
Learning to Listen to the Whole Counsel of God

What does Jesus want to say to the church in the West? To the church in North America? To the church in the South, or in New England, or in the Midwest? **What does Jesus want to say to *your* church?**

That all depends: **what is your church like?** Where are you strong? Where are you weak? We live in a big country with hundreds of thousands of churches. If you think the issue out there is too much law, you'd be right. If you think the issue is cheap grace, you'd be right about that too. Jesus wouldn't say just one thing to the church in this country—let alone in the West or in the world—because the church in this country is diffuse and diverse.

If Jesus had seven different letters for the churches in Asia Minor, I imagine he'd have more than one thing to say to the churches in North America.

Ephesus was your listless, loveless church. They were orthodox, moral, and hard working. But they weren't concerned about the lost and may not have been too concerned about each other. They were doctrinally sound, naval-gazers. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Love."

Smyrna was your persecuted, 10-40 window church. They were afflicted, slandered, and impoverished. But they were spiritually rich. They were vibrant, but fearful. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Be faithful."

Pergamum was your ungrounded, youth-infused church. They were faithful, passionate witnesses. But they had compromised with the world and accommodated to their sexually immoral and idolatrous culture. They were missional, but misguided. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Discern."

Thyatira was your warm-hearted, liberal church. They were strong in compassion, service, and perseverance. But they undervalued doctrinal fidelity and moral purity. They were loving, but over-tolerant. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Think."

Sardis was your flashy and successful, but ultimately shallow megachurch. They were like your big Bible-belt churches chocked full with nominal Christians. They had a great reputation. But in reality, they were spiritually dead. They were the church of the white-washed tombs. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Wake up."

Philadelphia was your small, storefront, urban church. They felt weak and unimpressive. But they had kept the word of God and not denied his name. They were a struggling, strong church. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Press on."

Laodicea was your ritzy, influential church out in the leafy part of town. They thought they had it all together. But they were as spiritually poor as they were materially rich. The church was filled with affluence and apathy. To them and to us, Jesus says, "Be earnest."

We all tend to see certain errors more clearly than others. Nothing wrong with that, as long as we see our own dangers most clearly and don't presume that every church has the same problems. **We must pay attention to the whole counsel of God.** We need to study all of it and preach from all of it, not just the stuff that hits our sweet spot. God has a word for all of us—if we are willing to look hard enough and willing to listen.

Read more from Kevin [here](#).