

The Seven Churches

Revelation 1:20-3:22

MEMORY VERSE

REVELATION 3:20

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Enough “Ears” from the template as the number of children in your class.

Enough instant pudding for _ servings to each child in the class, Styrofoam cups, plastic spoons and milk.

Enough “front door” copies as the number of children in your class (template provided), construction paper, scissors, glue or tape and crayons.

ATTENTION GETTER!

“Ears” To You

Before class cut up and hide the ears all around the room (ear template is included in the curriculum). At the appointed time for the game (just before story), tell the kids you have hidden something around the room and they have two minutes to find out what they are and gather them up. After the searching (give more time if needed) tell them it’s time for the story but that today there will be a charge for getting into the story circle...one ear! “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

If some of the children are having a difficult time finding an ear you can begin to give them directions. Use this to reinforce how important it is to listen to instructions. It may mean that we are left out if we don’t listen to what we are told. It is especially important to listen to what we are told by Jesus.

You can make this activity special by telling the story with a puppet, or asking a special guest in to tell it, or let some older kids act out parts of it (maybe one posed scene for each of the seven churches?).

LESSON TIME!

Are these the end times? Is Jesus coming soon? Many Christians think so. The Bible has much to say about Jesus' return. There are warnings that we need to listen to. As Christians we have nothing to fear for Jesus has promised to take care of us. Yet, we need to watch and obey God's commands.

In our lesson today, John is writing to seven churches in Asia. These churches existed at his time, but also represent churches throughout history. John has a vision or dream. In this vision Jesus is telling the churches to be very careful not to stray away from what they have been taught.

He is warning them to stay close to Jesus and to what they know to be true. Each church has good points as well as some problems that we can learn from.

This is a long passage and the format we will take is to look at each church individually and what it was that Jesus wanted to say to that church. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 1:20

"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Jesus makes it very clear in the letters to the churches that the letters are from Him. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.** The stars and lampstands are symbols of angels (messengers or pastors) and of the churches, which Jesus controls in His right hand.

He starts each letter by referring to Himself as the One who is speaking to the churches by describing Himself. Some of the terms He uses to describe Himself are; the Son of God, the One who died and rose again, the One holy and true who holds the key of David, the Ruler of God's creation, and the Amen.

Jesus wants the people of the end times to understand that no matter how things look, He is in control. He warns them to beware of Satan's influence. He tells them that they need to depend on Jesus and His power to survive and receive the reward that He has promised.

REVELATION 2:1-7

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

"and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

The first church we see is the church in Ephesus. Jesus commends the church for their hard work and patience. They don't tolerate sin. They test those who teach in the name of Jesus to make sure they are telling the truth. And they have patiently suffered without giving up.

The problem with the church is that they are so busy working and trying to be good enough that they have forgotten to worship Jesus. He tells them to turn back to when they first become Christians and to the love for Jesus that they had in the beginning. What the Lord was really longing for is not so much works, but loving relationship with His people.

We can't earn our way to heaven, faith in Jesus is the only way. He wants us to love and worship Him with all of our hearts. We can only do that by having a personal relationship with Him. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 2:8-11

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

Jesus tells the church in Smyrna that He knows their problems and poverty. There are people who are claiming to be Jewish believers but are really satanic. They are telling lies about the church. Jesus is warning them that they will suffer and some will go to prison.

He tells the church to stay faithful even to the point of death and that they will be rewarded. He will be with them through it all and give to them the crown of life. Those who are over-comers will go to heaven to be with Jesus. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 2:12-17

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

'Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

Jesus understands that this church is in the midst of a very evil city. The ways of Satan are very visible here. Yet in spite of all the crime and violence, as a church, they have remained true to Him.

Yet some of the people were worshipping idols and doing bad things as part of their religion. Jesus told them that they would have to turn from this or He would have to come and judge them.

But Jesus also promised to those who overcome, that He would provide for them (as He will provide for us) a new identity in Him. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 2:18-29

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

"And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

"Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

"I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

"Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

"But hold fast what you have till I come.

"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations;

'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father;

"and I will give him the morning star.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'

Jesus commends their love and faith. They have worked hard and have endured hardship. The problem with the church in Thyatira is that they have allowed sin and false teaching into the church. A false teacher promotes sinful living in the name of religion. Some of the people are suffering the results of impure living by reaping what they sow (sickness, etc.). The same thing can happen to us today if we refuse to obey the Word of God. Such teachings are wrong and are very harmful. People who follow these false teachings will fall apart like pieces of broken dishes.

Jesus calls them and us to repent and to keep our faith pure and focused on Him. We need to keep close to Jesus and to follow His Word, the Bible. We are to hold on to the love and faith that we have. If we overcome, He will put us into a place of authority to rule with Him. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 3:1-6

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The church in Sardis had the reputation as an active church. Jesus says, however that they are just going through the motions and that their worship is not true. They are working for the wrong motives. It is possible that instead of worshipping Jesus and following His leadership, they are following empty, man-made traditions.

He tells them not to delay in turning to Him in repentance and obedience. He could return at any time, when they least expect it. We all need to be ready for His coming. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 3:7-13

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Jesus has only good things to say about the church in Philadelphia. He knows and understands the difficult times that they are going through. They have very little strength but are holding on. They have kept His word and have not denied Jesus.

Jesus is with them and will protect them. He will be their strength. Since they have endured patiently, they will not have to go through the terrible trials that will come upon the whole world. They will be rewarded for staying true and will be a part of God's family in heaven. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 3:14-19

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked;

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

The people of the church of Laodicea feel that they are good people who can take care of themselves. They have lots of money, homes and all the things they want. They do not think they need anything – not even God. They may think they can get to heaven by being really good. They are neither for nor against God and will not make a stand either way. Maybe they do not understand that they could only get to heaven by being perfect, and the only way they could be perfect was by accepting Jesus' sacrifice for their sins and trusting in Him as their Savior.

Jesus is telling them that the way that they are makes Him sick. That's pretty serious! He is asking them to turn to Him and to repent. If they will make a commitment to Him He will heal them and provide for all their needs. He loves them and those He loves He corrects. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

REVELATION 3:20-22

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Jesus stands at the door of our hearts. He does not force His way into our lives. He waits like a gentleman to be invited in. If we open the door and invite Him into our hearts, He will come in and become a real part of our lives. **Jesus desires to speak to His people.**

He becomes very close to us. He will eat with us and talk with us as a member of His family. He will meet our needs and will help us to overcome all the evil in the world

if we walk in obedience with Him. We will become part of God's family and will share with Jesus all the riches of heaven.

The end times are going to be very difficult for mankind. We need to have a personal relationship with Jesus, stay true to our faith in Him, read the Bible and pray. He has promised to be with us and to take care of us. He is all powerful and in control. We can depend on Him.

Who's at the Door?

Who really is knocking at the door of our lives? Well, of course it's Jesus, but what does it really mean to let Him in? If He came to our house as a permanent guest, would anything change? Would we watch the same movies? Say all the same things to each other? Say them in the same voices? Would we do the same thing with our money? With our time? What would change?

Using the template provided with the curriculum, 1 sheet per child, have the children make the 'front door,' cutting along the dotted line so the door will open. Glue or tape the sides but not the door to a sheet of construction paper (maybe red and heart shaped). Help the children pretend that Jesus is coming and knocking at the real front door of their real heart.

Ask the children if they have asked Jesus to come in and live inside of their hearts. If not, He is knocking and would love to come into any heart willing to let Him come in.

Get the Job Done

Do this as your last activity. Have children work in pairs, one giving the instructions and the other doing the work. A fun and very motivating task to do this way is to make the class a snack using instant pudding. Give each pair of workers two Styrofoam cups and two plastic spoons. Calculate the amount of instant pudding powder and milk needed for half of one serving and write it down on slips of paper for the instructors.

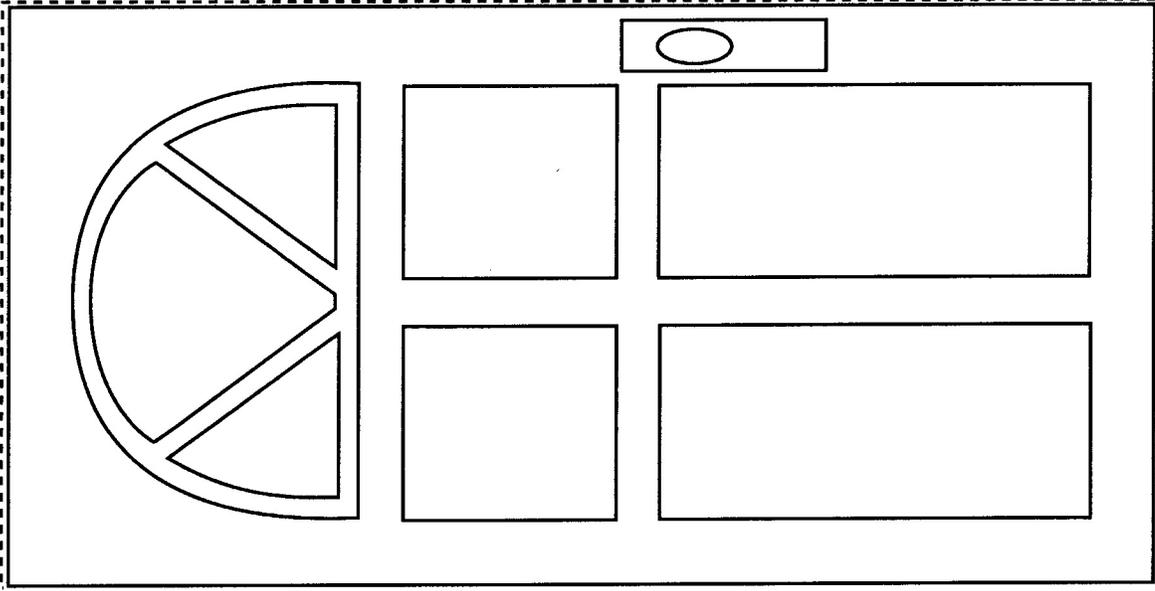
An alternative to this would be to bring two or more mixing bowls and let just two pairs work at a time. The different jobs would be: pouring and measuring, mixing and mixing, mixing and mixing (it takes a lot of mixing), putting in the cups, and serving.

When everyone is done ask; do the partners think they worked well together? Did they enjoy working together? Which partner was more like a boss? And which was more like someone working for a boss? What would happen at a job if the workers didn't listen to the boss? Does "listen" always mean only "hearing" what someone says? **Jesus desires to speak to His people.** He wants us to listen to what He has to say.

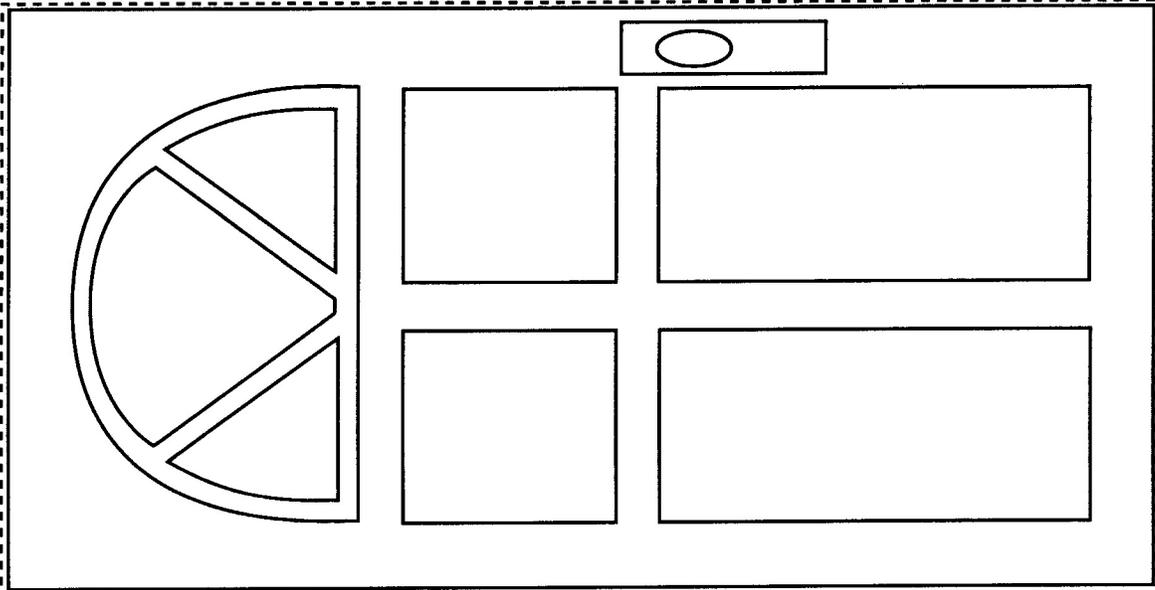
PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to obey whatever Jesus speaks into their hearts. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens the
door, I will come in to him and dine with
him, and he with Me."
Revelation 3:20



"Behold I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens the
door, I will come in to him and dine with
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Trim off directions, then cut sheet in half. Let children cut on dotted line so the door will open. Glue or tape the sides (all but the door) to a sheet of colored construction paper (maybe red, and heart shaped). The door should open so they can use it in the verbal portion of the activity.

