



Dear Church

Dear Church: Letter to Smyrna September 22nd / 23rd

Speaker: Dr. Mark Batterson

Scripture: [Revelation 2:8-11](#)

Sermon Summary:

The power of prayer is not the words we chose. The power of prayer is the God we pray to--the Alpha and Omega. He is God Most High, but He is also God Most Nigh. He is God with us, no matter what. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus!

Sermon Series Questions:

1. What did you think the letter meant to the original audience?
2. What do you think the letter means to the Church today?

Sermon Specific Questions:

1. Just like Ruth Foth writes personal letters to widows offering acknowledgement of their suffering and encouragement through the journey, who could you write personal letters of encouragement to?
2. Pastor Mark says, "The power of prayer is in WHO we pray to, not necessarily the words or what we pray." How do you address God when you pray?
3. Within the Kingdom of God, your character in Christ is your net-worth. How are you increasing your net-worth?
4. It's important to know the season you're in and your community around you is in. How would you describe your current season of life?
5. The Gospel is not just good news for when everything is going right, but it's good news for when the bottom falls out on our lives. How are you sharing the good news with your words and using your life as an example?

Digging Deeper

Letters to the Seven Churches

As we study the *Letters to the Seven Churches* found within Revelations, we need to try to understand what **DID** it mean to the original audience **BEFORE** we try to understand what **DOES** it mean for us today. You do not have to be a Biblical scholar to study scriptures! Yet, below you will find information, resources, and questions to guide you and your group in studying these letters together.

Geography of the City of Smyrna

Smyrna was a major port city located on a central and highly strategic point on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor.

Economics of the City of Smyrna

The city of Smyrna was known as a beautiful, wealthy port city comprised of Greek, Jewish, and Roman merchants. Status was established through membership of the various Merchant Trade Guilds, or network organizations. Smyrna was a city of “*Who do you know.*” Most trade guilds required the worship of a pagan deity or the Roman Emperor to participate. Despite being within an affluent city, the early Christian community was ostracized from participation in trade guilds due to their religious beliefs. Therefore, verse 9 is addressing the Church of Smyrna’s poor economic status.

Persecution of the Church in Smyrna

Society viewed Jews and early Christians as **atheist** (due to monotheism) **deformed** (due to circumcision), **lazy** (due to Sabbath rule), **finicky** (due to eating habits). However, during the first two centuries, the persecution of Christians existed sporadically and at a local level. One method was through imprisonment, which was a tool used to coerce a confession. Within the Roman empire, prison was also used force individuals to denounce their faith and sacrifice to another. One of the most famous martyrs in Smyrna is Bishop Polycarp in the 2nd century. The story was documented in a letter to the Church in Smyrna entitled *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>).

RE-READ REVELATIONS 2:8-11

Questions for the Church Today

1. How does the Church today relate to the Church in Smyrna?
2. Would the character of the Church today be defined as “*rich?*”
3. How is the Church today viewed from the outside? How do you handle accusations against your faith due to outside misconceptions?