

Seven CHURCHES

Letters to the Early Church for the Ears of Today

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

SEPT 20, 2026

The Church of Smyrna

The church in Smyrna stands out among the seven churches in Revelation because Jesus offers no correction or rebuke. Instead, He commends their faithfulness in the midst of suffering, poverty, slander, and persecution. Through His words, Jesus reminds believers that He is the First and the Last, the One who conquered death and reigns over every circumstance. The message to Smyrna challenges us to remain faithful when our faith is tested and encourages us to trust that our suffering is never unseen by God. As we study this passage, we'll consider how Jesus strengthens His people to endure hardship with courage and hope.

READ Revelation 2:8–11.

- Jesus introduces Himself as "the First and the Last, who died and came to life again." Why do you think this description would be especially meaningful to believers facing persecution and suffering?
- Jesus says, "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich." What does this teach us about how Jesus evaluates success, wealth, and faithfulness?
- The church in Smyrna receives encouragement rather than correction. What qualities do you see in this church that make them a model for believers today?
- How might a greater awareness of the suffering of believers in other parts of the world today strengthen your faith?
- How do Jesus' words to this church provide comfort and strength to those who were experiencing real suffering?
- Have you made compromises in your faith in order to avoid any kind of persecution from others?
- Where do you need encouragement in suffering or persecution today?



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Prayer

Spend a few minutes in quiet reflection and read Revelation 2:10 aloud:

"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."

Then pray through the following prompts:

- Thank Jesus for being the First and the Last, the One who has overcome death.
- Confess any fears, compromises, or areas where you have struggled to trust Him.
- Pray for believers around the world who are facing persecution because of their faith.
- Ask God for courage to remain faithful in your current circumstances.
- Close by thanking Him for the promise of eternal life and His presence in every trial.

Invite group members who feel comfortable sharing to pray for one another's specific challenges and areas of suffering.

Practice

This week, read the article: [What Can We Learn from the Life of Polycarp?](#) (Click the Link)

As you read, reflect on the courage and faithfulness of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who remained loyal to Jesus even when it cost him his life.

After reading, journal or discuss these questions:

1. What part of Polycarp's story challenged or encouraged you the most?
2. What helped Polycarp remain faithful under pressure?
3. How does his example deepen your understanding of Jesus' message to the church in Smyrna?
4. Where is God inviting you to greater faithfulness and courage right now?