**DISCUSSION GUIDE :: SESSION 5**

**CHRIST WILL WIN OVER EVIL**
**LETTER TO THYATIRA**
**REVELATION 2:18-29**
**02/26/2017**

**MAIN POINT**

Jesus calls His followers to a standard of living that sets them apart from the rest of the world.

**INTRODUCTION**

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How would you describe our culture’s view of sex? How is sex portrayed in various forms of media (social, movies, blogs, etc.)?

What do you think is the primary source that people in our community end up trusting for their convictions about sexual behavior?

Look around and it seems like we live in a world that is becoming increasingly sexualized and immoral, but the truth is this has always been an issue in the world and one Christians have had to learn how to navigate. Today we will look at Jesus’ letter to the church at Thyatira, a church being led astray because they looked to the wrong source for their convictions on sexual behavior. Jesus’ letter to this church warns us of the seriousness of sexual sin in God’s eyes.

**UNDERSTANDING**

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ REVELATION 2:18-29.**

These verses from Revelation 2 include Jesus’ letter to the church at Thyatira, one of seven letters Jesus inspired John to write to specific churches.

From this passage, what do we learn about the strengths of the church at Thyatira? What are its weaknesses?

What does the symbolic name “Jezebel” reveal about the women in this church (see 2 Kings 9:7-37)?

Verses 21-23 include Jesus’ harsh word of warning to the guilty in Thyatira. Why is sexual immorality so serious in God’s eyes?

Christ’s compliment to the church at Thyatira parallels what he said to the Ephesians in the previous letter. They are growing in their many activities. They are known for their love, faith, service, and perseverance. They were not content to
stand still in loving deeds and faithful perseverance. They had grown in faith and thus were stronger in love than when they first came to know Christ. But the criticism Christ has is severe. All their growth in love and faith was overshadowed by the success of a pernicious teacher, code-named “Jezebel.” As a result of her teachings and actions, some Christians of Thyatira were brazenly practicing open sexual immorality in the name of “being tolerant.” In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul helps us better understand why God calls us to a high standard in regards to sexuality.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11 AND 18-20.**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. How do each of the sexual sins Paul describes in verses 9-10 go against God’s plan for sex?

How should our actions regarding sexual immorality be different, according to verse 11? What role does the gospel play in our understanding of biblical sexuality?

Now read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. How do we see the truth of the gospel confirmed in verses 18-20? What does it mean that our bodies are not our own?

Do you agree that sexual sins have a more personal impact than “every other sin”?

Paul communicates a difference between sex and other physical acts. “Every other sin” that we commit has an effect outside our bodies, but sexual immorality impacts us in a more personal way. We can also infer that the opposite is true—that following God’s plan for sex and sexuality will be especially fulfilling for us.

How might Christians appear different to a fallen world if we lived up to a higher calling in regards to sex, as Jesus challenged the church at Thyatira to do?

As western culture continues to move away from its Christian roots, our Christian lifestyles will seem increasingly odd and old-fashioned. This is especially true when it comes to our beliefs about sex and sexuality.

Looking back at Revelation 2:18-29, what do you think Jesus’ promise in verses 26-27 means? What do you appreciate most about His promise to those who overcome temptation in this section?

Jesus’ letters to these churches include several promises to those who stood firm in their faith throughout the various threats and temptations they faced. All of these promises center around eternal life with Jesus. For the Thyatirans, there is some indication of what overcomers will be doing as they enjoy eternal life. They will share in Christ’s authority over the nations. The Father granted Christ the authority to rule the nations because of his willing death (Phil. 2:6-11). Christ, in turn, wills to share that ruling authority with those who overcome. A further reward of the overcomer is to receive the “morning star,” a reference to Christ Himself (see Rev. 22:16). Christ knew these churches intimately, even their most extreme sins. But He still offered them the hope of eternity with Him if they repented of their sins and persevered in their faith. This truth stirs up both conviction and repentance in our hearts as well.

**APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What characteristics of your life consistently show others that you are a different and changed person, focused on the cause of Christ above your personal desires? In what areas of your life do you need to work on this?

Practically speaking, how can being laser-focused on the cause of Christ help us run from sexual sins?
For those of us who are married, what can we do to be more open with our spouses about reflecting God’s plan for marriage? For those of us who are single, what impact does today’s study have on our lives for the week ahead?

PRAY

Close in prayer, asking God to lead the individuals and couples at our church in healthy relationships. Pray that we will look to God’s Word and the Holy Spirit as our guides for right behavior. Pray that we would take up Jesus’ charge to the church at Thyatira as our own and that we would be a beacon of light in our sin-darkened world.

COMMENTARY

REVELATION 2:18-29

2:18. Thyatira was 30 miles southeast of Pergamum on the Lycus River. Each of its trade guilds was devoted to a patron god or goddess, and social events centered on their worship. The pressure for Christians to participate in this idolatrous lifestyle, both for economic and social reasons, was great. The letter to Thyatira is the longest of the seven messages and the centerpiece of all seven. This is odd, considering that Thyatira was the smallest and least consequential city of the group. Also, closer study shows that the spiritual battle being waged at Thyatira is parallel to the battle to be waged in the end times (Rev. 14-18). Christ, for the only time in Revelation, is called the Son of God.

2:19. Unlike the church at Ephesus, the church at Thyatira was not guilty of a lack of love. Significant spiritual growth was taking place.

2:20. Jezebel involved her followers in the same sins as those that infected the church at Pergamum—sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols. These sins are mentioned in reverse order from the letter to the church at Pergamum (v. 14). This reversal is a literary device that calls even more attention to the connection between the two. “Jezebel” was likely a nickname recalling the idolatrous queen of the northern king of Israel in 1 and 2 Kings.

2:21-23. "Great tribulation" is used here not for the time of unparalleled suffering just before Christ’s second coming, as in Rev 7:14 (Dan. 12:1; Mat. 24:21), but for a time of intense affliction of an unknown nature. Its use foreshadows the time of great affliction to come upon the entire earth (Rev. 3:10; 7:14). The children of Jezebel are not her literal children, but spiritual “children” who have committed themselves to her false teaching. This group will be killed with the plague, a foreshadowing of widespread death by plague later in the book (e.g., 6:8). The strong parallels between Jezebel and Babylon, the great harlot of the latter part of the book (16:17-19:5), as well as the startling usage of "great tribulation," suggests Jezebel was a first-century preview of Babylon the Great.

2:24-25. The viewpoint and lifestyle associated with Jezebel (v. 20) are now unmasked as the deep things of Satan, meaning that this false belief and behavior originated with the Devil. The other members of the church at Thyatira not in league with Jezebel were asked to hold on to the faithful acts Christ had commended in verse 19.

2:26-29. Christ includes a special word to the one who does my will to the end, another reference to the need to persevere in Christian morals until he comes. In Revelation 1:6 believers had been called a “kingdom and priests” Now this is expanded by the quotation from Psalm 2:9. They will share in Christ’s authority over the nations. Christ will rule with an iron scepter (to maintain control, as a shepherd keeps control over his flock). Believers will share this rule, even going so far as to dash them in pieces like pottery. The full establishment of the kingdom of God, after Christ returns to earth, will require all forces of evil, all hostile powers to be completely subdued. The Father granted Christ the authority to rule the nations because of his willing death (Phil. 2:6-11). Christ, in turn, wills to share that ruling authority with those who overcome. (Matt. 19:28 and 1 Cor. 6:2 also teach the role of saints as judges.) A further reward of the overcomer is to receive the morning star. Morning stars appear only when night is over and a new day is at hand. The key for interpreting this is Revelation 22:16, where Christ is called the bright Morning Star. The reward is Christ himself, who will end the long night of sin’s rule in the universe. Verse 29 repeats the regular invitation to hear and heed the message.