. Glue the flap to the paper as well so the pocket is left open. Encourage her to use markers to draw a door on the envelope and a cross above the flap to form a church. Then give her four jumbo craft sticks and invite her to use markers to decorate each one to look like a person. The preschooler may then place her craft stick people in the pocket of the envelope as if they are people at church. Write the main point on each preschooler’s artwork.

SAY • Jesus loves the church. **Jesus sent messages to seven churches.** He warned them to turn away from their sin and follow Him. Jesus works through the church to help believers work together to do God’s plan.

Snack

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Guide preschoolers to clean their areas. Take a restroom break and wash hands. Gather preschoolers for snack time. Thank God for the snack.

Serve heart-shaped cookies or sandwiches for snack. Talk about how Jesus loved the churches so much that He sent them messages. Remind the preschoolers that we can listen to Jesus' messages, too. Just like the churches Jesus wrote to, Jesus wants us to follow Him and turn away from sin.

- countdown video (optional)
- Allergy Alert download
- snack food
- paper cups and napkins

Transition

When a child finishes her snack, guide her to throw away any trash. She may select a book or puzzle to examine, play quietly with play dough or a favorite toy, or color the Bible story coloring page.

Offer the journal page and invite preschoolers to draw a picture of a scroll. Inform the children that a scroll was used like a letter in Bible times. Pray for the children.

SAY • God, thank You for sending messages to the seven churches. You love Your church, and You want to help the church follow You! Give us hearts that want to listen to You and obey You. Help us to follow You. Amen.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.

- books
- puzzles
- play dough
- Journal Page printable, 1 per child
- Bible Story Coloring Page
- crayons
- Big Picture Cards for Families: Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers