

Discussion Guide – All Things New

Revelation 2:8-11

1. “How are we all doing?” (*High, Low & Buffalo*)

- i. High – What was a high point in your week? What was good or went well?
- ii. Low – What was a low point in your week? What was a challenge, disappointment, or struggle?
- iii. Buffalo – What was something else that happened this week? It can be anything – interesting, random, weird, surprising, or completely normal!

2. “The book of Revelation was read out loud to the churches, and there was a blessing for the reader!¹ Can someone read Revelation 2:8-11 out loud? Try to read a little *slower* than usual. For the rest of us, try to listen with our imagination. Can we “see” what we hear?”

Have one person read this week’s passage out loud while everyone else listens. You can close your eyes if you’d like!

3. “What did you picture as you listened? What of the images were interesting or compelling? What did you find hopeful, strange, or even scary?”

For example, how did you picture Jesus as the one who “died and rose again”? Can you still see the holes from the nails in his hands and feet? How do you picture the “victor’s crown”? Does Jesus himself place the crowns on their heads?

4. “Revelation is closely connected to the Old Testament. Can someone read Isaiah 44:6 and Isaiah 48:12?”

- i. What similarities do you notice between these verses in Isaiah and Revelation 2:8?
- ii. How might Jesus’ name as “First and Last” have offered comfort to the church in Smyrna?

5. “John tells us, the readers, to ‘hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.’ What do you hear in Revelation 2:8-11?”

¹ Revelation 1:3

- i. What do you feel curious about or confused by? Is there anything that feels like it was written just for you or your life right now?
- ii. Smyrna remained loyal to Jesus even with intense pressure to worship Caesar, knowing it would cost them their lives.
 - a. Where do you see or experience pressure to worship something other than Jesus? In our life group? Our church?
- iii. Most of the other church's letters in Revelation include a warning or command to repent, but Jesus leaves this part out for the church in Smyrna. Instead, Jesus encourages them to continue worshipping only him in the midst of persecution.
 - a. Have you ever felt Jesus encourage you during a difficult time? If yes, share with the group. *[For example, maybe it was through a friend, a specific song or Bible verse, or an unexpected moment of rest, etc.]*
- iv. What promise does Jesus make to the church? How does that promise resonate with you?

OPTIONAL – If you'd like, break into smaller groups for this last section. You could also have one person responding to all of the questions at once rather than discussing one question at a time.

6. "Revelation 1:3 says that 'those who hear these words and take them to heart' are blessed."

- i. What did you 'see' or 'hear' most clearly from the passage? What resonated with you? What picture or idea do you keep returning to?
- ii. The church in Smyrna was poor, but Jesus called them rich. He showed them things were not as they seem! Where might Jesus describe you or your life differently than you would describe it? (e.g. poor / rich, insignificant / significant, weak / strong, broken / whole, etc.)
- iii. When has following Jesus been costly for you (e.g. a change in your friends, family, finances, hobbies, or habits)? How did 'losing' something impact your relationship with Jesus?
- iv. How has a fear of suffering impacted a decision you had to make? How could Jesus' promise change your response to suffering?
- v. Where would encouragement from Jesus make the biggest difference for you?

7. "Thanks for sharing _____. Can I pray for you?" *Take time to pray for each other.*

8. "Thanks everyone! Same time next week? Who will lead / host / bring snack / etc.?"