

Lost in the Forest
Growth Group Discussion
Revelation 2:12-17

Intro questions

- What kinds of settings make you feel on edge, as if you are in danger? How do you deal with that feeling?
1. Read Rev. 2:12-13, then discuss the following.
 - The overall encouragement that Jesus gives through Revelation is for his followers to stay the course, in spite of hardship. Why do you think that Jesus begins his letter to the Christians of Pergamum with this sword imagery?
 - For a review of important imagery, read Rev. 1:12-16.
 - Based on Jesus' words, how would you describe the environment surrounding Christians in Pergamum?
 - What did you learn about this city in Sunday's sermon, which helps to make sense of Jesus' description?
 - For what is Jesus commending the Christians in Pergamum?
 - In what way could this commendation serve as a future motivator?
 - On Sunday, Josh brought out the danger that these Christians faced, and the danger faced by any Christ-follower in this world: **the hostility of the world around us.**
Discuss:
 - Besides Nigeria, which Josh mentioned on Sunday, in what other parts of the world do Christians regularly face open hostility?
 - Have you ever faced open hostility for your faith in Jesus? Please describe.
 - Josh explained that while Christians in the USA rarely face open hostility, we live in systems that are hostile toward Jesus and his people. He mentioned several examples. What aspects of our culture and its systems have you felt were hostile to your faith in Jesus? (Be sure to discuss these things graciously with your group; it may be that differing views exist among you. Remember the words of Proverbs 15:1—
"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.")
 - How could these systems and values be dangerous to your faith?
 2. Read Rev. 2:14-16, then discuss the following.
 - If you have time, invite your group to read the story of Balaam referenced here, in Numbers 22:1-13, 25:1-4, and 31:16.
 - The most likely way that Christians in Pergamum were following "the teaching of Balaam" was in continuing to participate in feasts that were part of idol-worship in their city. As such, Jesus is warning us here of **the danger of flirting with idolatry.**
 - In the 1st-Century Roman Empire, idolatry involved going to pagan temples and participating in festivals there. What does it look like in our time and place? If you're comfortable, share what it has looked like in your life?
 - Among the ways that Pastor Josh defined idolatry, he said that it is "when we organize our lives around anything less than Jesus." Do you agree with this definition? What things could compete with Jesus as the organizing center of your life?

- Are there other things in our culture that might cause you to drift from Jesus? What are they?
 - Jesus calls his people here to repentance. What would repentance look like in your life, in reference to the things you have shared? (OR what has it looked like, if you have already repented?)
3. In Jesus' description of himself in v. 12 (and again in v. 16b), he mentioned the weapon that we have to fight these two dangers: the "sword of my mouth."
- Have someone read Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17, to bring clarity to what "the sword" is.
 - In what way does the sword of God's word defend you against the hostility of the surrounding world? Share specific examples of how this has worked in your life.
 - In what way does the sword of God's word defend you against the temptation of idolatry?
 - Specifically, God's word is telling the story of how Jesus was pierced with a sword so that he could redeem us. How does this central message of the gospel offer us protection against these dangers? How can you take advantage of this resource on a daily basis?
 - Read Revelation 2:17. How do these symbolic promises offer you encouragement to hold fast to Jesus?
4. Prayer
- If you have sensed that repentance is needed in any area that has been shared, be sure to offer prayers of confession and repentance.
 - Share and pray about whatever other needs and concerns are weighing on your minds.