

# COMMIT TO MEMORY

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer,  
the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last,  
and there is no God besides Me.” - Isaiah 44:6

# CONSIDER

As Believers in Christ, we are overcomers, but we need to adopt the right perspective on Satan’s attempts to harm and test us. Satan may be telling us that he plans to steal from us, kill us and destroy us (John 10:10)—but when he does, remember that God is greater than our enemy. The beautiful thing about being a Believer in Christ is that God is crafty enough to allow Satan to believe he is throwing you to your demise, but he is actually throwing you straight into God’s hands—even in the midst of your suffering.

Believers in Christ will also need to adopt the right perspective on what it means to embrace the life of an overcomer. Namely, an overcomer is someone who takes their position in Christ and makes it their practice in Christ. It is not someone who is trying to overcome. It is someone who recognizes that they have already overcome—they are only in a process of working the overcoming out in their day-to-day life.

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The church at Smyrna, which is the focus of our time this week, was located some thirty five miles from the previous church we looked at in Ephesus. Smyrna was a well-known city that had buildings constructed and erected in the shape of a crown. This is because it was one of the cities in Asia that had focused on emperor worship. Smyrna was a place where the Christians were undergoing a great deal of tribulation and trials. This is because the believers living in Smyrna were disciples. They were not secretive about their faith. Will you remain faithful?

# CONNECT

Remember to always open your group time together in prayer. Invite God's Spirit to manifest Himself fully in your midst, to soften your hearts and open your ears to His Word as well as to guard your lips—seasoning each person's speech as with salt. Keep specific prayer requests to be covered at the end of the meeting, if possible. This is a time to connect with each other and to connect with God as we open our time together.

*Share your responses to these questions as you open up your time of connection.*

What is something that you learned or stood out to you in your personal time in the Word this past week?

Can you share about some of the things you are putting into practice based on the principles learned in this study? Have you noticed any positive outcomes at this point?

Are there any specific needs you want to share with the group this week? Or answered prayers?

After this preliminary connecting time is completed, watch the DVD teaching by Pastor Evans on this session. Next, have someone read the discussion questions in the Concentrate section and guide the discussion.

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# CONCENTRATE

*Use the following questions and Scripture passages to guide your discussion of the teaching you just experienced from Pastor Evans and the discussion from your group members.*

1. Read Revelation 2:8-9. What does Jesus say He knows about the people of the church of Smyrna?
2. Based on Revelation 2:10, What does Jesus urge them not to do in light of their pending suffering? And how difficult is His request, if you know you are about to face suffering?
3. Based on the video teaching, Pastor Evans says that a test has a purpose for it. It does two things. What two things do spiritual tests do and does knowing this truth bring you comfort in any way?

A.

B.

Notes

*(Use this space for personal notes on the lesson and discussion.)*

# CONVERGE

“be doers of the Word,  
not just hearers”  
- James 1:22

In this section, talk with the group about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study.

***Discuss the following questions:***

1. Describe a time in your life where you felt that the Lord was allowing testing and trials for some reason only He knew. What gave you the strength to continue in faith during this time?
2. What are some things we can do to encourage others who may be going through a season of testing? What are some things we probably shouldn't do or say during those times?
3. Have someone read James 1:2-4. Based on this Scripture passage, what do trials produce in us? Have you seen a progression in your maturity to steadfastly handle trials and tests that would have been too much for you in the past? How does that make you feel to witness your own personal growth toward wholeness?

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Focusing  
on practical  
applications of  
what we've  
learned in this  
lesson in  
order to better  
align our life  
choices with  
God's truth  
and will.

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To close your time together, spend some time worshiping God together—praying, singing, reading Scripture. Use the Prayer and Praise to keep track of how God answers prayer.

# CONTINUE

Rest, and allow the Lord to lead you as you seek Him through His Word.

The following section is for you to use personally on your own as you continue in the week's topic throughout the next few days. Pray and ask the Lord to open your ears to truly hear His truth and apply it in your life. If you want to, feel free to write what you learn in the margins or in the Notes section of this week's lesson.

## Day 1

*The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.*  
 - Isaiah 26:3-4

### REFLECT:

Since trials are designed to produce steadfastness in us, what are we guaranteed is a result of these trials based on this passage?

Are you required to keep yourself in perfect peace, or is it God who does this?

What is your part to play in living as an overcomer who experiences perfect peace?

## Day 2

*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.* - John 14:27

### REFLECT:

What two things are we not to allow our hearts to be?

How is Christ's peace different than the peace the world gives?

Peace is priceless. In what ways can you align your thoughts and mind-sets under God at a greater level than you already are in order to tap into His gift of peace?

## Day 3

*For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.*  
 - Read Psalm 27:5-6

### REFLECT:

What three things does this passage say the Lord will do for you on the day of trouble?

What is to be your response when He does this for you?

Have you ever experienced a deeper intimacy with God during a trial than while things are going along well for you? How does having a mind-set that acknowledges this ahead of time help you to mentally prepare for a trial you may one day face?

## Day 4

*For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.* - 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

### REFLECT:

Does it surprise you that the great apostle Paul despaired of life, or in our contemporary language, was suicidal?

What was God teaching Paul and his companions during this severe time of testing?

Jesus introduced Himself to the church of Smyrna as the One who died but who was also raised from the dead. Paul refers to trusting in God who raises the dead as the lesson he learned from his tribulation. In what ways does the reality that nothing is final unless God says it is final give you strength to face the trials and tests you may be in or may one day be in?

## Day 5

*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me."* - Isaiah 44:6

### REFLECT:

What do you think it means when God refers to Himself as the first and the last?

How does the truth of God's preeminence over all affect the way you view your personal challenges?

Since there is no God besides God, what does He deserve from you?