**1. Motivate**

What are some fears you’ve had to overcome?

* heights

A video introduction is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_gskpamks> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/faje5awy>

* speaking in front of a large group
* snakes, spiders
* making decisions
* asking a girl for a date
* taking a class in a hard subject (math, English, history, …)
* leaving home to go to college
* pleasing a parent
* playing contact sports
* roller coasters
* driving on a crowded and fast moving freeway

**2. Transition**

It’s probably good to have a healthy fear of some things.

* For other things in life, we do need to learn to manage our fears
* Ultimately, we need not fear life’s many difficulties because we are rich in God’s grace.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 God and His Blessings are Greater

Listen for a commendation.

Revelation 2:8-9 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

The recipient of the message is “the angle of the church in Smyrna.” What is a church in the most basic sense?

* not the “church building” or the “church campus”
* it is the believers
* the group of people who worship together
* can mean (as here) the local congregation
* can mean the worldwide body of believers

How did Christ Jesus identify Himself to this assembly of believers?

* Him who is the First and the Last (later on in Revelation, the Alpha and Omega – first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)
* He who died and came to life again
* the Risen Savior

What is significant about the title Christ gave Himself ("the First and the Last, who died and came to life again")?

* God lives outside of the dimension of time
* He sees and knows the whole span of the times of our lives
* He was/is the “Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth”
* His salvation was effective, is effective for all of time
* He knows and will guide events of history … even though humans like to think we are controlling local and world events

What did He know about them?

* their difficulties
* their poverty
* at the same time, how they are “rich”

In what way could it be said the church at Smyrna was rich even though the people were poor? How can a person in poverty be considered rich?

* rich in faith
* have a vital life in Christ
* have God’s presence and power at work in their lives
* have all the riches of Christ
* God’s promises
* Fruit of the Spirit

What riches have you experienced because of your relationship with Christ?

* assurance of Heaven
* direction in life
* Fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control
* God’s guidance in our decisions
* as believers, we have God watching over us – providing material, emotional, and spiritual needs
* His power, authority are at work in our lives

Who were their opponents and accusers? How did the Lord characterize those who persecuted and blasphemed, those who were faithful to Him?

* many of the local Jewish community
* “those who say they are Jews and are not”
* they claim to be of the Jewish faith, but have strayed from true faith in Jehovah God
* in effect, they are a “synagogue of Satan”

How would it change things to realize that Jesus knows your situation?

* assurance that there is Someone who cares
* knowing Jesus is watching over me
* He knows what is happening in the background … some of which I might not even realize
* He knows the future and will guide me

3.2 Faithfulness to Christ Wins

Listen for a promise and encouragement.

Revelation 2:10 (NIV) Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Of what did He warn them?

* suffering is coming
* don’t be afraid of what is about to happen
* the devil would attack them
* even “put them in prison”
* persecution will last “10 days”

In your view, which is worse—physical or verbal persecution? Why?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Physical Problems | Verbal Persecution |
| * when you are really sick, you have a hard time carrying on
* if you don’t feel good, you can’t concentrate
* for some problems, you cannot even get up and around
* you are robbed of energy to do anything
 | * you are emotionally beat down
* what is being said is not true
* you are devastated by the words of people you thought you could trust
* their words can feel like physical blows
* you feel you cannot depend on anyone you thought were faithful friends
 |

To what length did He admonish them to go in facing tribulation?

* be faithful
* it may even mean death
* continue to trust God
* do not renounce your faith for anything

What did He promise to give them? What do you think that means?

* the Crown of Life
* an award of eternal life
* no matter what happens in this life, we will be united with God beyond this life … forever
* our soul will exist in His presence, outside the dimension of time

When has a difficult season strengthened your relationship with Christ? When have you seen believers overcome adversity through their faith?

* a time of physical difficulty – learn that Jesus is the “Great Physician”
* financial difficulty – God has unlimited supply for us
* spiritual struggle – God gives strength to overcome
* God enables us to overcome worry, stress
* pressure at work, burden of responsibility … God empowers us to deal with those situations

3.3 Life in Christ Overcomes Death

Listen for a promise.

Revelation 2:11 (NIV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

How can knowing that the Lord speaks to His people be an encouragement to faithful living in times of trial?

* God communicates to us his love and attention
* we’re not left in an information vacuum
* God can “talk us through” our problems
* He continuously reminds us of His attention to our problems
* He assures us of His power and authority and love for us at work in our lives

What is the promise given to those who persevere?

* not be hurt by the second death
* “first death” is physical … separation of soul from the body
* second death would be separation of our soul from the presence of God
* the believer *need never fear being separated from God* … in the present life or beyond

What are practical ways to reject fear and embrace God’s promises for the future?

* you have to *know*  God’s promises, His attributes
* you have to be reading about them from His Word, even memorizing His words
* daily communication with God – both ways … hearing/reading and responding in prayer
* pray the scripture – read through the Psalms how David declares praise and trust … voice those same things to God for yourself

What are some ways might our church be like the church at Smyrna?

* small struggling church
* big struggling church … getting smaller due to a variety of reasons
* currently without a pastor (died, moved, quit, whatever)
* there are people making it hard for the church to operate
* at the mercy of Covid restrictions
* hard to find volunteers to teach, help with children
* financially struggling
* lost some key people to Covid or they have moved away

What message would Jesus want to send us in those situations?

* “I know what problems you face”
* “I know you are going through trials”
* ”Realize things could get even worse.”
* “I challenge you to be faithful, even when they do get worse”
* “I will be with you, My Spirit is empowering you”
* “You have *eternal* life to look forward to”

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Trust.

* Christ tasted death for us so that we would not have to experience the second death.
* Turn from your sin and trust Christ to save you. Look on the inside front cover of this book for more about committing your life to Christ

Thank.

* Make a list of all the ways you are rich because of God’s grace in your life.
* Spend time in prayer, thanking God for all the blessings He has given you.

Encourage.

* If you know someone who is struggling in their walk with Christ, encourage them to endure and stand strong in Christ.
* Use your example of endurance in the face of difficulties to encourage their steadfastness.

Double Puzzle

Ayee Cucaracha ! They only gave us two B’s for the message. I guess you’ll have to unscramble the clue words and match the numbers under the letters to the numbered squares in the message. I’ve been told the clue words are from our Bible passage, Rev. 2:8 – 11 (NIV) You can also get help at <https://tinyurl.com/faje5awy> And there are other great Family activities there