



Cuyahoga
Valley Church

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

Week of 9.13.26

Revelation 2:1-11 // Joe Valenti

Please take the opportunity to revisit the CVC Equip
Portrait of a Healthy LifeGroup on a regular basis

CONNECT (10 MIN)

- ① On Sunday, Pastor Joe shared some examples of possible Google reviews that one might encounter for the church in Ephesus and the church in Smyrna. Have you ever encountered a particularly funny or off-the-wall review for a product, store, or experience? Take some time to share these in your LifeGroup.

EXPLORE (30 MIN)

Create Context (5 min):

HERE is the Sermon Recap video playlist on Vimeo.

Study & Discussion (25 min)

Read Revelation 2:1-11.

- ① Think again about those possible Google reviews from the sermon on Sunday. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. While we humans are often limited in our views and understandings by what we can and cannot see, God is not so limited. When it comes to the hearts of individuals, and the hearts of churches, God sees clearly and rightly every time. This is true when it comes to the churches in the book of Revelation, and it's true in our individual hearts as well.
 - Take a moment to think about CVC as a whole and about your LifeGroup in particular - if Jesus were to look right at CVC, or right at your LifeGroup, what do you think He would say about our hearts as a whole?
 - Now take a moment to reflect on your own individual heart. Think about when you first came to know and love Jesus. Is your love for Jesus burning bright as it once did, or have you in some sense lost your first love, like those in Ephesus?
 - Think about the church in Smyrna in particular - from outward appearances Smyrna might have seemed like it was struggling, but from Jesus' view this was a church that was faithfully clinging to and loving Him.
 - For those who have worked a long time in ministry (vocationally or as lay leaders in the church or in another ministry setting), there can be seasons of faithful living for Jesus characterized by a deep love for Him that don't seem, in the short term, to be bearing much fruit. How can the example of the church in Smyrna encourage faithful Christians who feel stuck in the midst of frustrating or overwhelming external circumstances?



- ② Where are you most tempted to see the world in general, and your life in particular, with eyes that are focused on the temporary - on this life? What are some things that help you to see reality - in the world, in the church, and in your own life - with the eyes of Jesus?
- ③ Roughly 60 years after the book of Revelation was written and delivered to Smyrna (and other places also), a Christian leader named Polycarp - from Smyrna - would be killed (martyred) for his faith in Jesus. Before his death, he was urged that if he would just curse the name of Jesus Christ, he would be set free. In response, Polycarp is recorded to have said, "For eighty-six years I have been his servant, and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Polycarp understood quite well something that Pastor Joe said on Sunday: "Suffering and death in this life are not all that dangerous in the grand scheme of things."
- When you think about Polycarp's commitment to Jesus in the face of death, what encourages you and convicts you?
 - Sometimes, suffering and death in this life can feel incredibly dangerous when we are walking through suffering or experiencing a death of someone we love - or facing our own mortality.
 - Think of and, if you're willing, share about a time when suffering and death have felt dangerous to you.
 - In that season, what encouraged you in your faith in Jesus?
 - Who are some people who equipped you to see and pursue and trust Christ in the midst of that season?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Consider Pastor Joe's words on Sunday that, "Jesus isn't minimizing your pain - He's telling you that it's not final."

- In this life, there will be suffering and pain some of the time. But Scripture tells us that "this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." What does it look like for Christians in general to keep this perspective? What about your life would change if you in particular remembered this at all times?
- Does it bring you comfort to remember that your pain right now is meaningful, but not final? Why or why not?

RESOURCES

A Tale of Two Kingdoms Recommended Resources: https://cvconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/TaleOfTwo_Resources_CVC.pdf

CVC Blog: <https://cvconline.org/category/articles/>

PRAY AND APPLY

- Pray for rekindled love. Pray for anyone whose obedience has quietly become duty instead of delight, that God would reignite real affection for Jesus.
- Pray for those walking through loss, illness, slander, or real cost for following Jesus, that they'd know his nearness and hold on to hope.
- Pray for courage to see our own hearts as God sees them, not just as our resume of good works makes them look.
- Pray for believers around the world facing real tribulation for Christ's name, that they'd stand firm and know the crown of life awaits.
- Pray for CVC as a church to remember where we've fallen from, repent honestly, and return to the works – and the love – we had at first.



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WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please take a moment to share these announcements with your group.

INVITE

Baptism - September 20

We are excited that you have indicated your desire to be baptized! Click [here](#) to learn more about baptism and apply for upcoming opportunities.

Pizza with the Pastor - September 27

We'd love the opportunity to get to know you and help you get to know us. Join us for Pizza with the Pastor, It's a relaxed, informal time to connect with one of our pastors, hear more about CVC, ask questions, and discover your next steps. Join us at CVC in Lower Level 114 at CVC after the 11:15 service. Register [HERE](#)

JOIN CVC - October 11

To become a member of our church, attendance at two classes is required. The first class is called Explore CVC, and the second is Join CVC. Completion of both is necessary for membership. Explore CVC is required before you can take Join CVC. [Register here.](#)

CVC KIDS

CVC Kids and CVC Youth Parent Connect - September 20

New to CVC Kids or CVC Youth? Join us for lunch! Following the 11:15 service on September 20, parents of children and students are invited to lunch with the CVC Kids and CVC Youth teams. You'll have a chance to meet our staff, learn more about our ministries and how things work, and ask any questions you may have. Whether your family is new to CVC or you're a longtime CVC attender with a child or student who is just getting connected, we'd love to have you join us! [Sign up here!](#)