

Longing
Growth Group Discussion
Revelation 3:7-13

Intro question

- What is the earliest **longing** that you can remember having? For today's purposes, a longing is a strong desire that stays with you for a significant period of time.
1. Read Rev. 3:7-13, then discuss the following.
 - Pastor Josh pointed out that the ancient city of Philadelphia sat on a major fault line, and dealt with the constant threat of earthquakes. This information is important for understand the letter to the church at Philadelphia.
 - Have you ever lived in a place that was prone to earthquakes or other natural disasters? How did it affect your daily life?
 - The other important point of historical context was that the Emperor Domitian had recently forced all grape-growers (the primary economic engine at Philadelphia) to cut their product in half, and being growing corn instead. This change had a distinct economic impact, in addition to undermining trust in the Emperor.
 - Considering these factors—in addition to the persecution of Christians, which seemed to be a given throughout the Empire—what would you imagine to be the mental and emotional state of the church at Philadelphia?
 2. It is with these circumstances in mind, that Jesus speaks to the longings of his people. On Sunday, we considered five such longings. Discuss each one, listed below. Spend more time on the ones that are more pertinent to your group, and less time on those that are less pertinent.
 - **The longing for opportunity.**
 - To what degree do you feel that you have had access to opportunity? Or, how real this is longing for you presently?
 - How do you see this longing addressed in vv. 7-8?
 - In what ways does the world say that you, apart from Jesus, should satisfy the longing?
 - In what way does the characteristic of Jesus described here uniquely satisfy this longing?
 - **The longing for justice** (specifically for vindication).
 - What kinds of things make you feel this longing?
 - How do you see this longing addressed in vv. 8-9?
 - In what ways does the world say that you, apart from Jesus, should satisfy the longing?
 - To what degree does Jesus' promise here help you?
 - **The longing for security** (or protection).
 - In v. 10, Jesus promises to keep his followers in Philadelphia from a season of trial. How do you interpret this promise, in light of other things Jesus said in the Gospels?
 - In what ways do you most acutely long for security, or protection?
 - How does Jesus' promise here address your longing?

- **The longing for permanence.**
 - In the first half of v. 12, Jesus promises to the “one who is victorious” (i.e., who holds fast to him), that he will make them “a pillar in the temple of my God,” and “Never again will they leave it.” What symbolism is at work here?
 - Why would the longing for permanence have been especially acute for the Philadelphians?
 - To what degree do you feel a longing for permanence?
 - In what way does Jesus’ promise here fulfill or help with that longing?
 - **The longing for belonging.**
 - In what seasons and ways have you most felt this longing?
 - In what ways has your longing to belong been satisfied throughout your life?
 - In the second half of v. 12, Jesus talks about what he will write on his people—the name of his God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and his own new name (King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Rev. 19:16). How does this promise address our longing to belong?
 - How can it practically help you in the here and now?
3. The one command that Jesus gives in this letter is in v. 11: “Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”
- When circumstances assault you from all sides (e.g., earthquakes, economic disaster, betrayal), it can be tempting to abandon Jesus and satisfy your longings in other ways. Have you felt this temptation? How much do you feel it presently?
 - Jesus’ instruction here is to hold on to him and what he has given you in the gospel. What helps you to hold on to him and the gospel on a regular basis?
 - What do you make of Jesus’ statement in v. 11: “I am coming soon”? How does this promise help you?
 - How can we support one another, as a group, in holding fast to Jesus?
4. Prayer
- Some of your group members may have already shared at a vulnerable level. Pray for them accordingly!
 - Share and pray about whatever other needs and concerns are weighing on your minds.