

A NECESSARY PAUSE:

*Search Me, O God ...
And Show Me!*

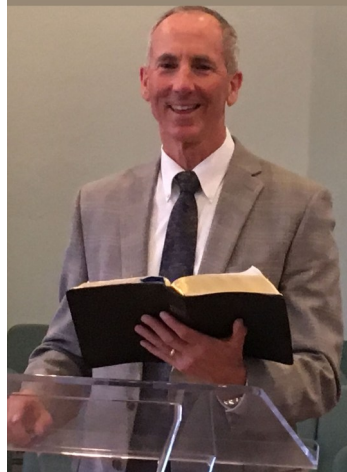
VISTOSO COMMUNITY CHURCH

FOREWORD

I would like to ask everyone who considers Vistoso Community Church to be their church home to join me in what I have labeled:

A Necessary Pause.

This will be a short pause—just three days (September 26-28). The goal is to allow the truths we have learned from our study of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 to impact our lives individually, and to impact the life of our fellowship.



The place to begin is in reading this little publication, and the rest of the details will follow. This is something we haven't done before, but I trust the Lord will lead us to do so on a regular basis.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, sweeping 'K' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kevin Redig, pastor-teacher

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
Publication: September 2025

INTRODUCTION

I hate the thought of learning something and not applying it—especially when it is wisdom dispensed by God! I found our study of the seven churches of Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 to be very convicting. These were seven real churches in existence roughly two thousand years ago. God tells us exactly what He finds commendable in these churches and what He condemns.



What God Condemns

In particular, the things that He condemns really caught my attention for two reasons:

- First, I was surprised to see the kinds of problems in the early church that were well documented in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3. After all, some of these churches were planted or taught by the apostle Paul and other spiritual giants of the early church. How could they have such glaring shortcomings?
- Second, I see exactly the same kinds of problems showing up in the church in America today. Could it be that we are expected to learn that the Church is always going to face the same temptations? I think so! If that is the case, shouldn't we be on guard against such things and seek to keep them out of our fellowship? That's the goal of this little booklet.

What We Are Going to Do

In September, we are going to do something that I hope will become, at the very least, an annual event. We are going to set aside September 26-28 as a time to pause, come before the Lord, and ask Him both corporately and individually to:

Search us, O God, and know our hearts; test us and know our thoughts. Point out anything in us that offends You, and lead us in the way of everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23-24

This verse has been recast in plural pronouns in order to apply to VCC corporately. In the singular, it is perfectly suited to personal reflection.

The goal is very simple:

- To allow the Lord the opportunity to point out anything that we need to expel from our midst.
- To allow the Lord to point out anything that has the potential to cause us to stray.
- To allow the Lord to confirm those things pleasing in His sight.

How We Are Going To Do It

First, it is my hope that every member of our fellowship will work their way through this little booklet, and make



PSALMS 139:23 WEB

*Search me, God,
and know my
heart. Try me, and
know my thoughts.*

It a matter of prayer during this three-day period. Then we will gather for corporate prayer on Friday evening September 26. Those so inclined are invited to join us to prayerfully consider the issues raised in this booklet. And, finally I will be preaching to this subject on Sunday, September 28.

You may be wondering, "Why this particular weekend?" From a pastoral standpoint, this is the perfect time to pause. The summer is over and most of our year-round fellowship have returned from their time away. In October, we become focused on the start of fall Bible studies, preparation for the Christmas cantata, and the return of our winter visitors. To borrow an old expression, this last weekend in September is the *lull before the storm!* As such, it is an opportunity I would very much like to take advantage of, and I hope you will join me.

So let us begin with those things against which we must be on guard!

I. The Church Must Guard Against Forsaking Their *First Love*

In the very first church on which Jesus pronounces judgment, we are told:

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your First Love."

Revelation 2:4

Shockingly, this message is to the church at Ephesus! Paul spent over two years teaching them. At one time the witness of what God was doing through this church

was so widespread that the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus:

... were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Acts 19:17

What happened? The church at Ephesus left its *First Love*! There is nothing cryptic about this reference. The *First Love* of each and every church is meant to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. How could it be otherwise when the Church is the Bride of Christ?

Read the text of Revelation 2:1-7 and you will note the church was still *busy* for the Lord and hadn't taken up obvious sin. But the one vital ingredient necessary to be a *Prevailing Church* was now missing—a vital and life-giving relationship with its Savior. This is no longer a church that Jesus is building, and that is the first step in the decline that is sure to follow.

Understand the Problem

What would cause a church to leave its single-minded focus on developing its relationship with its Savior? The answer is too many programs, too much entertainment, too much accommodating the world—too much of anything else but Jesus!

How about on a personal level, does the same thing apply? Allow me to suggest that it does! To help make this point clear, let's consider the marriage relationship as an example. Can you picture a young husband and wife—madly in love and thinking nothing will ever get in the way of their feelings for each other? But life happens, doesn't it? When children come along, financial difficulties arise, career demands lead to crazy hours ...

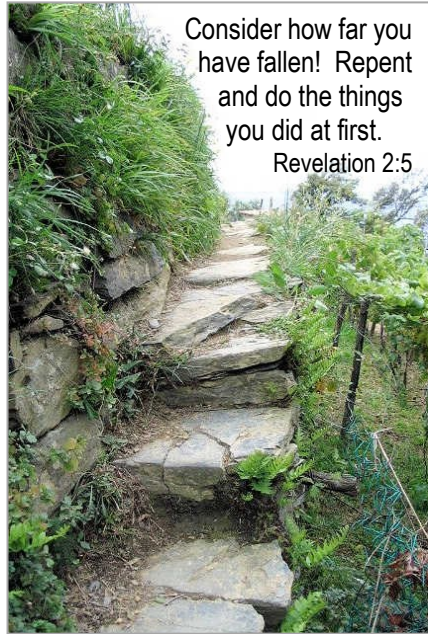
and all the rest. If this couple isn't careful, is it possible for one or the other to forsake their first love? You know that it is, because you have seen it happen.

What did Jesus tell the church at Ephesus?

"... Repent and do the things you did at first. ..."

Revelation 2:5

Acts 19 makes it clear that this church began with a steady diet of God's Word. As a result, they turned from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit was manifest among them.



The First Corrective Step

So, how do we keep from forsaking our *First Love*? Let's begin with the Word of God. Make some kind of daily devotional—in God's Word—an absolute priority in your life.

I don't mean reading something so you can check off the box. I mean sitting down, making sure you are in fellowship with the Lord, and then asking Him to reveal a little bit more of Himself to you through His Word. Ask Him to do this every single day!

Come to the Word with an expectation of knowing Him better. Bring your cares and concerns to Him, and allow

Him to speak His truth into your life in return. If we do this, here is what will happen:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.
II Corinthians 3:18

Do you see it? We fix our gaze upon Him and, in turn, the Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of our affections. If we do this day in and day out, a transformed life will occur. Literally we will go from that which is glorious to that which is more glorious. This should be our priority as a fellowship of believers.

Are you doing this individually? Do you think we are doing it corporately?

Take Time for Prayer

Would you pause now and spend a few moments in prayer:

1. Start by asking the Lord to draw you to Himself through His Word and His Spirit as you open the Word daily.
2. Ask Him to forgive you if you have wandered and to draw you back to Himself as the prodigal who has been fully restored to the Father's good graces.
3. Ask Him to keep you close and growing spiritually until you see Him face to face.

I have left space on the next page to jot down anything the Lord brings to your mind, things which might be helpful to consider again in the future.

The Lord Brought to My Mind ...

II. The Church Must Guard Against Worldliness

In the church of Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) and the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29), we find a terrible indictment of the church. It has been caught up in the *teaching of Balaam* and the *teaching of Jezebel*. These are two Old Testament characters that led the people of Israel into idolatry and sexual immorality.

This Is Still Relevant

It is easy to dismiss this as a concern because we do not feel like idolatry or immorality is a problem in our fellowship. To do that is to miss something very important. Follow me on this:

- Idolatry comes first and sexual immorality is typically quick to follow.
- Idolatry is turning, in part or whole, from all that is ours in Christ to anything else. It doesn't have to be a statue, false religion, or cult leader, it can be any substitute. This includes material things, recreational pursuits, gratification of self—anything that Satan, through this, world offers as a substitute.
- Make no mistake about it, the idols of our day are offered up by the world around us, and they are very numerous. When the Christian is caught up in anything found in this world. Here is God's assessment:

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."
James 4:4

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

I John 2:15-17

The Balaams and Jezebels of our day are calling the Church to worldliness. Whatever grabs our attention in this world—whatever we allow to stimulate our sinful nature—for us that has become our idol. And, an idol of any kind is a form of spiritual adultery. When understood this way, I trust that we see both idolatry and immorality are a very serious temptation to the church in our day.

I would be shocked if this isn't something that we have all, at one time or another, had to confess and forsake. Would you not agree with me that it has absolutely no place in a church that is seeking to follow after Jesus, to finish well spiritually speaking, and to bear fruit to His glory? If so, would you pause for a moment in prayer, and simply ask the Lord to point out any area of worldliness in your own life. Ask Him to convict you of anything He wants you to change. To help you do so, consider this definition of sin by Susanna



1 JOHN 2:15 WEB

*Don't love the world,
neither the things that are
in the world. If anyone
loves the world, the
Father's love isn't in him.*



Wesley provided to her boys John and Charles when they asked her about sin. I am not presenting it to you as a perfect definition, but as something that powerfully addresses the issue that anything that obscures our relationship with our Savior needs to go!

Whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes away your relish for spiritual things, in short, if anything increases the authority of the flesh over the spirit, that to you becomes sin, however good it is in itself.

Susanna Wesley

So again, please take time in prayer to take this up with the Lord, and allow Him to show you the inroads of worldliness in your life. I am fully aware that we are in the world, it is just that we are not to be of the world! It is not necessarily the things we do, it is whether or not those things have stolen some of our affections for the Lord. I have left you space on the next page to jot down anything the Spirit of God brings to mind for your future reference.

Before continuing, would you devote additional prayer to the issue of asking the Lord if we have allowed any area of worldliness into our church fellowship? Should you be convinced that we have, I would most certainly like to discuss that further with you. I am naturally on guard against any such thing, but I would like our entire fellowship to be sensitive to this matter. I am glad to listen to any warning you might feel led to offer.

The Lord Brought to My Mind ...

III. The Church Must Guard Against Becoming *Lukewarm*

The church of Laodicea is in big, big trouble. They think they are spiritually rich and thus don't need a thing (Revelation 3:17). God's assessment, which is, of course, the only one that matters, is that they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17).

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—"

Revelation 3:17



There is nothing ambiguous about God's assessment! It could hardly be worse. In fact, their spiritual *lukewarmness* is going to result in God *spewing them out of His mouth!* (Revelation 3:16) What a dreadful picture for any group of believers that calls themselves a *church* and claims an association with Jesus!

Two Important Questions

Naturally, questions abound. I am going to limit myself to two things for your consideration.

1. First, the church in Laodicea has failed to accurately assess its own spiritual standing. It thinks it is in good shape, while God declares it to be a disaster! This certainly shows it is possible to spiritually fool yourself. This is one reason I am wanting us to set aside

these three days to do some spiritual assessment. I find it impossible to believe that the church in Laodicea had, at any recent time, come before the Lord and asked Him if He finds any fault among them and listened to His response. This is something we need to do on a regular basis.

*Lord, what is it that makes us wretched before You?
Point out our spiritual lukewarmness!*

2. Second, how are we to understand the evil of *lukewarmness* as opposed to that of *wickedness*? Let me suggest that God finds *lukewarmness* so objectionable because it is a pretense of spirituality—one which looks nothing like the real thing! It is going through the motions of spiritual things, without their reality. It is singing His praises while thinking about something else, it is sitting through the teaching of the Word while watching the clock, it is finding fellowship with unbelievers rather than among the saints. In short, it is form without substance.

In fact it has gotten to the point that, in such a church, we find Jesus in a very strange place:

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20

Do you see it? Rather than being the center of things in this fellowship, Jesus is on the outside knocking! He is asking to be let back into His rightful place. He is willing to engage in fellowship once again, but first the door to the heart and mind must be opened!

A Prayer Request

So would you for a third time pause for prayer? Would you again seek the Lord and simply ask Him to show you where you may have gotten *sloppy* regarding your spiritual life? Where you might be thinking everything is just *fine*, while His assessment is something completely different. Even go so far as to ask Him to guide you into a zeal for knowing Him that might have been squeezed out by other things. Again, I have provided space should the Lord lead you to jot down any notes.

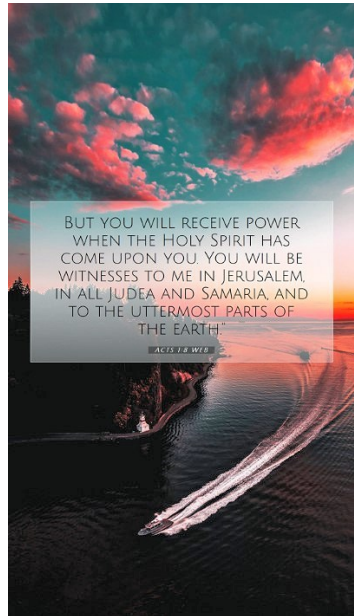
The Lord Brought to My Mind ...

Conclusion

If this little booklet has caused you to pause, and spend time in prayer these three times, I will consider it to be a complete success! But before I conclude, I would like to leave you with several bits of encouragement from our study of these same seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3.

1. As you have no doubt noticed, I have focused on the negative. That is because at heart I am a problem-solver, and I most certainly seek to lead our fellowship in avoiding those problems that God has so clearly revealed to us. But at the same time, I do not want to overlook that God commends good works that He accomplishes as we abide in our Savior and bear the fruit produced by His Spirit. He also commends a steadfast witness for Him to the watching world around us.

I trust that is exactly what we will be doing as the fall continues right into the new year. I trust our witness will begin with our weekly Bible studies in the Psalms and it will continue as we look for opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ with the lost and needy world around us and look forward to sharing the ministry of music with our community.

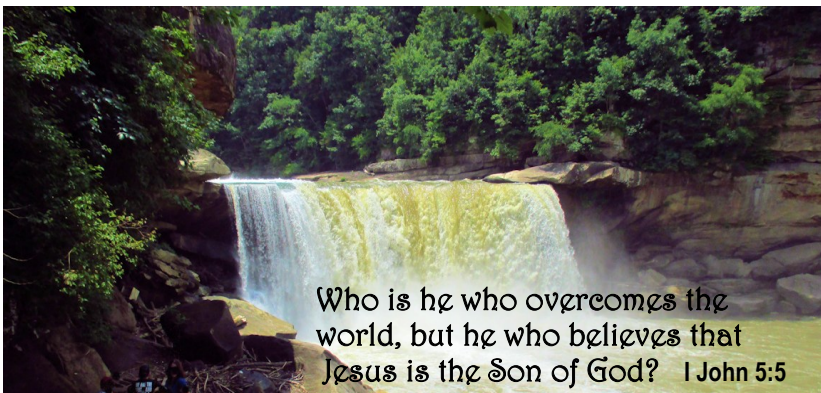


2. The second reminder I would like to give you involves the term *overcomer*. This was new to us until we studied Revelation, but it actually conveys an old concept.

This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

I John 5:4-5

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is calling His church to *overcome*! This is a call to a walk of faith, with which we should be very familiar. We start with faith in the person and work of Christ as the means of our salvation, and then we continue on just as we started—learning to walk by faith—from the moment our feet hit the floor in the morning until we lay our head on our pillow at night! God is not asking us to do great things, He will take care of that! He is asking us to live a life of dependent trust no matter the circumstances in which we individually or corporately find ourselves. To do so is to overcome in this life and to put ourselves in a position to receive the reward God desires to richly bestow.



3. There is an absolutely amazing aspect of God's grace regarding the life of a local church as revealed in Revelation 2 and 3. If we avoid those things He condemns and if we engage in the works He has pre-ordained for us to do, with the faith of the one who overcomes by means of a steadfast faith, then He has something very special in store. God has provided limited information about the specifics of eternal rewards, but what we do have is nowhere near as descriptive anywhere else than it is in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3.

Consider the following: Eating from the *tree of life*; wearing the *crown of life*; receiving some of the *hidden manna*; authority to rule over the nations; dressed in white and acknowledged before the Father; not touched by the second death; a pillar in His temple; and receiving the right to sit with the Lord Jesus on His throne. I freely admit that I don't know exactly what most of these mean. But I do know this: They are promises of reward from our Savior and they will be very good! Does the world have the ability to provide any of these things for all eternity? Of course not! So it comes down to trusting our God that:

... our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal of glory that far outweighs them all.

II Corinthians 4:17

May God bless you and our fellowship as we ponder these things deeply and seek to apply them both in our own lives, and corporately.

In His grace,

Kevin

VISTOSO



Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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