



REVELATION

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 1

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could visit any city in the world, where would you go and what would you do when you got there?

LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME: WHO WILL YOU WORSHIP?

Imagine for a moment you're a citizen of ancient Rome, surrounded by grandiose temples to Greco-Roman gods and looming symbols of Rome's insurmountable military, economic, and political power. You've never encountered a force more imposing or all-encompassing than the might of Rome.

To visit key places, like the market or hospital, you must first make an offering to a certain god or goddess, sometimes even the Emperor himself, and if you refuse, you're met with suspicion or open hostility. You may remember friends or family members who met brutal ends because of their unwillingness to worship these gods. There is no such thing as separation of church and state—politics and religion are intricately connected along with economic and social life. As a follower of Jesus, it is extremely difficult to remain faithful to the One True God while also participating in the Roman way of life.

Revelation is, first and foremost, a message to Christians who lived thousands of years ago, people who were struggling to navigate life in a world that begged for them to worship anything and everything apart from God. How could they remain faithful in an environment like this? And what about the Christians who were wealthy because they took advantage of the system?

This idea isn't all that foreign to us today. There are still empires all around us that compete for our affection and attention, for our worship; whether it's the empire of politics, economics, entertainment, careerism, beauty, or even the empire of our own

ego. We live in a world that calls us to worship all kinds of things. What does it look like therefore to persevere, to remain faithful, and to avoid compromise? This is what the story of Revelation is all about.

Take a moment to discuss this idea with your group. Put yourself in the shoes of an ancient Christian living in Rome. How difficult would it be to not give into the worship of other gods so you could participate in everyday life? How do you see elements of this dynamic still at work today?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What words come to mind for you when you think about the Book of Revelation? What experiences (positive, negative, or neutral) have you had with this book?
2. Why do you think so many people have an obsession with Revelation and the idea that it speaks about the end of the world?
3. What are you hoping to take away from this book?
4. What other “empires” do you think compete for our attention and affection today? What other ideas, things, or people might we be tempted to worship, even unknowingly?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Revelation 2 and 3 feature seven letters to different churches across Asia Minor. Each letter features both encouragement and challenge from Jesus that takes into account what the city was facing culturally and spiritually. What do you think Jesus would say to the church in your city today given the chance? Take a moment to sketch out a letter using a similar format as Revelation.

- Start by identifying what makes your city unique.
- What words of encouragement would Jesus have to say to your city?
- What words of challenge do you think he would offer?
- How do you think Jesus would call your city to persevere or conquer?

After you finish, spend a few minutes praying over your city specifically using the encouragements and challenges you’ve identified in your letter.

Not sure how to read Revelation? [Check out our new visual guide](#) with helpful tips for approaching this incredibly rich and meaningful book. This would be a great piece to discuss with your group.