

# Messages From the Living One

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[ 0 : 00 ] Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have said that your word is living and active, sharper than any sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

You have made it able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. So please enable me to speak your word faithfully today and please cause it to do as you have promised it will. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ and for his glory.

Amen. Amen. Friends, great to see you all here this evening. I'm so far enjoying this series. It's taking a lot of time to prepare, but I hope you are as well.

Friends, the City Harvest Church in Singapore was founded in 1989 by Pastor Kong He and his wife, Sun Ho. It has become well known for its slick image and its commitment to a wealth-focused brand of Christianity.

At its peak, it was estimated that there were some 30,000 members of this church in Singapore and elsewhere. However, in October last year, Kong and five other church leaders were convicted of fraud amounting to \$50 million Singapore dollars, which at the moment is about the equivalent to \$50 million Aussie dollars.

[ 1 : 17 ] The charges related to the church leadership's attempts to boost Sun Ho's music career worldwide. She had already cut several Mandarin singles and had some modest success in Asia.

Then it was decided to give her a makeover in order to crack the US market. She was restyled as a vampy rapper-singer nicknamed Geisha. Then she sang in a song called China Wine, which depicted her as a Chinese exotic dancer in Jamaica.

The new image was accompanied by a new and flashy lifestyle in Los Angeles. Anyway, the endeavour failed. The church-based music production company was left with millions of dollars in losses.

Six church leaders were found guilty on varying counts of criminal breach of trust and falsification of accounts. They are facing lengthy jail terms. City Harvest Church is one of many churches around the world that has bought into a personality-based leadership model and prosperity doctrine.

Here is one picture of the church around the world today. Let's take another one. The date is yesterday, Tuesday the 5th of January. A group of Christians were meeting for prayer at a church in the Indian state of Kantaka and they were surrounded by a radical Hindu mob.

[ 2 : 41 ] Reputedly, the authorities arrested the Christians to protect them. However, none of the attackers were arrested and when the Christians were released, they were warned against proselytising and told that they must in future warn the authorities before any prayer services or celebrations.

Or consider a growing number of Christians in rural Australia whose churches cannot no longer afford pastors and who meet in old buildings and listen to audio or watch video sermons because they have no one trained to teach the Bible.

These folk have a deep faith grounded in Scripture. They remain faithful to Jesus. They meet regularly as his people. But they have no formal or regular pastors. Friends, these are true stories from around the world in Christian churches.

Many more could be told and you would have some that you've read about yourselves. More details could be fleshed out. But let me tell you that this is Christ's church meeting in the name of Jesus around the world.

Friends, today we're going to look at some churches from the 1st century and we'll hear the examination of them by Jesus their Lord. And we'll get glimpses as to how we might examine and assess churches in our own day.

[ 3 : 56 ] So let's get started. Have your Bibles open. First thing I want you to do is to, or want to do is to give you an overview of the structure of the book of Revelation. As you might know, the key to understanding Revelation is to know and look for the number seven.

Seven is very important in the book of Revelation. And we see that even today. Of course, there are seven churches examined. However, let me give you an overview of the book. It's not perfect. However, I think it's a good representation of how the book is structured and holds together. And I've put it on your outlines. If you don't have an outline, you might put up your hand and someone will make sure you get one if you want one.

Anyway, here is, have a look at the outline and check it out with me. It's largely based on the work of a man called Dan Leoy. I've slightly amended it, but you can see it there.

I want you to notice a number of things about it. First, there are seven core sections. They're introduced by a prologue that includes a start to the letter from John to the churches.

[ 4 : 59 ] They're closed off by an epilogue that finishes the letter of John off. So basically, the letter is enclosed with a prologue and an epilogue, a beginning of a letter and the end of a letter.

Second, for each major section, there is a peek or a glimpse or an insight into the heavenly realm. It's as though heaven is opened up for us and we're given eyes to look. We can look in those with our eyes.

And then what has happened is that we then see that worked out on earth. The things we saw in heaven are then worked out in earth. A third, there are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

Okay, with that all done, so there's a brief outline of revelation. With that all done, let's now begin our section for today. Now, the letters to the churches is preceded by a preliminary peek into the throne room.

We looked at that on Sunday night. However, it's good to remind ourselves of what that consisted of. You see, and open your Bibles at Revelation 1 and look at verse 9. John is in Patmos because of his gospel ministry.

[ 6 : 03 ] I think that's what it means being on Patmos for the word of God. It's the Lord's day, that is, it's the day when Christians meet together. And on this day, he is given a message for a group of churches in Asia.

Those churches are not all the churches that existed in the province of Asia at that time.

Nevertheless, they are probably representatives, a representative of the churches in Asia. They're probably also representative of the whole church in the then known world.

My suspicion is that in the long run, they're probably representative of the churches around the world in any given time. Anyway, John gives a divine figure, sees a divine figure in the midst of the golden lampstands that represent the churches in question.

He is one who is described as one dead, but now, who was once dead, but is now alive forever and ever. He is one who holds the keys of death and Hades. And this one gives instructions to angels of seven churches.

Now, that is our behind the scenes sneak look into heaven. It is typical of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature often opens up heaven for us and then goes to see how that works out on earth.

[ 7 : 15 ] Heaven's curtain has been rolled back for us and now we are taken back to earth in chapter two. And there we'll be given glimpses of life among the churches of Jesus there.

And what this does is it tells us that the churches, that the one with whom we have to do, sorry, the churches of the one with whom we have to do, are the churches of the divine son of man, the judge of all the earth, the master of God's church.

You see, it is he, the son of man, who is speaking to them. And this is greatly assuring. You imagine you were here and getting this letter. He who walks among the lampstands of the churches now addresses you, the church, in your context.

It's Jesus speaking to you. It's greatly assuring. He holds them, you see, in his hands. However, let me tell you, it's not only assuring, it is somewhat disturbing.

After all, this is his church. It's not our church. It is his church. And he, the one who walks amongst it, the one whose church it is, has now come to visit.

[ 8 : 27 ] It is he, whom the disobedient, will have to deal with. So let's now take a look at what he has to say. Now, let's take a quick skim through the letters addressed by him to the angel of each

church.

By the way, I should tell you that the word angel in both Hebrew and Greek simply means messenger. I tell you this so that you can rid your minds of those white and winged things. Okay, just for a little while.

No, this is simply a messenger. We've got no idea what the messenger actually looked like. So with that said, let's see if we can get some of the general idea of the structure of the message the messengers are going to take.

First, each messenger is to write something. Presumably, that written message is what is going to be delivered to them. Second, each messenger is to say something that begins with these words. These are the words of. Then, in all but the sixth and seventh letter, this formula is followed by some words that are taken from the vision of the Son of Man in chapter one.

[ 9 : 31 ] For example, the messenger to the church in Ephesus is to write this. These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

Messenger six in Philadelphia echoes the words of Isaiah 22 and looks forward to Revelation 6 and 19 and says, these are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens, no one can shut and what he shuts, no one can open. Messenger seven records the words of Revelation 1 verse five. These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

And so, the messengers write and they then deliver an introduction that identifies the source of the words that is Jesus and Jesus is said to know certain things about this church.

In all but two cases which is chapter 2 verse 9 and 13, he said to know the deeds of the church.

Now that's awesome, isn't it, you see? So imagine the Lord came among us and said, I know your deeds.

[ 10 : 37 ] That would send some of us running, wouldn't it? Look at the first church, Revelation 2 verse 2. Jesus says to the church in Ephesus, I know your deeds, your hard work, your perseverance.

I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them to be false. Now the next standard element is that there is a standard saying that Jesus used in his earthly ministry and that is now used in his ministry to the churches.

I wonder if you can see it. Have a look at verse 7. Through the messenger, Jesus says, whoever has ears, remember Jesus saying that in the parables? Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

And then finally, there's a statement about what's going to happen if you heed these things and obey them and follow them and so on and sometimes the order is actually fiddled around a little bit and the wording is tweaked but nevertheless, it goes something like the first one in verse 7.

Can you see it? Verse 7. To the one who is victorious, I actually prefer the other one that came in an older version, to the one who overcomes. But nevertheless, to the one who is victorious, who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

[ 11 : 53 ] Now, what do you think is accomplished by those patterns? Let me suggest some things. First, it repeatedly and individually pushes home that the Lord Jesus, the heavenly son of man oversees his church.

Every one of them, every congregation, every gathered group of people, he oversees. Second, it shows that he knows what is going on in each of them.

That's the awesome thing. What is more, it communicates that he knows that they know what he sees and has communicated. But there's one more thing.

Jesus is said in these to reward the victorious. But what does a victorious or an overcoming one look like? Well, we have some glimpses here. We'll have to wait for the whole book to unfold to find out exactly what it means because we won't find out what overcoming means until the whole book progresses.

So there's an overview of the structure and the common elements. Now, let's take a quick run through each of the churches. So follow with me and we're just going to run through them. The words that begin the address are slightly stronger than in the previous version.

[ 13 : 01 ] Jesus Christ has absolute control over the congregation and his leadership, the Ephesian church is told. He holds the seven stars. He walks among the lampstands.

That is, he rules and sustains them and moves among them unseen. The Ephesian church members are commended because they've rejected evil, persevered in their faith, demonstrated patience.

However, Jesus criticizes them for losing their first love. What do you think that means, their first love? For most of my life, I thought it meant the love they first had when they became Christians. And it could mean that. It could also mean their love for others. That is, their first responsibility is to love others. Love God and love others. And so, their first responsibility to other human beings is to love them.

So it could mean their first love, which is to love others. But it also could mean their love for Christ. However, the other real possibility is that they have lost their love for their prime mission on earth, witnessing to their Lord Jesus.

[ 14 : 11 ] And I'm inclined to this view a little at the moment. And that would explain why their Lord threatens to remove their lamp of witness. You see, lamps were a witness to the presence of God in his world.

God's people were to be God's lamp, put on a lampstand to shine. That was to be their first love, witness to the Lord Jesus in the world.

And that has grown cold, as it were. So the Nicolaitans in verse 6 are possibly some, oh sorry, let's move on to the Nicolaitans in verse 6. They are possibly some libertine group who taught that some degree of accommodation to the idolatry of Ephesus was right, was okay.

What that means is some accommodation to the lifestyle lived by the rest of people in Ephesus was okay. I went to Ephesus last year, or Heather and I did, and just from the way the buildings are arranged, you can see it was an ungodly place.

The temple was, let's say, from here to the back of our church and the brothel was here. They were walking distance to each other and you could see from the temple anyone who walked in and out.

[ 15 : 25 ] That in itself was enough to tell you, that's very interesting. This is a place where things are fairly open. Anyway, the Nicolaitans are probably a group that were accommodating to the idolatry of Ephesus and even the lifestyle of Ephesus.

If they overcome or are victorious, the Ephesian believers will be given the right to eat from the tree of life. Verse 7. Let's move on now to Smyrna. Their Lord commends them for their spiritual riches among their afflictions and poverty.

He has not, his criticism, sorry, he has no criticism of them, but he simply urges them to be faithful until death. This is church number one that he has no criticism of.

He promises to reward them with the crown of life. If they overcome, if they are victorious, then they will not be hurt by the second death, that is, they'll not be hurt by that eternal punishment of the wicked that will follow after death.

It won't touch them. Pergamum now, verses 12 to 17. This time the Lord identifies himself as the one who has a symbol of judgment, a sharp two-edged sword.

[ 16 : 37 ] He says, I know where you live, where Satan has his throne, and although Satan has a strong influence, they have remained faithful. However, the Lord is not without criticism of the believers in Pergamum.

They tolerated immorality, idolatry, and heresy. So in verse 16, he urges them, repent, or face the consequences. The consequences would be that he would present himself among them and do battle with using the sword of his mouth that is his word.

Now, that's a potent threat, isn't it? You see, he says, you don't repent, I'm coming. I won't just be my angel, it'll be me, and I'll do battle with you with my word.

The other side of this is that if they overcome, those who were victorious would be given manna, hidden manna. Hidden manna could possibly be a metaphor for eternal life, but in that addition, in addition, they will be given a white stone on which he would write a new name known only to the receiver.

I love this little bit. It's probably a symbol of the Lord's ownership and protection. This stone that has your own secret name on it that only you and God know.

[ 17 : 52 ] A sign that you and he are bound together. They would have this and they would be guarded and protected by him. In verse 18, we move on to Thyatira.

The believers in Thyatira are commended for their steady improving of their love, service, faith, and patient endurance. However, they tolerated a cult amongst or around them that promoted sexual immorality and idolatry and the leaders of that cult, the Lord says, will be punished if not repentant. And the churches who see it will know that the Lord is he who searches the hearts and minds and repays according to their deeds. Imagine the scene. You've got a loose group of people in your church who are, you know, immoral and they're actively promoting this.

And Jesus says, I see. I search the hearts and the minds and I repay according to deed and be aware.

And the Lord then urges the faithful to hold firm to the true teaching they've received and those who hold firm are promised that one day they will rule with Christ over the nations. With that, we begin chapter 3, the church in Sardis.

[ 19 : 01 ] The first words to Sardis are stark. They have a reputation for being alive but are spiritually dead. That's not really the opening sentence you'd want to hear from the Lord, is it? And so they urge to repent and to strengthen what remains.

Those faithful will be clothed in righteousness, clothed in white to symbolise their worthiness and their victory. They will never have their name blotted out from the book of life. In fact, the Lord will acknowledge their names before his father and his angels.

What a wonderful scene, you see. There is God who says, let me present to you. What a great thing in their names and so on.

Now, Philadelphia verses 7 to 13. There are no criticisms of this church. Again, that's number two, isn't it? All is commendation. They have preserved the faith in the midst of trial and he will protect them even from the tough times that are coming upon the whole world.

He will bring them into his temple, that is, into his presence and he will write on them the name of God, his city and even his own name. Again, how spectacular is that?

[ 20 : 14 ] You know, God will etch as it were his name, his son's name and so on. Then, Laodicea. Laodicea, geographically, was a place noted for its tepid, unpalatable and nausea creating water.

It was the sort of water that made you want to spew. And the Laodicean Christians were apparently made the Lord feel the same way. That is, their culture, their situation matched their temperament. And the Laodiceans claimed they had spiritual riches. They're probably reasonably wealthy but the reality perceived by the Lord was that they're wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. And they needed to get some relevant medicines to sort this out.

There was no commendation really of these Christians. And what makes it a sober final word from the Lord sorry, and that makes it a final word from the Lord to his church and it's very sober.

Nevertheless, he says, when Christians overcome or are victorious, there will be a reward even amongst the Laodiceans. They will sit with their victorious Lord just as he sat in victory with his father on the throne.

[ 21 : 26 ] However, before we finish this very quick overview, I want you to look closely at the final exhortation. Look at verse 22. Notice the plural. It has been there all along.

That is, the plural has been there at the end of each section to each church. And all the letters are addressed in the singular to individual churches. But the note at the end is plural.

The other churches are meant to be eavesdropping, listening in, hearing to what is commended and not commended. God's intention is that all the churches listen to all the correspondence.

And one implication of this is that the sorts of things seen in these churches are common things. All the churches are in a world where there are heretics, morally bad people, pressures from the world, the flesh and the devil.

So every church can learn from these churches. And isn't it great when we read the word churches, we think us too. And we can learn as well. So we may not have their specific problems at this specific time, but we may have similar problems now or have them later.

[ 22 : 43 ] And so these letters can come to us and encourage and strengthen us. And when we do have those problems, we know how Jesus views them. What's more, when we have good things, we also know how Jesus views them, how he rebukes sin, how he punishes and how he rewards.

So friends, you see, when a church is openly corrupt, we know what Jesus thinks of it. When it is openly, when there are people, leaders openly immoral, we know what Jesus thinks.

And we know what he will do. So friends, let's see if we can grasp the big picture here. I mean, what have we found? Well, first and foremost, we've found that Jesus knows his church.

He knows the condition and circumstances of his church. Second, we've found that some churches, we've found some churches where their Lord finds no glaring weaknesses.

There's no strong rebuke for them. They're simply encouraged to just keep doing what you're doing, to patiently endure affliction, to maintain devotion to Christ.

[ 23 : 52 ] The first one of those is Smyrna, church number two. The second one is Philadelphia, number six. They are the stars in these two chapters.

Third, we've found a number of churches that are a mixed bag, haven't we? There are weaknesses and failures. They have strengths and things to commend them. And they include Ephesus, church number one, Pergamum, church number three, and Thyatira, church number four.

And then there are the two others, Sardis and Laodicea. Both have little to commend them. One is just simply dead. That's the declaration.

The other is so lukewarm that it makes the Lord want to puke, basically. So there's the big picture. It's a very mixed bag, isn't it?

And I want you to grasp this. You think, you see, we tend to think that this was the golden age of the church, don't we? These were the great ones. I don't look so great to me.

[ 24 : 59 ] They look not unlike many churches that I've seen. You see, there was no such thing. There was no such golden age of the church.

Why not? Because it had humans in it, basically. And humans who may have been forgiven humans, who may have been humans filled with the Spirit, who may have been under the oversight of the Lord, but the oversight of the Lord is an awesome thing.

They may have been under the charge of the Lord, but that is an awesome thing. But underneath it all, they are still humans. humans. The flesh still struggles within them like it struggles within us. However, the letters of the churches indicate that the Spirit is strong and He can produce significant groups of people, two churches at least, who together bear the likeness of Christ and whom Christ has little to rebuke.

Now, isn't that some encouragement? So, though the churches are filled with people like us, there are some churches that the Lord Jesus has very little to rebuke.

[ 26 : 17 ] So, that's the first thing. Diverse churches with diverse problems is the second. Second element is that the sorts of problems is looking at the sorts of problems that can be found in those churches. You see, all of those problems, everyone noted here, pains the Lord of the church.

Just skim through the letters again and note them. What things do you see that pain the Lord of the church? Loss of love, loss of love for doing God's work, idolatry, sexual immorality, ears that are open to false teaching, lack of discipline, lack of growth, unwillingness to change, tepid Christians who just make the Lord want to spew up.

third thing to notice is the cause of the problems afflicting the churches of the living Lord Jesus. We've already noticed one, it's human sinfulness.

But there are other sources as well. I wonder if you remember them. Do you remember those other sources of things that cause problems? Do you remember them? False teachers such as the Nicolaitans, chapter 2, verse 6, and 15, those who hold to Balaam's teaching, or those who follow Jezebel's instruction, persecutes some of whom kill, and underneath all of that is who?

The evil one, Satan himself, who even has his own synagogues, his own meeting places. He has his throne. He actively opposes God and his purposes.

[ 27 : 59 ] Presumably, he's even behind the false apostles, the false Jews, the false prophets, all of whom are named in these verses. Moreover, his forces, the forces of the evil one, can maim, imprison, and kill.

So there's a couple of perspectives on this big picture. But what about the overall message? What is the overall message of these chapters? What is here for us? What does God want to teach us? Well, let me suggest some things.

First, we must hear the introductory picture of chapter 1 that is picked up time and time again in these letters. the Lord Jesus Christ, the living one, the Son of Man, is in the midst of his church. He stands there. Then there's a development in the first letter to Ephesus. He walks among the church. He watches there.

He sees the faithful. He commends them. He will reward them. But he's also there to rebuke them.

[ 29 : 03 ] And he's there to guarantee the future of his church. Second, we need to hear the constant words that Jesus utters in these chapters. He says, you know what he says? He says, I

know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know, I know.

Friends, our living Lord knows. He knows our frailty. He knows our sinfulness. But he is able. And as we will see, he will be able to accomplish his victory in his world.

That's what the rest of the book of Revelation is going to show us him doing. And it will come about through what? Through historically weak, personally imperfect, and often divided churches full of people like us, making choices to be God's people in God's world.

Those people I've shown you are no different from us, who believe and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. Friends, sometimes I urge, you know, I really struggle with my own sinfulness, my own attitudes, my own frailty.

These people are like me and God can rebuke, correct, and train them in righteousness. How good is that? And the next thing is these letters urge us time and time again to stand firm, don't they?

[ 30 : 24 ] they say, be zealous for God, be zealous for his gospel, and we can do this positively or we can do it negatively. That is, our zeal for God and for the gospel is to be matched by rejection of false teaching.

We're to say, no, I will have nothing of that. God's people are to reject that which undermines the gospel. They're to reject that which compromises it. They're to have no time or place for it.

Now, friends, let me tell you, this is not an easy thing to do. You see, in a mixed church, such as we see in Revelation 2 and 3, that will cost relationships. It will cost friendships.

It will cost goodwill. For Satan will use even Christians to oppose those faithful to God. Those who oppose Christian truth will be found in the churches of God.

As will a moral people. As will agents of Satan. As will the hierarchies of churches. As will people who have titles.

[ 31 : 37 ] There's a fourth thing. We are called by these letters to live a life that corresponds to the gospel. And that requires choices. It requires us saying yes to godly ways and no to ungodly ways.

And it requires decision making. And the final thing to say is that we must exercise church discipline if these things are to be seen. You see, it's not as though Jesus just comes to us personally.

Who does he come to? He comes to a church. And he says to the church, you have this here and that there. What does he expect that they will do with that?

That they'll all individually, personally say yes, that's me. Well, there may be some of that. But he's calling on others to say, deal with it. And that requires church discipline.

And I think church discipline is very hard. It is particularly hard in our tolerant age. However, if there's wrong, it must be labelled as wrong and dealt with.

[ 32 : 39 ] And where there are Christians doing wrong, they must be corrected and disciplined. And where we are wrong, we must discipline ourselves for godliness and submit ourselves to discipline. I wonder if I could point out one more additional point from the text.

It is one that I find so encouraging and I have found so encouraging for so many years. I want you to look at chapter 3 and verse 22. Do you remember that church at Laodicea?

Remember it wasn't one of the stars? The church that made Jesus want to throw up? However, look at verse 20. 20. That verse 20 has often been used for evangelistic purposes.

Paintings have even been painted about it. People have often talked about it in terms of we need to open our hearts or our lives to Jesus and invite him in. However, that's not what the verse says, friends.

But what it says in my view is even more glorious. Let me show you. The living Lord speaks to a lukewarm church that is not open to Jesus.

[ 33 : 45 ] And in this verse he speaks strongly to individuals, not the whole church. And the text stresses it. And he says, here I am. I stand at the door and knock.

And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me. Friends, imagine you're in that church that is lukewarm. or that church that is languishing. And Jesus speaks about a door. A door to what? Well, a door to the church you're sitting in. A door to this local church.

And hear the word of the living Christ to you as you sit in this lukewarm church. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me.

Isn't that mind blowing? What a glorious thought. Most of the New Testament talks about two or three being gathered together in his name, doesn't it?

[ 35 : 00 ] Here's one person, one person who wants Jesus to come into his church. And Jesus says to them, I'll do it. Just ask, I'll be there.

If you hear my voice, open the door of this church to me and I will come and sup with you and I'll be present with you. How grand that is.

Well, friends, I've met many people in churches like that. people in people in people in people in the church. I've got one special note for you here at Holy Trinity.

So those of you who are not Holy Trinity folk, you can just turn off just for a moment. those of you who are from Holy Trinity know that I'm leaving in the middle of July or thereabouts.

And the change of minister can cause all sorts of reactions. Joy, pain, grief, fear. Well, friends, let me tell you, if you're fearful about someone coming to replace me, then be aware that there's no one but Jesus who can guarantee the future of this church.

[ 36 : 06 ] No one but Jesus. And he knows the situation. He is present here with this church. Turn to him and ask him to do what is good here.

Ask him to do what is good here. Ask him to provide the right pastor that might help this church be a church that God can commend. Seek the Lord of our church on this matter.

And then finally, think back to those three churches at the beginning. Do you remember the one in Singapore, the one in India, and all those rural churches around Australia?

What do you think Jesus would say to them? And how are you going to pray for them? Let's pray. Father, we thank you that the Lord Jesus stands in your presence and at the same time walks among his churches.

that is walks amongst us. Father, we grieve at some of the news we hear about your church around the world.

[ 37 : 40 ] And we know that therefore you and your son must grieve as well. Father, we ask that you won't grieve about our churches, but where there are places where you do grieve, things in them that you do grieve about, then please point them out to us.

As we study your word together, as we hear your word, please teach us, please rebuke us, please be at work in us by your spirit. Father, where there are gross things out of place in your church around the world, please send good and godly leaders, and good and godly congregation people, and people in the pews who will just hear your word of Revelation 3.20 and open the door to you.

Father, we pray that you'll send your son, and he might rebuke, correct, and train as is needed, so that your people might be built up in the knowledge and love of him.

And Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.