



JESUS WANTS A WORD WITH YOU – STUDY GUIDE

MEET	Fellowship with your friends in Christ	20 minutes
MAGNIFY	Worship the Lord together in unity	15-20 minutes
MESSAGE	Study the Word of God to be approved	30-40 minutes
MINISTRY	Pray for one another and allow the Spirit to lead	20 minutes

STUDY

Read Revelation 2.1-7. It is good news that we have a God who still speaks today. Muslims don't, Jehovah Witnesses don't – no other religion on the planet has a god who speaks, they have dumb idols, but the good news is Jesus still speaks to the church! God does not want to be a mystery to you, He wants a deep relationship with you where He both listens to you and talks to you.

Now the book of Revelation was written around AD90, and was the last book of the Bible written. By AD90, all the other apostles of the Lamb were dead, all of the other gospel writers were dead. In fact, it is entirely possible that out of all the people who saw Jesus alive between His resurrection and ascension were dead apart from John. John was exiled on the Isle of Patmos because the authorities tried to kill him but failed. On this island, John had a vision, a revelation of Jesus Christ, which many people have spoken about but we want to focus on the church at Ephesus and the seven verses that Jesus spoke to that church. Ephesus was once pastored by John, it was founded by Paul with special miracles and the whole nation of Turkey hearing the Word. During that season of revival, the church in Ephesus planted six churches and they are the other churches in the book of Revelation.

So, therefore the church in Ephesus was a church planting church, a church where miracles were common, that loved Jesus and had John as a pastor. I believe that what Jesus is saying to Ephesus is directly relevant to us at Tree of Life. I believe this is what Jesus would say if He was here now.

Read Revelation 2.1. Notice that Jesus speaks to the angel of the church. The Greek word for angel is *angellos* and means messenger. It is not talking about the supernatural messengers that we think of as "angels" but the pastor of the church. Notice that God speaks to one man in the church. God does not want the church led by a committee but by a man. Not saying NO CHECKS AND BALANCES – but it is a man. God believes in one-man leadership of the local church.

Now notice that Jesus here is not afraid to talk about Himself. He tells us He holds the seven stars in His hand – that means the pastors of the churches; and He tells us He walks in the midst of the lampstands, that the seven churches.

Jesus is not afraid to tell people He has big hands, He is in charge, He is the Lord. That reflects His life – He is not afraid to say He is the resurrection and the life, and that He is the bread of life, for example.

Humility is not the inability to talk about yourself, it is not being shy and timid – rather it is the power to speak the truth, and say who you are honestly and without fear. God has personally challenged me in the last three weeks both in America and here in the UK to share my vision and identity more. Now, I am not Jesus so you will not hear me saying I hold the seven stars in my hands. But I am one of those stars, I am the messenger of Tree of Life. I am who He says I am. And to deny who He says who we are and say something different from Jesus – that is arrogance!

So here is my vision, on paper – I am:

- Going to build a mega-church in Dagenham
 - In 2020 a spiritual person will know it will be a mega-church
 - In 2030 a carnal person will know it will be a mega-church
 - In 2040 I will give away a mega-church to my successor
- I am going to plant churches all over the UK
- I am going to win every battle, and teach and inspire you all to dream big and walk in victory

I am the angel of this church. I am the messenger of God for you. I am here for you. To equip you and grow you up – that is who I am. And for you to be godly and be like Jesus you need to be comfortable talking about you. When you pray for the sick, don't pray "well you never know, it might work, let's try", no rather say "I am anointed, when I lay hands on the sick, they recover, you are so blessed today, you have me praying for you! I am more than a conqueror, I am filled with the glory of God!"

This is a vital skill we must learn to talk about ourself – not in the flesh, but our spiritual identity in Christ. Read Philemon 1.4-6. Your faith communication is your ability to convince me that you have faith and trust that your prayers work – and it depends entirely on your ability to acknowledge what is good inside you in Christ. If you cannot speak good about yourself, your faith will never work.

If you cannot be like Jesus and say what is true about you, saying out loud "I am the righteousness of God, I am healed by His stripes, I am rich because He became poor, I am anointed by God" – then you will never successfully walk by faith.

Read Mark 11.23-24. For our declarations of faith to work and move mountains we must not doubt "in our heart". If you combine that with Proverbs 23.7 which says our heart thoughts are our identity, then for our declarations of faith to work, we have to believe in our identity that we can move mountains. It is not enough to believe that the mountain will move, you have to believe that you are a mountain mover.

Jesus started by talking about Jesus. He made a dramatic entrance into the church and talked about Himself, and He revealed that He holds the pastors of the churches in His hand. Jesus holds me in His hand. Sometimes you might look at me and think "Ben, you are making a mistake there, Ben you shouldn't do that, you shouldn't handle that situation like that", but you need to be aware Jesus holds me in His hand. He will lead me to the right place eventually.

And let me be honest – sometimes I look at some of you and think "Really? You are making a big mistake there, you shouldn't do that, you shouldn't handle a situation like that" And I have to remind myself that He walks among you, Jesus is walking in the midst of you – when you pray – Jesus is walking in the midst of you, when you go to work, on the bus, in the car, on the tube – Jesus is

walking in the midst of you, working on you, helping you get over it, leading you to listen to Duane Sheriff, leading you to listen to me, leading you to repent and change.

So – here is the deal – when you are disappointed in me, roll it over to Jesus, I am in his hand. He will show me. You can speak to me about your concerns but do it in faith that Jesus IS holding me in HIS HAND. I will get there! And I will – when I am disappointed in you, roll it over to Jesus, knowing HE IS WALKING AMONG US – building us, speaking peace to us, leading us to know that we are righteous. YOU WILL GET THERE! I think this is a good deal, I think we can trust Jesus with each other!

Read Revelation 2.2. Jesus starts by encouraging the church. He starts by saying He knows our works. In fact, if you read all 7 churches, Jesus starts off by saying “I know your works”. He does not say “I know your heart, I know what you planned to do, I know what your wonderful good intentions are”.

I have lost count of the amount of times I have spoken to someone who was doing something lax, worldly, foolish – missed church to go play football or watch TV, or just tired. And then they go “well the LORD knows my heart” – no He knows your works. When Jesus looks at the churches He does not look at your plan – He doesn’t look at your dreams, He looks at your implementation!

If the grace of God is not producing a passion, a holiness, a fire inside us that changes our actions – not out of fear or guilt, but out of grace and love – if your life isn’t transformed your mind isn’t renewed! It’s that simple.

We need to change our behaviour – now the way to do that is to change our thoughts. But if it doesn’t change our lives, JESUS doesn’t know it. He doesn’t go to the man committing adultery and go “I know your heart”, He says “I KNOW YOUR WORKS”. The grace needs to lift you out of that pit and into life!

But here to the Ephesians Jesus is saying it as a compliment. That’s the side I want to be on, I want to be complimented by Jesus – I want Jesus to say “I know your works”. I want Jesus to say “Well done – not well thought – good and faithful servant”.

He knows our works. Our works are the things we do with energy and life and motivation. He also knows our labour – labour here is things we do with hardship and grief and sorrow. Things that are hard work to do. Sometimes you get up on a Sunday and man alive you are excited for church, and you get up and go to church, and you are singing all the way. Sometimes you get up on a Sunday and man alive you are not excited for church. You are pulling yourself out of bed, you are tired, you are sad, it’s been a tough week, you have things to do, you have to do this and that, someone in your family doesn’t want to go – you are not signing in the car, in fact you can barely keep from crying – it hurts so much to go. But you get up and go anyway, that is called labour.

I like that Jesus knows our labour, and a healthy church has works and labour. We serve God when it is exciting to serve God, we serve God when it is boring to serve God. It is called being mature, being consistent, it is called living above your emotions.

You know when you go to church when you do not feel like it – when you feel that you would rather be somewhere else, but the Word is being taught a seed is being sown in your heart. A farmer does not need to be happy to sow a seed and receive a harvest. A farmer could sow seed grumpy and tired and not wanting to be there, but there will still be a harvest. The seed does not care what your attitude is, it cares what you do. Now it’s not as simple as the farmer because the dirt is your heart,

so get that right over time – or the seed will die, but you can still sow it in your heart when you are sad and tired and weary, and it will still grow.

The difference between a good and great Christian is what you do when you do not feel like doing it. I want to be a church where JESUS says “You did it when it was exciting, you did it when you didn’t even care” – you did it anyway! You can give in the offering with joy – God loves a cheerful giver, you can give with sorrow – tears – and still reap. Works and labour, you need both.

Now Jesus knows our works and our labour and also knows our patience too. The Greek word for patience is hupomeno, which comes from hupo which means under and meno which means to stay or remain. Patience is the power to stay under something when it is tough. Many people cannot do that – the moment things go wrong they challenge all authority. The wife leaves the husband, the people blame the government and the church blames the pastor.

Read 2 Corinthians 6.11-14. Paul tells the Corinthians that it is not his fault their life is straitened (which means small, narrow and full of obstacles). He says it is because their heart is small, and then he points out that you should not surround yourself with people who are unrighteous and unbelieving. Don’t dare blame your pastor for your small life – look at the people you hang around with the rest of your week.

You need to DEVELOP THE POWER TO STAY UNDER as the DEVIL will try and get you to COME OUT and he will present it as a come OVER! He will present it as a victory – if you are not careful, you will walk out of this church – this powerful church – this glorious church, this life changing church, this church where people are getting out of wheelchairs, where blind eyes are opening, where marriages are being restored – where miracles happen. And the BEST IS YET TO COME!

You will walk out the door and THANK GOD you are finally out of it, finally not under it! I’ve seen it! And then people NEVER LEAVE HERE AND GO TO ANOTHER CHURCH – they stop going to church altogether, their Facebook page is all about this and that and NOTHING ABOUT JESUS! Or they go to a worse church – some dead church telling them that God might heal, might not heal. And they wonder why they start losing at LIFE!

YOU NEED TO DEVELOP THE POWER OF “STAY UNDER” – not saying never leave, I am saying COME ON – let’s grow! If you leave by sneaking out the door, that was you leaving BADLY – leave sending an email to random people in the church saying all the things I am doing wrong, you have a problem. And sadly these things have happened.

If you cannot leave with us knowing it is your last service, us celebrating you and us laying hands on you and sending you to a better place – you have failed to leave properly, and you do not have HUPO-MENO, you have no patience, and it is by faith and patience you inherit GOD’S PROMISES, so I can easily predict how your life will go in the future.

I want JESUS TO TELL ME: I know your works, I know your labour, I know your patience. I also want him to praise me because I “cannot bear those who are evil”. Now that word “bear” does not mean to put up with, but it is the old meaning of “bear” – “to carry”. It is not the job of local church to carry evil people. Evil here in the Greek is “kakos” which means the desire to injure and hurt other people. I have called social service a couple of times when I have seen people in the church injure their children. I will not carry evil people. I will love them and help them, but I will not carry them. I will not help them do evil. I have thrown false prophets out of the church because they desired to injure you.

I AM NOT ABOUT TO CARRY THEM AROUND AND LET THEM HURT YOU! I'm not talking about the selfish times, the failed times, the lose your temper times, we have all done that... me too (but it is ok, I am in His hand!). I mean the EVIL PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HURT people. I Had to deal with one this week – came and prophesied money out of people's pockets in this church! Part of a pastor's role is found in Psalm 23 where the rod and staff comfort the sheep: the rod is a weapon to beat wolves, the staff is to lead sheep. You should be comforted by me as your shepherd that I don't just have the equipment to lead you, but if someone comes in here after you – I will beat them. Not literally, and I do not normally make a big deal of it when it happens – but Jesus wants us all to know that we are a church with great patience, and we do not carry evil people.

Some of you right now might be helping evil people. The Bible says if you don't take care of your own family, you are worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5.8). If you are feeding them and giving them cash, you are carrying evil people. Rather put the money in the church and we will use it to pay for our pastors, pay for buildings, for our staff, for our new churches, for world mission.

Also you carry evil people when you are listening to their gossip and slander. Someone might come to me and say "do you know such and such said this about you" – my response is why did you listen? Because if someone comes to me to talk about you I just will not listen. It's that simple, I will not carry evil people.

I WANT JESUS WHEN HE WALKS AROUND US TO SAY "thank you, you do not carry EVIL around. You don't let evil people thrive and survive. You speak out against the EVIL in the world"

Finally, I want Jesus to say well done – you have tried the apostles who claim to be apostles but are phony. So many churches will have anyone come and minister and sell their wares – their trinkets, their paintings and so on. We must try people – check out how they behave. I watch our guest speakers like a hawk – and this month we have had some amazing people like Arthur, Bengt and Bob. Other speakers sadly have not behaved well, some have lied in the pulpit, some are just hypocrites. I will not bring people – or bring them back – if they are not true, and are not genuine. I want Jesus to say to us: you didn't put up with it, you didn't let them exploit your people, you tested them.

And what is the test – Jesus told us clearly we know people by their fruit (Matthew 7.15-16). A true teacher of the WORD – the fruit of that – is in the church – is a love for the WORD! I bet since Bob Yandian has come many of you are opening your Bibles more, reading about DAVID more, just thinking about the WORD more -that is the fruit of a teacher. The fruit of a pastor is we look after each other more – brother's keeper. Robert Maasbach is a great pastor, when he comes to church we all love each other more. I watch these things carefully – what are you like after the speaker leaves. That is the fruit. And, of course, the fruit of their life – not perfect, but how do they treat the waiter, how do they treat people who cannot help them, how do they handle money, do they worship in the service?

I test. We all should test.

I believe Jesus is saying: YOU CARRIED – not EVIL – you carried GOOD, you helped what was good – world mission, honoured great preachers. You have worked hard, even when you didn't feel like it – and you never failed, you never fainted. You are consistent and you do what you say you will do.

Let's be encouraged. Some of us will definitely need to make some course corrections, but as a whole this is an encouraging part of what Jesus is telling us.

Some of you might need to focus on labouring – on doing things for Jesus, on coming to church, on giving, on living for God – even when you do not feel like it. Some of you might need to work on patience – so you can stay under when you are tempted to leave and run away. Some of you might even need to stop blaming me when your small heart is the cause of your problems! Some of you might be involved with ministries that you have never tested and need to deal with that.

Jesus wants to give you a good report. Next week we will learn about his concern, but this week enjoy this encouragement.

QUESTIONS

1. When roughly was the book of Revelation written?
2. Who wrote it?
3. What similarities, if any, does our church have with the church in Ephesus?
4. Who does Jesus talk about first when He talks to the church in Ephesus?
5. Ben says that talking about ourselves is “a vital skill” that “makes your prayers work”. What kind of things do you need to say about yourself?
6. Why should it comfort all of us that Jesus holds the stars in His hands, and walks among the lampstands?
7. Why is it important to know the Bible says “the Lord knows our works”, rather than the Christian cliché “the Lord knows my heart”?
8. What is the difference between works and labour, and why are both important in the Christian life?
9. What does the word “patience” mean? And why is patience so important for us?
10. What will the devil do to us if we lack patience?
11. What does it mean not to carry evil people? Have you carried evil people before, and what happened?
12. Why must we test the ministers who come to our church? How can we test them?
13. What changes can you make in your life because of this message?
14. What about this message inspired, challenged or encouraged you the most this week?