



REVELATION

extravagant hope



STUDY GUIDE • SIX SESSIONS

MARGARET FEINBERG

ZONDERVAN

Revelation Beautiful Word Bible Study

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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WELCOME



REVELATION

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SOMETIMES the Bible can seem overwhelming. Where do you go for words of comfort when you're feeling overwhelmed, lost, or frustrated in life? What book of the Bible do you turn to for wisdom about the situation you find yourself in?

The Beautiful Word Bible Study series makes the Bible come alive in such a way that you know where to turn no matter where you find yourself in your spiritual journey.

Mention the book of Revelation, and you'll receive a spectrum of responses. Some will be intrigued, others fascinated, some perplexed, others hesitant, some nervous, others afraid. Toss around a mention of the number 666 or the beast, and some will wince while others grow wide-eyed.

Revelation falls into a genre known as apocalyptic literature. The Greek for *apocalypse* means "revelation" or "the unveiling of things not previously known." Just as you wouldn't pick up an electronics manual and read it like a novel or open a cookbook and read it like a history book,

Revelation has its own style. While genres like the Psalms, the Gospels, and epistles are much more instructive and straightforward, Revelation draws on layers of symbols, unusual visions, and strange imagery to give glimpses into the heavenly realm and the future.

John writes to the seven churches in Asia. In modern terms, this would be like sending a group text or email. Even though the churches are called out specifically (Revelation 2–3), everyone is reading the same content, learning from each other, and being called Christward.

With each passing page, we must resist the temptation to overemphasize or become dogmatic about interpretations or debatable topics that draw us away from what, or rather who, this book is all about: this is a revelation of Jesus Christ.

We must also practice generous grace toward those who read and interpret passages differently than us. Some read Revelation from a *futurist* perspective, seeing most of the chapters as being about what's to come. Others read from a *historicist* view, noting that much of the book focuses on what has happened over the centuries, and only a pinch is of what's still to come. Others take a *preterist* outlook, viewing much of what's described as happening only during the time John lived. Still others take an *idealist* method of interpretation, believing the teachings aren't tied to specific events but rather describe the ongoing battle between good and evil found in every age.

Regardless of your perspective, remember that followers of Jesus have hotly debated this book for thousands of years and will likely continue until Christ's return. Your goal isn't to win an argument. Your goal is to be conformed to the image of Jesus and discover the extravagant hope he has for you—in the past, in the present, and in the future.

With each passing page, we must resist the temptation to overemphasize or become dogmatic about interpretations or debatable topics that draw us away from what, or rather who, this book is all about: this is a revelation of Jesus Christ.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

GROUP SIZE

The Beautiful Word *Revelation* video curriculum is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, small group, or during a weekend retreat. After watching each video session, you and the members of your group will participate in a time of discussion and reflection on what you're learning. If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Each participant should have their own study guide, which includes video outline notes, group discussion questions, a personal study section, Beautiful Word coloring pages, and Scripture memory cards to deepen learning between sessions.

TIMING

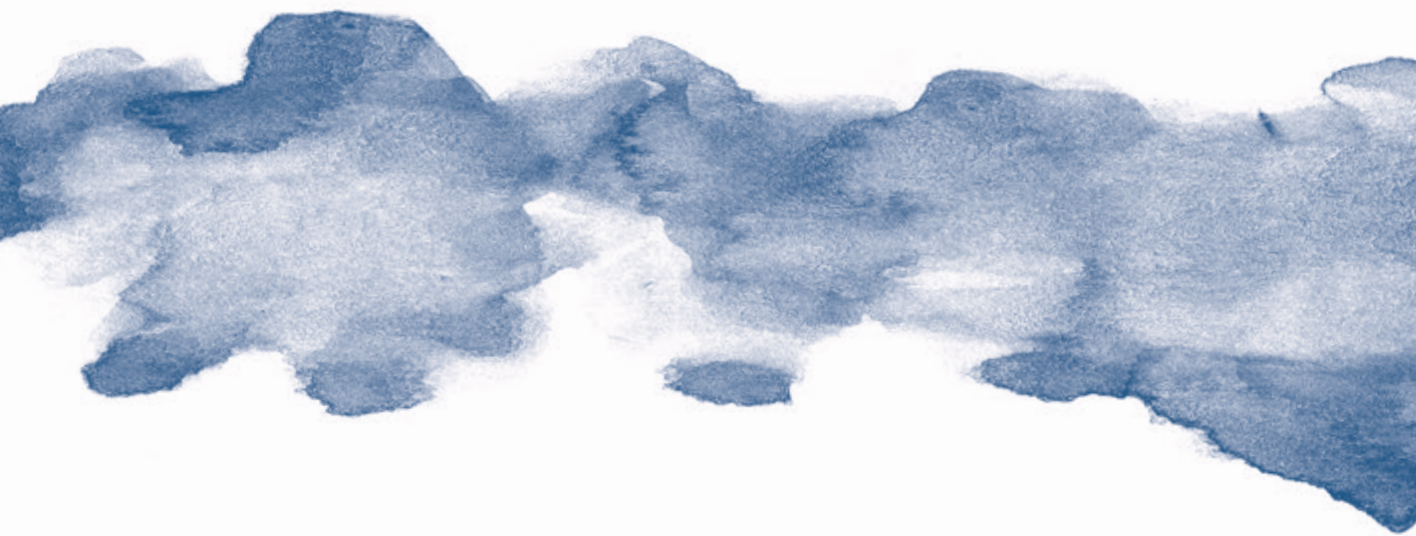
The timing notations—for example, 20 minutes—indicate the actual length of the video segments and the suggested times for each activity or discussion. Within your allotted time, you may not get to all the discussion questions. Remember that the *quantity* of questions addressed isn't as important as the *quality* of the discussion.

FACILITATION

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

OPENING GROUP ACTIVITY

Depending on the amount of time you have to meet and the resources available, you'll want to begin the session with the group activity. You will find these activities on the group page that begins each session. The interactive icebreaker is designed to be a catalyst for group engagement and help participants move toward the ideas explored in the video teaching. The leader will want to read ahead to the following week's activity to see what's needed and how participants may be able to contribute by bringing supplies or refreshments.





— TEMPTED —
TO GIVE UP ON
GOD?



REVELATION

OPENING GROUP ACTIVITY [10–15 MINUTES]

What you'll need:

- ▶ Sheet of blank paper for each person
 - ▶ Pens, markers, and/or watercolors
1. Each participant is invited to use the paper and drawing/writing tools to create either a picture of what's described in Revelation 1:12–16 or a list (words or images) of symbols included in the description.
 2. Discuss the following questions:
 - When you think of the book of Revelation, what comes to mind?
 - Describe your first exposure to the book of Revelation and whether that was a positive, negative, or neutral experience.
 - What element of your drawing stood out to you the most? Why?

SESSION ONE VIDEO [24 MINUTES]

NOTES: *As you watch, take notes on anything that stands out to you.*

▶ What if, through the book of Revelation, God is saving the best for last?

▶ John was in a dark place. His fledgling churches were struggling. Fellow disciples had died brutal, barbaric deaths. He was surrounded by uncertainty about his own future and the future of the faithful.

▶ *Apocalypse* means “unveiling” or “uncovering.”

▶ In our personal setbacks and suffering, there's always a temptation to retreat, to pull back from God, at the precise moment we need him most.

▶ The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches. Gold represents the purifying work Christ does in and through the church. The lampstands remind us we are called to stand and shine bright like a city on a hill.

▶ As a soldier's uniform tells you something about that person's role, these garments reveal Christ as priest.

▶ The white wool and white snow declares there's nothing that Christ cannot forgive.

▶ Feet of glowing bronze reveal that Jesus is flawless.

▶ Jesus illuminates the cosmos, and he illuminates our lives.

▶ Jesus is giving you a golden invitation to a fresh revelation of who he is and how he's going to see you through.

SCRIPTURE COVERED IN THIS SESSION:

REVELATION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS [30-45 MINUTES]

1. What are some of the hang-ups, fears, or bad experiences with Revelation you need to let go of to get the most out of this study?
2. What can you do to ground yourself (as an individual and as a group) in the truth that no matter what you read in Revelation, it's all about Jesus? Write down some ground rules and ideas in the space below:
3. Margaret teaches,

“Revelation is a survival guide for the suffering, a book of promises for the persecuted, a banner of hope for the beaten down.”

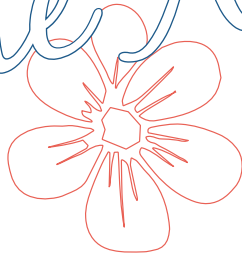
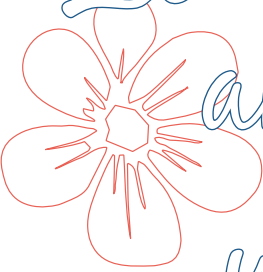
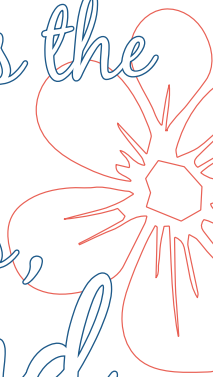

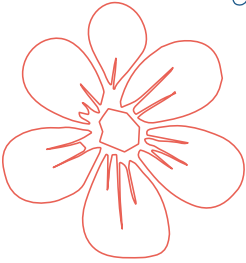
In what area of your life are you most beaten down and ready to give up right now?
Where do you most need to experience the presence and power of Jesus?

4. Read Revelation 1:4–8. Which of the names or titles of Jesus is the most meaningful to you? Why? Underline or write down the one you would most like to experience more of right now?

PREPARATION

To prepare for the next group session:

1. Read Revelation 1–3.
2. Tackle the three days of the Session One Personal Study.
3. Memorize this week’s passage using the Beautiful Word Scripture memory coloring page. As a bonus, look up the Scripture memory passage in different translations and take note of the variations.
4. If you’ve agreed to bring something for the next session’s Opening Group Activity, get it ready.



"I am
the Alpha ^{and} the
Omega," says the
Lord God, "who is,
and who was, and
who is to come,
the Almighty."

—Revelation 1:8

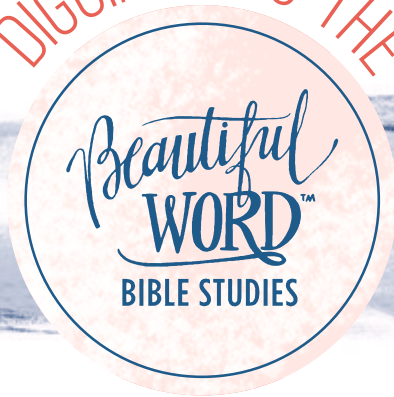


SESSION

1

PERSONAL STUDY TIME

DIGGING INTO THE



REVELATION

TEMPTED TO GIVE UP ON GOD?



**“I make
known the
end
from the
beginning,
from
ancient
times,
what is
still
to come.”**
.....
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Isaiah 46:10

DAY 1

REVELATION 1

John began his career as a fisherman in the Sea of Galilee alongside his brother James. He left everything to follow Christ. John became one of Jesus’ closest friends (John 21:20), entrusted to care for Jesus’ mother, Mary (John 19:25–27). He also penned the Gospel of John, and 1, 2, and 3 John.

1. **Read Revelation 1:1–2. Why was the revelation given according to this passage? What is John’s revelation?**

2. **Read Revelation 1:3. This is the only book in the Bible that includes a promise of blessing for all who read it. What blessing would you like to receive from reading Revelation? Write down your desire as a prayer that God will answer as you study.**

John pens his letter to seven real churches throughout the region. He greets them with “grace and peace,” which is a common welcome throughout many of the epistles.

3. Read Revelation 1:4–8. Fill in the chart below recording the names of God, Jesus, and us in this passage. Which is the most meaningful to you in this moment of life? Why?

NAMES OF GOD	NAMES OF CHRIST	WE ARE DESCRIBED AS . . .

4. Read Revelation 1:9–11. Make a list of all the attributes of John you can glean from this passage. What kind of person might he have been? What had his life been like previous to this passage?
5. Which one helps you most to identify with John as a Christian brother? Why?

John mentions the **sevenfold Spirit** before God's throne (Revelation 1:4). This likely refers to **the fullness of the presence of the Holy Spirit**. **Revelation** is sometimes called the **Book of Sevens** because there are so many—seven spirits, seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven signs, seven bowls, seven blessings, seven last things, and more. Seven often represents divine perfection and completeness.

6. While some of the images found in Revelation may sound strange, they're often deeply rooted in Scripture. Reflecting on the symbols enumerated in Revelation 1:12–16, look up the following passages and fill in the chart below. What surprises you most?

ELEMENT OF JOHN'S VISION	SCRIPTURE	WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT REVEALS ABOUT JOHN'S WORDS IN REVELATION 1:12–16
Seven lampstands	Exodus 25:31–40	
Robe	Exodus 28:4 Isaiah 6:1	
White hair	Daniel 7:9	
Feet like bronze	Ezekiel 1:27–28	
Voice of rushing waters	Ezekiel 1:24	
Sharp, double-edged sword	Psalm 149:6 Hebrews 4:12	
Face like the shining sun	Exodus 34:28–30	

7. Read Revelation 1:17–19. How does John respond to seeing Jesus? How does Jesus’ response to John demonstrate his care and compassion toward John and toward you?

8. Read Revelation 1:19–20. What do the seven stars represent? What do the seven lampstands represent? What fills you with the most hope from this chapter?

DAY 2 REVELATION 2

Most of the words Jesus speaks are found in the Gospels, but in Revelation we find more rich teachings of Christ. Remember, this is a revelation of Jesus!

John dictates the words of Christ to seven churches. These believers met in seven cities clustered in modern-day Turkey. The words remain timeless because we can still find churches like this today. And we can find places in our hearts where these messages ring true of us individually, too, not just in our local churches.

The church at Ephesus, to whom the first letter is addressed, was located in a prosperous trade center on the coast. It was known as Asia’s Supreme Metropolis. The city boasted one of the wonders of the ancient world, a temple for the “bee” goddess known as

NOTICE THAT
JESUS DIDN'T HATE
 THE NICOLAITANS,
 HE HATED THEIR
 ACTIONS (2:6),
 WHICH REMINDS US
 THAT
JESUS LOVES THE PERSON

BUT NOT THEIR
 SIN AND SELF-
 DESTRUCTIVE WAYS
 (JOHN 15:12).

NICOLAS
 MEANS "ONE
 WHO CONQUERS
 THE PEOPLE."
 THE NICOLAITANS
 ARE BELIEVED TO
 HAVE ELEVATED
 THEMSELVES
 WHILE TEACHING
 HERESIES,
 PRACTICING SELF-
 INDULGENCE,
 ENGAGING IN
 TEMPLE SEX,
 AND WORSHIPPING
 EMPERORS.

Artemis or Diana. Thousands of priests and priestesses worshiped and practiced cult prostitution there.

The letters to the churches follow a particular pattern: who the letter is written to, description of Christ, commendation, correction, counsel or direction, and a challenge.



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1. Read Revelation 2:1–7 and fill in the chart on the next page. Then circle the statements that are also true of you. (Note: Some spaces in this chart may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given.)

REVELATION 2:1-7

Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

2. How has your love for Christ changed since you became a believer? What have you found that reignites your love for Christ? What do you need to repent, remember, and do?

Smyrna was a well-developed and beautiful city, containing temples to Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, and others. It was also the thriving center of emperor worship.

3. Read Revelation 2:8–11. Fill in the chart below, then circle the statements that are also true of you. (Note: Some spaces in this chart may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given.)

REVELATION 2:18–11	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

Jesus promises *the crown of life* to those who stand firm in their faith.

The Bible speaks of many crowns given to overcomers, including the imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24–27), the crown of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19–20), the crown of life (James 1:12), the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), and the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:2–4).

4. Describe a time of personal suffering, loss, or pain in which you discovered Christ’s faithfulness. How does this message to Smyrna inspire you to suffer strong?

Like Smyrna, Pergamum was a center for worshiping pagan gods and the emperor. When Jesus calls Pergamum “the city where Satan has his throne” (v. 13), he is probably referring to the city’s temple built specifically for worshiping Caesar and to its altars to Zeus and Asclepius, the snake-god of healing. Pergamum was also unique in that Rome had given it permission to practice capital punishment, which Jesus may be alluding to when he mentions “the sharp two-edged sword” (v. 12).

Manna refers to the food God provided for the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness and ran out of food (Exodus 16). Jesus reveals himself as our hidden manna, reminding us of his grace and goodness when we find ourselves in the wilderness.

In this section, you’ll find a reference to Balaam. He was an Old Testament prophet who took money from an enemy king, Balak, to pronounce a curse on Israel. He devised a deceptive plan that led Israelite men to worship Baal (Numbers 22–31). Eventually, the children of Israel killed Balaam and Balak with a sword. Jesus tells those in Pergamum that something similar has happened to them. They’ve been led astray, and he fights for them with the spiritual sword of Scripture.

5. Read Revelation 2:12–17. Fill in the chart below, then circle the statements that are also true of you. (Note: Some spaces in this chart may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given.)

REVELATION 2:12–17	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

6. What are three temptations you wrestle with that can cause you to compromise your faith? What strategies do you have to overcome these temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13)?

Located inland, Thyatira was a smaller city famous for distributing clothes and cloth dipped in purple dye. The letter written to Thyatira is the longest and one of the most challenging letters written to the seven churches.

7. Read Revelation 2:18–29. Fill in the chart below, then circle the statements that are also true of you. (Note: Some spaces in this chart may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given.)

REVELATION 3:14–22	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

**JEZEBEL,
THE WIFE OF
KING AHAB
IN THE OLD
TESTAMENT,
WAS A
PRIESTESS
IN A PAGAN
TEMPLE
WHICH
TAUGHT
HERESIES,
INCLUDING
THE EATING
OF FOOD
SACRIFICED
TO IDOLS
AND TEMPLE
FORNICATION.**

(1 Kings 16:31–33;
2 Kings 9:22)

White stones were inscribed and used as invitations to banquets. The new name may refer to receiving a white stone with a secret name of Jesus that reveals our intimate relationship with him or the new name Christ has for us (2:17).

8. What are three attitudes or actions you're still holding onto that don't align with the purity, single focus, and deep love that Christ calls you to throughout these letters to the churches? In the space below, write a prayer asking for forgiveness and freedom.

DAY 3

REVELATION 3

We continue our study of the letters to the seven churches with Sardis. Built on a hill, this fortified city was strategic to Rome's military. When Jesus mentions clothing in verses 4 and 5, he may be alluding to the city's famous and flourishing wool industry.

In antiquity, the name of each citizen was recorded in a register. Once the person died or was convicted of a serious crime, their name was marked out of the book.

Jesus promises that our name can never be blotted out from the book of life, because nothing—including death—can separate us from the love of God. See Exodus 32:32–33; Isaiah 4:3; and Romans 8:38.

1. Read Revelation 3:1–6. Fill in the chart below. Remember to pay attention to lines which may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given. Then circle the statements that are also true of you.

REVELATION 3:14–22	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

2. In what area of your life do you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to “wake up” and “change into clean clothes”?

3. Read Revelation 3:7–13. Philadelphia, meaning “city of brotherly love,” was a strong fortress city. Located in an area prone to earthquakes, it was prosperous because of its textile and leather industries as well as nearby vineyards.

Fill in the chart below. Pay attention to entries which may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given. Then circle the statements that are also true of you. (Note: Some spaces in this chart may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given.)

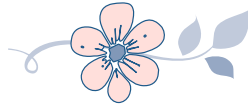
REVELATION 3:14–22	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	

4. Reflecting on this passage, what is the greatest word of encouragement to you right now?

Laodicea was so wealthy that after it was destroyed by the great earthquake of 60 AD, the residents refused rebuilding help from neighboring regions. The Laodiceans did it all themselves. Famous for its school of medicine, Laodicea produced a special ointment believed to cure eye and ear defects.

5. Read Revelation 3:14–22. Fill in the chart below. Again, pay attention to lines which may need to be left blank because no commendation or correction is given. Then circle the statements that are also true of you.

REVELATION 3:14–22	
Church Addressee	
Revelation of Jesus Christ (self-identification)	
Commendation	
Correction	
Counsel/Directive	
Clarion Call, Challenge, and Reward	
Reflecting on this chart, what is Christ calling you toward?	



As you reflect on your personal study of Revelation 1–3, what are the beautiful words that the Holy Spirit has been highlighting to you through this time? Write or draw them in the space below.



A large, light blue, hand-drawn oval frame containing horizontal dotted lines for writing. The frame is decorated with stylized green leaves and a pink flower at the top left. The dotted lines are spaced evenly and extend across the width of the oval.