

**Staying the Course**  
Growth Group Discussion  
Intro to Revelation

**Intro questions**

- Pastor Josh began Sunday's sermon by talking about a race that he entered that turned out to be much more difficult than expected. Have you ever taken on some endeavor—a competition, or degree, or task, or job—that turned out to be much harder than you expected? If you had known that going in, how would it have changed your approach?
- How do you feel about studying the book of Revelation? (Excited, scared, curious, apathetic, etc.)
- The book of Revelation is written in the style called "**apocalyptic**," which means it uses wild, graphic symbols and images to convey ideas. It is important to not get lost in the minutia of the detailed images, but instead, to step back and try to see the broader message that they convey.

1. Read Rev. 1:9-11, then discuss the following.
  - a. What can you gather about John's situation here as he writes?
  - b. What/who was the inspiration for the images recorded in Revelation?
  - c. Who was the original, intended recipient of Revelation? Do you know anything about those churches?
  
2. Read Rev. 6:9-11, then discuss the following.
  - a. In this vision of what's presently playing out in heaven, who does John "see?" (Answer: Christian martyrs.)
  - b. According to these verses, why were they killed?
  - c. What is the essence of their question for God? (v. 10). Can you identify with their sense of longing? Why or why not?
  - d. How would you describe God's answer to their question, in your own words?
  - e. Pastor Josh said this about the metaphor of the white robes: "The metaphor is most likely an allusion to a Roman triumphal procession. When Roman armies would come back from a military campaign victorious, the citizens would line the streets to welcome them back and they would all put on white robes. The white robes were a way of saying, 'We're all victors in this war because of what these soldiers have accomplished.' It was the sign of a vicarious victor." What would this image be symbolizing, then, with regard to Christian martyrs?
  - f. This long-term reality—that in Christ, **we get to be vicarious victors**—is a reality that helps us stay the course. Has this fact been helpful to you? Why or why not?
  
3. Read Rev. 12:10-12, then discuss the following.
  - a. What is Satan's role in the hardships that Christians are now facing, according to these verses?
  - b. According to v. 11a, how did the martyrs "triumph" over Satan? Flesh out these two components of their triumph.
  - c. "They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (v. 11b). What does this verse suggest about the role of love in enduring persecution? Does it remind you of anything Jesus said?

4. Read Rev. 13:9-10, then discuss the following.
  - a. Pastor Josh summarized that Revelation gives us this expectation for the short-term: **“Expect things to get worse before they get better.”** We live in a season between the first and second coming of Jesus when suffering and testing are the norm for Christians.
  - b. Based on what you’ve read in Revelation today, what are the specific ways that Christians can expect things to get worse before they get better?
  - c. What are some specific ways that you have experienced this reality—or if you haven’t experienced it directly, what have you heard about others experiencing this reality?
  - d. In addition to outright persecution, John warns us about the temptation to assimilate—to adopt the customs of the prevailing culture in order to maintain the comfortable status quo. What does this look like in our current setting? Have you experienced this tendency?
  - e. According to v. 10, what response is called for by this reality? How can we patiently endure?

### **Prayer**

- Pray about whatever may have surfaced in your preceding discussion: fears, outright persecution, etc.
- Pray for persecuted Christians, as the Spirit leads you.
- Share and pray about whatever other needs and concerns are weighing on your minds.