To The Well Community Church...

A Guide for Studying the Letters
to the Churches in Revelation

THE WELL
COMMUNITY CHURCH

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About This Study

The seven churches in Revelation get to hear some feedback from God on how they are doing. As God speaks to them, so He speaks to us as His church. We will listen to the words God has for His early church, and see that they apply to us, His people as The Well, here in Silver Spring, today.

By hearing and obeying His word to us, His people, we will shine more here in a place and time that so desperately needs His church to live for Him, with each other, and among the lost in this place.

How to Use This Guide

Interact with God and the Scriptures for each week using the “Personal Daily Study” and “Study Questions” associated with the main Scripture for each week. Then in your 3Ds, use the discussion guide to spend time with God and each other in Life, Bible, and Prayer.

Personal Daily Study

Spend the entire week on the given section, slowly reading and rereading it in order to deeply, and accurately, interact with God. Also consider the below supplemental questions per each given week (You can also check out our other simple guides online for additional Bible study resources at **thewellsilverspring.org/resources**.)

What Does It Say?

First, we ask: *"What does this say?"*

Read the passage a few times and carefully observe the words; give full attention to what it says. The purpose is to saturate in the content of the passage.

Look for things such as: important words (what's being talked about), conjunctions (how is one idea connected to another), admonitions (something being commanded), contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repeated phrases/ words, mood, and grammatical construction (verb tenses, prepositional phrases, etc.).

Linger here, listening to what God is saying in the detail of His words. Write down questions that the passage raises for you, things you don't understand, ideas you'd like to pursue further.

What Does It Mean?

We now ask ourselves: *"What does it mean?"*

Use the observations you just gathered, the context of the section, and other passages of scripture to get at the meaning of what you have read.

Consider using **a commentary,** the **GROW** or **SOAP** Bible study tools, the **ESV Study Bible** notes, or other resources to help.

Next, summarize the main truth you heard from God in His word.

Consider writing out the synthesized truth in your own words. Outline, diagram, draw, or flowchart the line of thought or main idea of the passage. What jumped out?

So What?

Now we must ask: *"So what"*

After meeting God in His word, we cannot ignore, or walk away unchanged. Why does the truth you heard matter to you today?

> Is there something new to believe, cling to, or a sin to confess?
>
> Is there something for you to do (or not do) in response to what you have read?
>
> Is there someone with whom to share this truth (believer *or* nonbeliever)?

Do not forget to apply the gospel for your forgiveness, and as the reason compelling your obedience:

Christ is enough!

He has forgiven you for _____
and He is the reason why we _____.

Week One

Revelation 1

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

What is highlighted about who Jesus is in this chapter?

What imagery is used and what does it signify?

SO WHAT?

If this is who Jesus is, how does this impact to your life today?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Two

Revelation 2:1-7

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Three

Revelation 2:8-11

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Four

Revelation 2:12-17

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Five

Revelation 2:18-29

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Six

Revelation 3:1-6

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Seven

Revelation 3:7-13

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Week Eight

Revelation 3:14-22

QUESTIONS

Do the above process, slowly seeking Him, deeply listening to His words, and journaling as you interact with the living God. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

> *What does it say?*
>
> *What does it mean?*
>
> *So what?*

What is the context of the church this letter is written to here? What issues are they dealing with? Pressures facing? It might be helpful to reference a study bible or commentary (see resources pg. 13 particularly the free one from The Gospel Coalition.)

Does this letter have a commendation, rebuke, or both? Describe.

How does this letter contextualize to our modern day lives?

What element of Jesus' heart is revealed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for you personally?

Is there any sense of truth or relevance in this letter for our church?

How does this letter draw you closer heart of Jesus either through worship, confession, or action?

Spend time praying the themes of this letter, both for yourself and those God has placed in your life.

Together With Your 3D Group

You'll find the specific supplementary questions for the scripture passages in the above schedule. You can also find the full details for 3D discussion in our **3D Meeting Guide**. Here's a summary:

Bible

First, discuss the Bible passage from the week:

1. What does the passage say? What jumps out to you? What key ideas, commands, promises, words, ideas, etc, struck you this week?
2. How would you summarize the main truth from the section? How might this inform your thinking and shape the way we are to live?
3. Where is the gospel connected to this truth? What does this highlight about who we are, or about who God is?

Life

Share about how this truth impacts your life today:

For you today, why does this specifically matter?

Is there something God calling you to obey in response to His word?

Is there something you need to do or not do? Something to believe, promise to cling to, or a sin to confess?

Is there someone to share this truth with?

Prayer

Pray throughout your time together.

Offer praises to God when something encouraging is shared; ask for help from God as challenges are shared.

Close in prayer.

Spend time to respond to God's truth in the scriptures and from your conversation.

Praise Him.

Confess sin to Him.

Thank Him.

Ask Him for His power and provision.

Resources

Here are some good resources to consider when getting to know God and growing to live for Christ.

Recommended Resources

Revelation For You by Tim Chester
This accessible expository guide opens up Revelation for new and mature Christians alike. It is a mix of commentary and personal devotion, and is really useful in small groups or personal time with the Lord.

Blessed: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Revelation by Nancy Guthrie
This book covers the full text of the book of Revelation, exploring its call to patient endurance as God's sovereign plans for judgment and salvation are worked out in the world. In this book, Guthrie shows how Revelation is less about when Jesus will return and more about who we are to be, what we are to do, and what we can expect to endure as we wait for Jesus to return to establish his kingdom in the new creation.

The NIV Application Commentary: Revelation by Craig Keener
This is an accessible commentary through the entire book of Revelation, geared to help readers understand the text in its original context as well as apply it to life today.

Bibles & Commentaries

English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible
The ESV Study Bible is a great resource - everyone should own one. Short commentary on each book of the Bible. You'll love this Bible for the passages above.

The Gospel Coalition Commentaries | **thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/revelation**
TGC has put together a collection of wonderful, accessible, and free digital commentaries.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible
Online pdf is free and solid.

Online Media

BibleProject | **bibleproject.com**

hey have solid videos for every book of the Bible, themes that flow through the Scriptures, and theology in general.

Precept Austin | **preceptaustin.org**

Online resource pool with tons of resources, a little much to sort through, but many are helpful.

SOAP

SCRIPTURE

Begin reading a passage in the bible (if reading the bible is new for you, start in one of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). Stop when something jumps out.

Take a moment to rephrase or summarize what has jumped out to you. What is God saying in this? Write it down. Considerwhy God brought this section/idea/word to your attention. Write these reflections down.

OBSERVE

1. What words, themes, or phrases stick out?
2. Does the passage present a specific command or promise?
3. What questions does the passage raise for you?
4. What is the surrounding context of the passage, how does this impact what you have just read?
5. Summarize, in a sentence or two, the main idea/principle of the passage.

APPLY

1. How does the passage connect with your life right now?
2. Does this prompt you to believe something you didn't before? Is God prompting you to do (or not do) something you weren't doing before? Is God prompting you to share something you haven't shared before?
3. Write, specifically, a way to obey God in response to what you just read.

PRAY

Nowtalk to God.

1. Praise Him for who He is.
2. Confess where you fall short.
3. Ask for further clarity, guidance and understanding of the passage.
4. Talk transparently with Him about any frustrations, fears, doubt, or confusion.
5. Ask Him for the power to respond and obey.
6. Thank Him for Jesus, His forgiveness and His love, that is your motivation to obey.

GROW

GET IN IT: PRAY, REFLECT, OBSERVE

Read + Observe Everything Within the Passage - What Does it Say?

1. Before you start reading spend time being still. Ask God to show you what's on your heart and mind. Prayerfully ask Him for a desire to know and love Him more. Ask Him to meet you in this time with Him in the Bible and to change you to be more like His Son.

2. Read the passage a few times and carefully observe the words; give full attention to what it says. The purpose of *observation* is to saturate yourself completely with the content of the passage. Look for things such as: important words (what's being talked about), conjunctions (how is one idea connected to another), admonitions (something being commanded), contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repeated phrases/words, mood, and grammatical construction (verb tenses, prepositional phrases, etc.). Linger here, listening to what God is saying in the detail of His words.

3. Ask questions. This is the bridge between *reading* the passage and *understanding* it. Don't rush this step (even if think you know the answers). Ask yourself many *questions for understanding* such as: Who is writing? Who are the characters? What's the meaning of…? I wonder why…? What's the relationship between…? What is written before and after the passage (context is everything)? What is unexpected in this passage? What rubs me wrong about this passage? How does this fit into the grand story of the scriptures (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Culmination)? What do I learn about myself from this passage? What do I learn about God in this passage? What is the definition of…? Etc.

RESOURCES: PRAY, INTERPRET, ANSWER

Tools to Help You Answer Your Questions - What Does it Mean?

The goal here is to use resources to help unleash the meaning. You want to be careful not to bring your own assumptions, perspectives, thoughts, background, and experiences to the text. Though our experiences are helpful, presuppositions can also result in an incorrect, shallow, or unbiblical meaning. Interpreting the passage flows out of your previous questions for understanding (above). Use some of these tools below to help you. Aim to discover the author's purpose in writing.

1. Use the passage and surrounding context: Look before, after, and in your passage to answer as many questions for understanding as possible. Allow scripture to interpret scripture. Context is everything.
2. Pray. Reading the Bible is your conversation with God. Remember to keep talking with Him. Ask Him for clarity and answers; wrestle with Him over hard truths. Confess, rejoice, seek Him.
3. Define words: Look in a dictionary to discover the meaning of key words.
4. Compare translations: Read the passage in several translations to hear it afresh.
5. Study cross-references: Use the footnotes to find similar verses. We recommend the ESV Study Bible.
6. Concordances: A concordance is an alphabetical topical index of Bible passages. You may have one in the back of your Bible. Look up the topic of your passage to find parallel verses. You can find three great concordances here: http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/.
7. Discuss it with others: Share observations and questions with other believers (3D's). How do others understand this passage? What can you learn from their questions and answers?

8. Commentaries/Bible Atlas/Bible dictionary: These are very helpful in providing background to the geography, history, and culture of biblical times (particularly for harder passages)
9. Check out www.bestcommentaries.com. We recommend the NIV Application Commentary Series, Matthew Henry Commentary (Free Online) and God's Word for You Series.
10. Online Study Tools: www.blueletterbible.org | www.esvbible.org | www.bible.org | www.biblestudytools.com
11. Sermons + Articles: www.desiringgod.org | www.thegospelcoalition.org | www.monergism.com

OUTLINE IT: PRAY, SUMMARIZE, SYNTHESIZE

Ways to Write Out What You Are Learning - What is the Main Idea/Truth?

Now you're ready to clarify what you've learned about God and yourself in this passage. You've taken it apart; now put it back together. Choose from these helpful ways to synthesize what you've just read.

1. Outline the text; capture the specific flow of the argument or story.
2. Write the passage in your own words. Make sure to capture the main idea.
3. Illustrate, draw, paint, what is happening in the passage.
4. Journal about what stood out to you in the passage, and pray through it.
5. Diagram or flowchart the key concepts in the text.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? PRAY, APPLY, TRANSFORM

Obey God's Word in Your Life Today - How Do I Respond?

Knowing God in His word is a core piece of your life-changing relationship with Him. It is crucial to stop and decide to respond to God in obedience. He loves you. You can trust Him, believe in Him, and obey Him.

1. *What am I to believe?* – Did I learn something new about God or myself? Is there any important teaching on which I need to build my faith? Is there truth to understand about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, grace, mercy, sin, forgiveness, hope, eternal life, suffering etc.?

   Remember the Gospel: How is this passage good news to me because of Jesus?

2. *What am I to do?* – How does my faith translate into specific action? Is there something I am compelled to do? Is there sin I must confess to God or someone in my life? To confess sin, go below surface actions to the "why" motivation. How does the gospel offer what my sinful motivation does not provide? How does Jesus motivate my faith to obey in specific action?

   Remember the Gospel: How did Jesus do all I did not, forgive me, empower me to obey?

3. *Whom can I tell?* - Is there a person who knows Christ who can help me obey? Is there someone (Christian or not) who might be encouraged, challenged, or resonate with this truth? Does this passage create questions or doubts I can investigate with other believers?

   Remember the Gospel: How does God's grace to me in Christ spill over to others?