

“Life in the Church Where Christ is All”

Sermon Notes

- **Success in our church’s mission is not measured in raw numerical growth, but in maximum congregational health**

**So, let’s...*

1. Pursue the culture of a healthy church (vv.12-15)

2. Access the power within a healthy church (v.16)

3. Assign the credit for a healthy church (v.17)

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of February 13th - 19th

Getting Started

1. Have you ever been a part of an exceptionally healthy church? If so, share a bit with the group. What are the marks of a healthy church? Let's turn the question around. Have you ever been a part of an unhealthy church? What are the marks of such a fellowship?

Digging Deeper

2. Christian author Dallas Willard, once wrote: "The popular model of success [for a local church] involves the ABCs - attendance, buildings, and cash. Instead of counting Christians, we need to weigh them." We know the temptation in our culture of exclusively measuring the former, but what might it look like to be committed to measuring the latter? If our ultimate goal isn't a certain *quantity* of *disciples*, but rather a certain *quality* of *discipleship*...how do we pursue 'quality control' as a fellowship?

Open your Bible to Revelation 2-3...

3. One of the finest (frequently overlooked) diagnostic tools that we have for cultivating church health are the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. In these brief epistles of our Lord, we have the opportunity to watch Jesus walk in the midst of a handful of 1st century congregations as he evaluates their relative strengths and weaknesses. Applications for the church in the 21st century abound. Let's begin with the letter to the church in Ephesus (2:1-7). How does Christ commend them? What does he critique in them? How does he seek to motivate them? What applications do you see for our local church?
4. Take a look at the letter to the church in Smyrna (2:8-11). How does Jesus encourage them? Do you see any words of criticism? Why do you suppose that's the case? Are there any particular features of this letter that you find especially appropriate for today's church in our current cultural moment?
5. Read the letter to Pergamum (2:12-17). Identify any commendations as well as criticisms that you see. This is one where you might want to have a good commentary or study Bible on hand in order to sort through some of your questions about the letter. Considering this epistle as a whole, what appears to be our Lord's overriding concern for this church? How do you think our church fares in light of this particular concern?
6. Now let's read the letter to the church in Thyatira (2:18-29). What evidences of grace does Jesus identify in their fellowship? What obvious concerns and clear words of warning does he have for them? Any applications that emerge in your reading of this letter for our fellowship? Explain.

7. Turning to the letter to Sardis (3:1-6)...you know the drill by now. What is Christ's commendation for them? How about criticisms? What strikes you most about this letter, whether by way of his encouragement or critique? How might we seek to take Jesus's words here to heart for our church?

8. The final two letters (to Philadelphia - 3:7-13 and Laodicea - 3:14-22) really are quite a study in contrasts. Read them back-to-back in order to get a sense of how these churches differ from one another. For the church in Philadelphia, Jesus has nothing but encouragement. For the church in Laodicea, he has nothing but correction. What are a handful of key take-aways that you can discern for our church in both letters?