LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA THAT CAN APPLY TO YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Theological Seminary
in Partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By
Jong Yoon Kim

Lynchburg Virginia
April, 2006
LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

GRADE

____________________________________

MENTOR. Dr. Frank J. Schmitt

____________________________________

READER. Dr. Fred Smith
ABSTRACT

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA THAT CAN APPLY TO YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH

Jong Yoon Kim
Liberty Theological Seminary
Mentor: Dr. Frank J. Schmitt

The purpose of this project is to understand the characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia, using Revelation 2-3 and to apply those characteristics to Yohan Tokyo Christ Church. The project carefully examines the characteristics of a healthy church from Jesus Christ’s commendations and condemnations to the seven churches of Asia. It also analyzes and evaluates current situation of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church based on surveys. Five practical strategies for spiritual health development of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church are offered. Those strategies will help the spiritual health of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church and other churches.
Abstract length: 102 words.
To My Spiritual Mentor
and the Leader
of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church
Pastor Kyu Dong Kim
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer needs to make several thanks. The writer would like to express special thanks to Dr. Frank J. Schmitt, Director of D. Min. Program and Mentor to complete this project. Dr. Frank J. Schmitt continually inspired and encouraged the writer to work hard on writing this project.

My appreciation is also extended to the Reader, Dr. Fred Smith, who was so kind enough to take much time to read, correct, and suggest many helpful ideas. He has recommended the writer many helpful literatures for this project.

The writer would like to give special thanks to Heung Kug Ahn who is a senior pastor of the Dae Shin Dong Church, and the elders for their encouragement and financial support.

The writer deeply appreciates pastor Kyu Dong Kim who is the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church founder. He continually encouraged the writer to complete this project as my spiritual mentor.

I wish to express special appreciation to Dr. Jong Min Kim who is a professor of Kosin University. He continually helped to evaluate the YTCC spiritual health condition for the writer.

Finally, the writer deeply appreciates the writer’s wife, Young Shin Yu, for her loving patience, continued prayer, and encouragement. She also suggested many helpful ideas, opinions, and comments to complete this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... v

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................. ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 1

  Statement of the Problem and Purpose .......................................................... 4
  Statement of the Scope and Limitation .......................................................... 7
  Theological Basis for the Project .................................................................. 8
  Statement of Methodology ............................................................................ 14
  Review of Selected Literature ..................................................................... 15

CHAPTER TWO: THE HEALTHY CHURCH IN TODAY’S LITERATURE ............... 18

  C. Peter Wagner ............................................................................................. 19
  John MacArthur ............................................................................................. 20
  Dann Spader and Gary Mayes ....................................................................... 22
  Wayne Grudem .............................................................................................. 23
  Christian A. Schwarz ..................................................................................... 24
  Stephen A. Macchia ....................................................................................... 25
  Waldo J. Werning .......................................................................................... 27
  J. Robert White ............................................................................................. 28
  Mark Dever .................................................................................................... 29
  Bill Scheidler .................................................................................................. 30
  Summary and Conclusion .............................................................................. 32

CHAPTER THREE: CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA IN REVELATION 2-3 ............... 34

  The Church that Keeps Jesus Christ as it First Love (The Church in Ephesus, 2:1-7) .......................................................... 36
    Historical-Geographical Setting ..................................................................... 36
    The Origins of the Church in Ephesus .......................................................... 39
    The Diagnosis .............................................................................................. 40
    A Commendation ....................................................................................... 40
    A Condemnation ....................................................................................... 45
    The Prescription .......................................................................................... 47

The Church that Suffers for Christ’s Sake
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Smyrna, 2:8-11)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Smyrna</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Commendation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that Keeps God’s Truth</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Pergamum, 2:12-17)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Pergamum</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Commendation</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Condemnation</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that Lives a Holy Life</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Thyatira, 2:18-29)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Thyatira</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Commendation</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Condemnation</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that is Spiritually Alive</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Sardis, 3:1-6)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Sardis</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Condemnation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that Perseveres in Difficult Situations and Environments</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Philadelphia, 3:7-13)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Philadelphia</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Commendation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that has a Spiritual Passion for Christ</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Church in Laodicea, 3:14-22)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical-Geographical Setting</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origins of the Church in Laodicea</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Diagnosis</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Condemnation</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prescription</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church that Hears and Obeys what the Holy Spirit Says</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The Seven Churches of Asia, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHAPTER FOUR: THE DESCRIPTION OF THE YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH .......................................................... 110
- The Birth and Growth of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church ......................... 110
- The Planting of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church ....................................... 113
- The Program of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church ..................................... 118
- Summary and Conclusion ............................................................................ 120

### CHAPTER FIVE: THE APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH TO YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH ................... 122
- Evaluation of the YTCC Spiritual Health Condition ................................ 122
  - Questionnaire ..................................................................................... 122
  - Analysis of General Questions (Korean) ........................................... 124
    - Survey Result ..................................................................................... 124
  - The Diagnosis of Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) ..................... 126
    - The Diagnosis Result ......................................................................... 126
  - Concrete Diagnosis and the Prescription ........................................... 127
    - Analysis of General Questions (Japanese) ........................................ 137
      - Survey Result ..................................................................................... 137
    - The Diagnosis of Spiritual Health Condition (Japanese) .............. 139
      - The Diagnosis Result ......................................................................... 139
  - Continuous Interest for a Healthy Church .......................................... 143
    - Regular Diagnosis and the Prescription of Spiritual Health Condition ........................................... 144
    - Concrete Christian Education for a Healthy Church ....................... 146
    - Maintain Balance of Spiritual Health Condition ............................ 146
    - Ultimate Glory to God ....................................................................... 147
    - Summary and Conclusion .................................................................. 148

### CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION ................................................................. 149

### APPENDIX: A HEALTHY CHURCH SURVEY CONTENT .............................. 152

### BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................. 155

### VITA ................................................................................................................. 160
LIST OF FIGURES

1. The Results of the Surveys .................................................................................. 6
2. Revelation Churches at a Glance ......................................................................... 13
3. The Nine Characteristics of a Healthy Church
   which Authors Commonly Speak of ................................................................... 33
4. Emphasis of the Characteristics of a Healthy Church
   from Revelation 2-3 in Today’s Literature .......................................................... 108
5. The Average Attendance of Adult Sunday Worship (not including children) .... 113
6. The Average Attendance of Japanese Adult Worship ......................................... 114
7. The Average Attendance of Adult Worship of Yohan Seoul Christ Church ..... 115
8. Gender (Korean) .................................................................................................. 124
9. The Average Age (Korean) ................................................................................. 124
10. Time of Being a Christian (Korean) .................................................................. 124
11. The Average Attending Period (Korean) ........................................................... 125
12. Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .................................................................. 127
13. Gender and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .............................................. 129
14. Age and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) ................................................... 129
15. Time of Being a Christian and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) ............ 130
16. Attending Period and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .............................. 131
17. Family and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .............................................. 131
18. Marriage and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .......................................... 132
19. Baptism Place and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean) .................................. 133
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Most people, especially Christians, have deep interests in good health and healthy life styles. God wants all of us to live healthy lives in this world. However, many people have incorrect concepts of good health. If there is an absence of diseases or disorders, people tend to think that they are healthy. But, this isn’t necessarily true. One can learn much about truly good health from the Bible.

In *Ten Essentials of Highly Healthy People*, Walt Larimore states,

> Health in the Bible is a multifaceted concept. The Hebrew word shalom, while sometimes connoting “peace,” is not just the absence of conflict, just as health is not just the absence of disease. Its root meaning is that of wholeness, completeness, and general well-being—not just physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It also carries a strong emphasis on relational well-being, especially with regard to one’s relationship with God. In fact, the Bible teaches that true shalom comes only from God.¹

Truly healthy people have good relationships with God, but, many truly unhealthy people do not. Everyone needs to have a good relationship with God for truly good health.² God wants each Christian to have a good relationship with Him,³ and He

---


²In his book *Healthy Churches in a Sick World*, Howard Foltz, said that “I believe God builds His Church as a prescription for the world’s ills. Every local church should be part of that prescription - but it can’t be unless it is healthy. The process of discovering our need and God’s remedy always begins with Scripture.” See Howard Foltz, *Healthy Churches in a Sick World* (Fairfax: Xulon Press, 2002), Introduction.

³The relationship between God and people was broken due to the sin of Adam, the first man. God sent us Jesus Christ to reestablish the relationship. If anyone believes in Jesus Christ, he can
wants them to live in good health in this world.

Likewise, God wants His churches to be healthy churches. A healthy church has a good relationship with God. A healthy church is headed by Jesus Christ.

In Colossians 1:18, the apostle Paul says, “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first—born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.” In this verse, “He” is Jesus Christ. The head is in command of everything, and the body must obey the head’s commands. If the body does not obey the head’s commands, this will lead to many problems. If Jesus Christ is truly the head of the body, which is the church, then this church is a healthy church. Therefore, hearing and obeying His words are the most important aspects of a healthy church. A Jesus Christ-driven church is a healthy church.

Today, many Christians have forgotten what a true church is, and what Christ thinks of the church. We must all remember what a true church is, and what Christ tells His church. This can be known through studying the Bible. In the Bible, we can learn the thoughts and the commands of Jesus Christ, Who has the perfect wisdom and the authority. In Sharpening the Focus of the Church, Gene A. Getz spoke about the importance of Bible study.

To start a new work or to renew an established church, it is important to begin with the perspective of the word of God. Bible-believing Christians, particularly since they believe the Bible is the Word of God, are responsive to the Scriptures. It is to this Book we must turn as our authoritative base. The problem in many churches is that Christians (including both pastors and people) don’t really know what the Bible teaches about New Testament church life. The principles that grow out of such a study are not clearly focused in their thinking.  

reestablish his relationship with Him. If Christians are filled by the Holy Spirit, they can have good relationships with God.

Therefore, the best way to understand the nature of a healthy church is to study Jesus Christ’s words carefully. Jesus Christ spoke about the ideal, healthy church about two thousand years ago. Today, different churches may use various methods in order to become ideal, healthy churches. However, the ideal, healthy aspect of a church itself, which Jesus Christ spoke of, does not change—regardless of the passing time, nations, races, pastors, denominations, or church programs. His Words are an undeniable and unchangeable truth.

This prompted study of the characteristics of a healthy church from Revelation 2-3. Jesus Christ spoke to the seven churches of Asia through the apostle John at the island of Patmos. The words that Jesus Christ spoke to the churches are unique in the New Testament. John Stott has the same viewpoint:

What then is his view of his church? In each of the letters which follow, the risen Lord lays emphasis, either in rebuke or in commendation, on one particular aspect of an ideal church. Put together, these characteristics constitute the seven marks of a true and living church. They tell us what Christ thinks of his church, both as it is and it should be.

There is no doubt that the characteristics of a healthy church, seen in the seven churches of Asia, can serve as a model for today’s church leaders—especially to the Tokyo Christ Church’s leaders (hereafter YTCC).

---

5 Some scholars and pastors have researched local churches for a long time. And they have presented many characteristics of healthy churches.

6 The book of Revelation was revealed to Apostle John one Sunday about A.D. 95, and records seven epistles dictated to John by Jesus and the visions John saw that day while imprisoned on the island of Patmos. See, Elmer L. Town, A Journey Through the New Testament (Orlando: Custom Publisher, 1996), 333. Patmos harbor is situated some forty miles from the mouth of the Maeander, the nearest point of the Asian mainland, and about sixty five miles from the site of Ephesus. The island is eight miles long and five miles wide, and it measures thirty Roman miles in circumference. See, Colin J. Hemer, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia: in Their Local Setting (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 27.


8 The “Yohan” is Korean pronunciation of John. For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Whatever is alive will grow. Growth is the most dynamic aspect of life. Life is the gift of God to the farmer who grows crops. Life is the gift of God to the parents who raise a baby, and life is the gift of God to the pastor who leads a church.\textsuperscript{9} The Bible calls the Church the “body of Christ.” However, why are some churches sick? Why are some churches dying?\textsuperscript{10} In \textit{Turnaround Churches}, George Barna listed four crucial insights into the natural decline of the church.

First, it appears that the list of catalysts underlying a collapse is virtually limitless. Second, none of the churches could blame the decline on a single factor. In every situation we explored, the church was suffering from two or more harmful conditions. Third, most of the churches we evaluated experienced several identical problems. The ways these elements came about differed, the combination of plagues visited upon the church varied and the relative significance of each element within the collapse of a given church was unique. Finally it is apparent that with proper attention and response, all of these debilitating factors are avoidable. Sidestepping these challenges is no easy task, but it is possible.\textsuperscript{11}

In this book, Barna also states that it seems that in all but the most extraordinary of cases, a true healthy church will not fall apart due to a single catastrophic element.\textsuperscript{12} The natural declines of some churches are because of ill health. As Barna has said, if the church is in good health, then it can be protected from decline.


\textsuperscript{11}George Barna, \textit{Turnaround Churches} (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 32-33. In his book, Barna identifies eight symptoms of the nature of decline. The following is the list of symptoms: 1) Demographic Changes. 2) Inadequate Leadership. 3) Poor Management. 4) Old Blood. 5) Building Campaigns. 6) The Ingrown Family. 7) Resistance to Change. 8) Spiritual Health—a lack of passion for ministry. See, Ibid., 33-38.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 32.
Therefore, the health of a church is connected to a church’s growth. If a church is healthy, then this church can truly grow. In *Into the Future*, Elmer Towns and Warren Bird wrote, “Christians are moving away from a numbers-driven church growth emphasis to focus on growing healthy churches.”13 Today, every Christian wants to attend a healthy church. No one wants to continually attend an unhealthy church. If an unhealthy church doesn’t recover its health soon, then the people will leave that church eventually.

Rick Warren said, “I believe the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth. When congregations are healthy, they grow the way God intends. Healthy churches don’t need gimmicks to grow—they grow naturally.”14

Today, more than ever, many churches have deep interests in becoming healthy churches, which is even greater interest than the growth of the churches. The reason for this is that while all churches need to be healthy, if the truth be told, there are many churches today that are very unhealthy. Likewise, many of today’s Korean churches are very unhealthy.15

In 1998 and later in September and October of 2004, the organization for the Future of the Korean Churches, and Gallup, the Korean institute of public opinion, surveyed 1,000 Christians and 1,000 non-Christians. The purpose of these surveys was to diagnose aspects of today’s Korean Churches, and to make predictions about those

---

15John H. Oak who is the former founder pastor of Sarang Church diagnosed Korean churches in his book. “To be even more direct, we’re talking in most cases about churches suffering from a serious illness. To make a fitting comparison, 90% of pastors are like doctors wrestling with cancer patients. It’s tough, and the outlook is not too bright.” See John H. Oak, *Healthy Christians Make a Healthy Church* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 21.
Korean churches for the future. The results of the survey were reported in January, 2005. In this report, they compared the 1998 images of the Korean churches with the 2004 images of them. The subjects of this survey were non-Christians. The results of the surveys are: 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches’ influences grew in the Korean society.</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches serve our society well—including doing relief works.</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches adapt well to the changes of the times.</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leaders of Korean churches are outstanding in our society.</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Korean churches help solve the spiritual problems well.</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches have an interest in the churches’ growth, and an even greater interest in the truth.</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches tend to emphasize the increase of the offerings at the church.</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches don’t warmly welcome the non-Christians at the church.</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean churches emphasize the church’s laws and rules too much.</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The Results of the Surveys

Sadly, in general, when compared with 1998’s result, the images of the Korean churches in 2004 have gone from bad to worse. 17 This leads to the conclusion that the Korean churches have many problems and are suffering from ill health. Recently, a series of inner conflicts in Korea’s mega—churches have clearly indicated that there are serious health problems. 18 The basic problem was distrust between pastors and laity. The results of the distrust were feuds between pastors and laity, which included the lay church leaders. This led to many church members leaving their churches. Due to these churches’ inner conflicts, Korean society severely criticized many of the Korean


17Ibid., 232-237.

18This writer prefers not to publicly disclose the names of the churches that were involved, in this project. For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.newsnjoy.co.kr.
churches, saying that “the Korean churches give people no hope, and there is no love in there, either.” The church, which is the body of Jesus Christ, got criticized by society because of these inner conflicts. This clearly shows that many Korean churches are unhealthy, and are in need of great improvements.

Realizing such a problem, this project will research the characteristics of a healthy church in Revelation 2-3. By carefully studying Jesus Christ’s Words, an attempt will be made to offer a biblical model of a healthy church to today's churches, especially to the YTCC. Thus, the specific purposes of this project are:
1) to understand characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia,
2) to apply those characteristics to today’s YTCC, and
3) to suggest to today’s Korean church leaders a practical strategy based on biblical characteristics of a healthy church.

STATEMENT OF SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This project is not an exhaustive study of the entirety of Scripture. It only deals with Revelation 2-3. In those letters to the seven churches of Asia, this project will present the characteristics of a healthy church that Christ emphasizes. This is not an exhaustive explanation of Revelation 2-3, and the seven churches of Asia. Many scholars have written detailed books about this important passage of Scripture. The

---


main source of this project is Jesus Christ’s Words to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3. This writer will consult other books on Scripture and other sources as needed. However, the main argument will be grounded in Jesus Christ’s Words to the seven church of Asia from Revelation 2-3.

This project will trace the history of the YTCC, which is the largest church in Japan. It will also look at its present situation. While this church has a history of an amazing revival, it is still growing, even now. Everyone hopes that this church will continue to grow in good health. Therefore, this writer has no doubt that, through this dissertation, the characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia can present as a model of a healthy church to YTCC, and to other churches of the world. This project will limit itself to Jesus Christ’s Words to the seven churches of Asia, and the YTCC. This writer hopes to find the characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia, and hopes to apply those to YTCC, and to other Korean churches.

THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PROJECT

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus Christ says, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.” In the years since, Jesus Christ has built His church in this world. Jesus Christ asserts that the foundation of the church is going to be built upon His Lordship. The word “church” is derived from the Greek language ἐκκλησία. This means that the church is “belonging to the Lord.”

Lewis Sperry Chafer defines that the word “church” is a people segregated or called out from the mass into that which is a distinct

---

The Bible says that the church is the body of Christ. In *Reformed Dogmatics*, Reverend Herman Hoeksema writes that the church is the body of Christ, an organic whole, of which they who are chosen from before the foundation of the world constitute the members, gathered by the Son of God through His Spirit and Word in all ages and from all the nations of the world, and manifesting itself on earth as the gathering of believers and their seed.

There are many Scriptures which specifically emphasize the church as the body of Christ. In Romans 12:5, the apostle Paul says that so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another. In 1 Corinthians 12:27, the apostle Paul says that now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. In Colossians 1:18, the apostle Paul says that He is also head of the body. And, in Ephesians 4:15, the apostle Paul says, “But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects] into Him, who is the head, [even] Christ.” Therefore, He came to this world for His people, and He became the head of the church. His people are the body of Christ, and are a part of it.

In *The Essence of the Church*, Craig Van Gelder explains about His people well.

The Book of Acts tells us that those whom the spirit had formed into the church were known first as members of “the way” (9:2), and that in Antioch the “disciples were first called Christians” (11:26). As the fuller reality of living within God’s redemptive reign unfolded, this new community came to be called the εὐαγγελισμός, which means “a called—out assembly.” The Septuagint had used this word to translate the Hebrew word for the “people of

---


God,” although ἐκκλησία, which means “a gathering together,” was more commonly used to describe the Jewish movement in Palestine.24

Jesus Christ loves His people and the church, which is His body, and He wants His church to be healthy and growing. The expression of the church is a local body of believers, and they should meet regularly.25 They also must learn what Christ thinks of His church, and what Christ’s purpose is for His people.

John Stott explains it well:

So what does Christ think of His church? Fortunately we are not without the means to answer our question. For the New Testament contains much information about Christ’s purpose for His people. From His own words recorded in the Gospels, from Luke’s portrayal of the early church in the Acts, and from the detailed instructions of the apostles in their letters we can glean much about the nature and functions of the church. But there is another resource at our disposal, which tends to be neglected, namely the Book of Revelation. Its second and third chapters contain seven letters, each addressed to a particular first-century Christian community in the Roman province of Asia. Although these letters were written by John, it is claimed that they were given him directly by the ascended and glorified Christ. Although their message is related to the

24Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 104-105. Reverend Herman Hoeksema states on ἐκκλησία and ἐκκλησίαις: In the New Testament the Greek language ἐκκλησία is never used for the church, but always for the assemblies or meeting-place of the Jew. The Greek language ἐκκλησίαις denotes, first of all, the entire church, or all those who are called into the fellowship of Christ, the church universal (cf. Matthew 16:18; Acts 5:11, 9:31; 1 Corinthians 6:4, 14:4; Romans 16:23; Galatians 1:13). It is called ἐκκλησίαις Ἡ Ἐρυθραία (1 Corinthians 10:32; Galatians 1:13, etc.). It is also called ἐκκλησίαις in (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23). However, more often perhaps, the Greek language ἐκκλησίαις refers to the local congregation (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Revelation 1:4, 11, 20; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, etc.). Besides, in the New Testament the church is also called Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2), and the temple, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; cf. Ephesians 2:21, 22; 1 Peter 2:5). See, Reverend Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 563-564. Also, it is called ἐκκλησίαις and ἐκκλησίαις Ἡ Ἐρυθραία. There is just one place in which that name is applied to the church (1 Timothy 3:15). The figure is expressive of the fact that the church is the guardian of the truth, the citadel of the truth, and the defender of the truth over against all the enemies of the Kingdom of God. See, L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), 558. Historically the marks of a true church have been defined as: 1) the true preaching of God’s Word (John 8:31, 32, 47; 14:23; 1 John 4:1-3, 2 John 9), 2) the use of the sacraments in accordance with their institution (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30), and 3) the practice of church discipline (Matthew 18:18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 13; 14:33, 40; Revelation 2:14, 15, 20). See R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 219.

25Reverend Herman Hoeksema emphasizes that the whole church, according to the divine plan, must be gathered out of the whole human race before the end can come. See, Reverend Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 584.
specific situations of those churches, it expresses concerns which apply to all churches. By praise and censure, by warning and exhortation, Christ reveals what He wants His church to be like in all places and at all times.26

Revelation was rooted in the life and needs of His people.27 John Stott clearly stated that if Christians study the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3, they can learn what Christ thinks of His church, and what Christ’s purpose is for His people. Christ reveals what He wants of His church through the book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation is a revelation from Jesus Christ.28 Revelation 1:1 clearly stated that “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated [it] by His angel to His bond-servant John.” In Triumph of the Lamb, Dennis E. Johnson comments about Revelation 1:1 well:

The first verse not only announces its title, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” but also traces a chain of transmission by which this Revelation has reached the church on earth. The transmission process involves four steps: 1. God “gave” the revelation to Jesus Christ (to show his bondservants); 2. Jesus revealed it by sending it through his angel; 3. The angel communicated it to John; 4. John bears witness to all he saw, writing to the seven churches (1:2, 4).29

Revelation 1:2 (NLT) says, “John faithfully reported the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ—everything he saw.”30 In Revelation 1:3, Jesus Christ

26 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 7-8.


28 The revelation of Jesus Christ). Is “Jesus Christ” an objective or subjective genitive? If the latter, as most commentators suggest, the sense is the “revelation from Jesus Christ”; if the former, the meaning would be the “revelation about Jesus Christ.” Grammatically, either is possible. See, Alan F. Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 418.

strongly proclaims, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

Unfortunately, today, many Christians don’t read the Revelation. In *Encountering the New Testament*, Walter A. Elwell states, “For most people today, the Book of Revelation is a closed book—literally. They never read it. They are either afraid of it or think they cannot possibly understand it. This is unfortunate because from the early days of the church this book was turned to in times of persecution as a source of strength and encouragement.”

Those letters were sent by the apostle John to the seven churches in the province of Asia, for them to read and to follow. Therefore, blessed is the church which reads and those which hear the words of the prophecy to the seven churches of Asia, and heed the things which are written in it. Also, if the churches apply the Christ’s Word, then the churches can become healthy.

In his book, Robert H. Mounce analyzes the seven churches of Asia:

Christ comes to inspect His Churches, and issues words of warning and notes of encouragement. The messages are a vital part of the Apocalypse as a whole and are intended for the exhortation and edification of the church universal. Each oracle contains the challenge “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The body of each letter is composed of an acknowledgment of the church’s positive achievements (except in Laodicea and, perhaps, in Sardis), followed by words of encouragement, censure, counsel, or

---

30 Two elements are of chief importance: “The word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” In referring to his vision as the “word of God,” John emphasizes his continuity with the prophets in the Old Testament as well as the apostles in New Testament. The church needs to be reminded that the neglected Book of Revelation is the very Word of God to us. “Testimony” translates the Greek υπολογίζεται τοῦ λόγου του Θεού τον χριστιανόν, εἰς τοὺς τῆς ἀγίας της Λαόν. It is variously rendered as “witness,” “testimonial,” “validation,” “verification.” “The testimony of Jesus” grammatically could be the testimony “to” Jesus—i.e., John’s own testimony about Jesus (objective genitive). However, the alternate grammatical sense—the testimony or validation “from” Jesus (subjective genitive)—is to be preferred. John testifies both to the Word of God received in the visions and also to the validation of his message from Jesus Himself. See Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation*, 417.

warning. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia escape some note of censure. The letters close with the exhortation to hear and a promise to those who conquer.”

In *Healthy Churches in a Sick World*, Howard Foltz summarized the Revelation churches concisely.\(^{33}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Warning</th>
<th>Today’s Danger</th>
<th>Prescription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pergamos (2:12-17)</td>
<td>Have not Renounced faith.</td>
<td>In danger because of tolerating immorality.</td>
<td>Compromise with the world system.</td>
<td>Repent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardis (3:1-6)</td>
<td>Some have kept the faith.(^{34})</td>
<td>The church is drowning in dead Orthodoxy.</td>
<td>Ritual without life.</td>
<td>Repent, strengthen what remains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia (3:7-13)</td>
<td>Faithfulness despite persecution.</td>
<td>None to speak of Discouragement over lack of size and strength.</td>
<td>Continue to keep the faith.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Revelation Churches at a Glance

Though each scholar has somewhat different perspective on Christ’s commendations and the condemnations in the letters sent to the seven churches of Asia, the instructions on how to avoid the condemnation was clear. Christ’s Words are the best prescription for the churches that received condemnation. Why did Christ choose


\(^{33}\)See, Howard Foltz, *Healthy Churches in a Sick World*, 82.

just those seven churches? Commentators have not failed to notice that the Asian churches numbered seven, a number indicating perfection and completeness in a book whose numerals are nearly always symbolical.\(^{35}\)

Therefore, even if we don’t study more churches from that period, we can still find out what the Christ thinks of His church, and what is the Christ’s purpose for His people today, by studying the seven churches of Asia. Though addressed to seven churches actually located in Asia, like the Epistle of Paul addressed to churches the risen Jesus Christ’s message goes beyond their immediate destination to the church in the present age.\(^{36}\)

**STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY**

Chapter One is the introduction. Chapter Two will examine the healthy church in today’s literature. Chapter Three will examine the characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia, using Revelation 2-3. This chapter will specifically examine the characteristics of a healthy church from Jesus Christ’s commendations and condemnations to the seven churches of Asia.

Chapter Four will describe YTCC, including the history of the church, the church program, and church planting, etc.

---

\(^{35}\)In *Triumph of the Lamb*, Dennis E. Johnson states, “Seven is the number of Churches to which the book is addressed and consequently the number of letter/proclamations addressed by the risen Christ through his Spirit to the churches. Though other New Testament writings show that churches existed in other cities of western Asia Minor when Revelation was given, these seven represent the churches of Jesus Christ generally, since their numbers, seven, symbolizes completeness.” See, Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, 14. In *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, John Stott writes, “The seven churches of Asia, though historical, represent the local churches of all ages and of all lands.” See, John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 12.

Chapter Five will analyze, evaluate, and apply the current situation of the YTCC based on surveys. There are two main sections to the survey. The first section will ask general questions to the church members. The second section will allow them to evaluate the condition of their spiritual health according to the characteristics of a healthy church, from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3.

Then, the survey results will be divided into strong points and weak points. If this church has a strong point, then this writer will encourage that particular point. If this church has a weak point, then this writer will present a way to grow stronger from Jesus Christ’s Words. This writer visited Japan beginning June 15, and the survey was conducted on June 17-19, 2005.

Chapter Six is the conclusion, and it will present the principles of a healthy church for the churches of the world today.

THE REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE


The Expositor's Bible Commentary is a major contribution to the study and understanding of the Scriptures. Written primarily by expositors, for expositors, it aims to provide preachers, teachers, and students of the Bible with a new and comprehensive commentary on the books of the Old and New Testaments. Volume twelve is Hebrews through Revelation. The book of Revelation has particular relevance to this thesis project.


This book presents a guide to the eight essential qualities of a healthy church. In this book, the author deals with eight characteristics which are empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small group, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.

This book is a part of “The Biblical Resource” series. This book is a shortened rewriting of a study which started life as a Ph D thesis supervised by Professor F.F. Bruce and accepted by the University of Manchester in 1969. This book is a good source for this thesis project.


This is a classical book on a healthy church. In this book, the author explains seven vital signs for a healthy church such as a positive pastor, a well-mobilized laity, meeting member’s needs, the celebration of congregation and cell, a common homogeneous denominator, effective evangelistic methods, and Biblical priorities.


This book is a good commentary on Revelation. D. A. Carson said that the strength of this work is the way it takes some of the best material on the interpretation of apocalyptic generally and Revelation in particular, and presents it in a palatable, readable form. This is also a good resource for my thesis.


In this book, Donald J. MacNair presents well the practices of a healthy church. He emphasizes:

1. The church must retain its commitment to the Holy Scriptures without compromise.
2. The church must engage in regular, vibrant worship to God as the ultimate motivation for personal and corporate growth.
3. The church must continually train and implement shepherd leadership.
4. The church must have a mechanism for utilizing gifted member initiative with ordained elder accountability.
5. The church must have a continually modified vision and plan, unique to that church body at that time and in that community, which focuses and implements its purpose and mission.
6. The church must prayerfully seek the grace of God to build commitment to biblical health.


This book well explains the three lenses which are Scripture, history and culture. This author approaches the fact that the churches are by the Bible, in history, and in cultural milieu.


This book provides insights that will either help to turn around a frail church or prevent a major slide in a church that is presently strong, based on what he discovered through research. This book is another great resource for this thesis project.


In this book, Part three, George Barna explains that a biblical perspective on what God expects of his church. This author presents the six pillars of the church which
are worship, evangelism, service, education and training, building community, and stewardship.


Pastor Ted Haggard says, “‘Healthy Churches in a Sick World’ is an excellent overview of the church in the New Testament and its relevance in today’s society.” This book well analyzes today’s churches through medical terms such as the diagnosis, the prescription, the therapy, the prognosis, and the cure.


This author strongly proclaims that healthy Christians make a healthy church. He analyzed today’s Korean churches and church members, and explained “How to make a healthy church.” This book is best source for this thesis project.


This book clearly presents “What Christ thinks of the Church through the seven churches of Asia Minor.” This book is one of the better sources for this thesis project, too. In this book, John Stott presents the characteristics of a healthy church such as love, suffering, truth, holiness, reality, opportunity, and wholeheartedness.


This book is Pastor Kyu Dong Kim’s book on the church, in Korean. He is senior pastor of YTCC. This book explains the history of the church, the strategy of the mission, and a confession of faith.


This is a classical book on the letters to seven churches. This book is William M. Ramsay’s exposition of the letters to the seven churches of Asia. This is another great resource for this thesis project, too.


This book is a part of “The New International Commentary on the New Testament” series. This is a good commentary on Revelation.


In foreword, Haddon Robinson says that Stephen A. Macchia offer practical down-to-the-pew advice that you as a pastor, a leader, or a member can follow to make church one of the most positive words in your vocabulary. In his book, this author presents the ten characteristics of a healthy church.
CHAPTER TWO

THE HEALTHY CHURCH IN TODAY’S LITERATURES

In *The Church*, L. L. Clover states that the church was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world.¹ He has a master plan for the church from the foundation of world. God built the church to receive glory from His people ultimately. God showed His master plan for the church concretely through Jesus Christ. His master plan for the church is that His church becomes a biblical healthy church headed by Jesus Christ. As already stated, God wants His churches to be healthy churches that have a good relationship with God. God wants to receive glory from His people.

Church growth and a healthy church are inseparable. If a church is healthy, then it will grow. However, even if a church grew, people can not see that the church is certainly healthy. Church growth is complex.² In *Into the Future*, Elmer Towns and Warren Bird admonish, “Often as a church continues to grow, their newcomers tend to be transfer Christians rather than new converts unless the congregation’s leadership continually challenges the church to remain outwardly focused.”³ Whatever its size, a church must become healthy because church growth is a result, not a goal. That means church growth is the result of the church’s being a healthy body of Jesus Christ living in obedience to Him. Therefore, church leaders don’t have to reach a certain size first.

There is church growth in God’s sovereignty. This does not mean that there is no work which we can do for church growth. It is our responsibility to make the environments so that the church may grow. However, church leaders must think of the health of church and the growth of the church at the same time, meaning church leaders must focus on the church’s health.

Many scholars and pastors have studied the characteristics of a healthy church that God wants. Some of them studied characteristics of a healthy church through the viewpoint of church growth. Others studied just characteristics of a healthy church. These two viewpoints are important. Just as His people must read the Bible to know God’s will, church leaders must know the characteristics of a healthy church to make a healthy church. Characteristics of a healthy church in today’s literatures are as follows.

**C. Peter Wagner**

In his book *Your Church Can Be Healthy*, C. Peter Wagner states the seven vital signs of the positive side for health and growing. The seven vital signs of the positive side that C. Peter Wagner speaks are as following:

1. A positive pastor. The first vital sign of a healthy church is a pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyze the entire church into action for growth. That is, he emphasizes the pastoral leadership as the first vital sign of a healthy church.

2. A well-mobilized laity. He identifies a well-mobilized laity that has discovered, has developed and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth as the second vital sign of a healthy church. He asserts that mobilizing spiritual gifts certainly is a factor of first-line priority.

3. Meeting member’s needs. The third vital sign of a healthy church which he speaks is a church big enough to provide the range of services that meet the needs of its members.

---

needs and expectations of its members. That is, to be attractive to newcomers, he proposes to serve its members well.

4. The celebration, congregation and cell. He divides a church into three structures, that is, celebration, congregation and cell. The largest is the membership group, which can be almost any size; the middle one is the fellowship group, which should be somewhere around 35 to 80; and the smallest is the kinship group, which is limited to 8 to 12 persons. As fourth vital sign of a healthy church, he emphasizes about balance of the dynamic relationship between celebration, congregation and cell.

5. A common homogeneous denominator. Growing churches ordinarily find that their members come basically from one kind of people or so-called homogeneous unit. So, he presents a common homogeneous denominator for church growth.

6. Effective evangelistic methods. As the sixth vital sign of a healthy church, he mentions an evangelistic method that has proven effective in making disciple. He says that the churches which have methods that will bring people to Christ and also unite them in fellowship with other Christians grows.

7. Biblical priorities. Priorities properly arranged in biblical order constitute the seventh vital sign of a healthy church which he speaks.

**John MacArthur**

In his book, *Marks of a Healthy Church*, John MacArthur identifies the twelve characteristics of a healthy church using the Bible. The following is the list of the characteristics of a healthy church that John MacArthur presents.

1. Godly Leaders. The first mark of a healthy church which he speaks is “Godly leaders.” Jesus Christ wants to rule His church through holy people. He states that a church should not ignore the necessity of having godly leadership.

2. Functional Goals and Objectives. The second mark of a healthy church which he speaks is “functional goals and objectives.” A church must have functional goals and objectives that can present direction. He points out that a church that lacks direction will have no sense of accomplishment.

3. Discipleship. The third mark of a healthy church is discipleship. A church must make a concerted effort to teach people the Word of God to bring them to faith, maturity, and growth. He states that everyone is to be involved in that

---

process: the teaching pastor is to perfect the saints and the saints are to do the work of the ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up. Therefore, a church should emphasize discipleship.

4. Penetrating the Community. The fourth mark of a healthy church is an emphasis on penetrating the community. A church that is effective and successful will have a strong emphasis on penetrating the community. He emphasizes that the Bible makes clear that we are to reach people for Christ.

5. Active Church Members. He writes that all the saints must be involved in ministering the gifts God has given them as the fifth mark of a healthy church.

6. Concern for One Another. He describes that the New Testament has much to say about how believers respond to one another. Concern toward others is an important theme in Scripture (ie., Romans 14:19; 15:14; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:16).

7. Devotion to the Family. The seventh mark of a healthy church which he speaks is to devote to their family. Christians have an obligation to their families. A strong Christian family should be a high priority. And, there is a high price to pay if we don’t make that a priority.

8. Bible Teaching and Preaching. He emphasizes Bible teaching and preaching as the eighth mark of a healthy church. The heartbeat of the church is a dynamic presentation of the truth of God. At the heart of a dynamic church is solid Bible teaching and preaching.

9. A Willingness to Change. The ninth mark of a healthy church is a willingness to change. A church can become so comfortable with unchanging forms that its members lose sight of what are there for. But if a church lives on the precipice of change, there will be a sense of vitality.

10. Great Faith. He mentions about great faith as the tenth mark of a healthy church. Great churches live on the precipice of faith where they can do nothing but trust God. They are accustomed to the tension of trusting God and accepting the risk that is inseparable from faith.

11. Sacrifice. The eleventh mark of a healthy church which he speaks is sacrifice. He writes that the leadership of an effective church does not have to plead for its people to be involved or to give because the congregation’s faith should enable them to stretch themselves sacrificial.

12. Worshiping God. The final mark of a healthy church which he speaks is to worship God. He points out that what especially makes a church great is its emphasis on worship.
Dann Spader and Gary Mayes

In *Growing a Healthy Church: Complete with Study Guide*, Dann Spader and Gary Mayes declare the twelve essentials of growing a healthy church. The following is their list of the essentials of growing a healthy church.

1. An Atmosphere of Love. The first essential of growing a healthy church that they speak is an atmosphere of love. The priority of love is a clarion call throughout Scripture (cf. Leviticus 19:18; John 13:34-35; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Peter 4:8). Many passages and almost fifty others in the New Testament reiterate the priority of love. It is absolutely clear that believers need to grow in love, but they also need love to grow.

2. Relational Ministry. Relational ministry is the second essential of growing a healthy church. Jesus Christ established the priority of a relational ministry from the beginning (John 3:22). Therefore, they describe that the need for relational ministry, felt so intensely today, has existed since the days of Christ and before.

3. Communicating Christ Clearly. The third essential of growing a healthy church that they speak is to communicate a clear understanding of Christ. They say that “As we know Him we are drawn to Him. As we are drawn to Him we are eager to please Him.”

4. A Healthy Group Image. A healthy group image is directly connected to our effectiveness in helping people grow as disciples of Christ. It is a major part of a nurturing environment. Therefore, they identify that a healthy group image is the fourth essential of growing a healthy church.

5. A Prayer Base. They emphasize to mobilize a prayer base as the fifth essential of growing a healthy church. They state that mobilizing a prayer base that bathes our ministries and people in prayer is undeniably a foundation priority.

6. Communicating the Word. As the sixth essential of growing a healthy church, they mention to communicate the Word. They write that if we are to build ministries that enable people to grow in Christ, we must consistently communicate the Word.

7. The Nature of Ministry Training. Ministry training is the seventh essential of growing a healthy church. Ministry training as a matter of enabling believers to become reproducing disciples who live out the Great Commission is simply the process of equipping people to participate in the ministry of Christ.

---

8. Identifying the Responsive. Church leaders should be watching for people who are ready for more. At the same time, they should be looking for those who are responsive—responsive to Christ and to their ministries.

9. Training the Team. The ninth essential of growing a healthy church that they speak is to train the team. To train the team is the processes of helping people shift the use of their energies.

10. Rethinking Evangelism. They describe that we need to develop a workable corporate strategy that will mobilize people for evangelism and assist them along the way.

11. Mobilizing for Evangelism. The eleventh essential of growing a healthy church that they speak is mobilizing for evangelism. By creating special events designed to expose non-Christians to Christ in a positive way, any Christian can get involved aggressively in evangelism.

12. Leadership Multiplication. They identify leadership multiplication through Ephesians as the final essential of growing a healthy church. God has called leaders to equip others to also become leaders (Ephesians 4:11-13). God has not called us to operate as Long Rangers.

Wayne Grudem

In his book *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem describes the twelve signs of a more-pure church using the New Testament. The following are the list of the signs of a more-pure church:

1. Biblical doctrine (or right preaching of the Word, Titus 1:9).
2. Proper use of the sacraments (or ordinances, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
3. Right use of church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:6-7, 12-13).
5. Effective prayer.

---

7. Effective fellowship.


9. Spiritual power in ministry (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Galatians 3:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; James 5:16).

10. Personal holiness of life among members (1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14).


12. Love for Christ (1 Peter 1:8; Revelation 2:4).

**Christian A. Schwarz**

In his book *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Christian A. Schwarz states the eight essential qualities of a healthy church for natural church development. He presents eight essential qualities of a healthy church for natural church development that was found by surveys of 1,000 different churches in 32 countries on all six continents. The following are the list of the eight essential qualities of a healthy church for natural church development that he discovered.

1. Empowering Leadership. The first essential quality of a healthy church for natural church development that they speak is empowering leadership. Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They do not use lay workers as “healers” in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. These pastors equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God wants them to be.

2. Gift-Oriented Ministry. The second essential quality of a healthy church for natural church development is gift-orient ministry. He writes that the gift-oriented approach reflects the conviction that God sovereignly determines which Christians should best assume which ministries. When Christians serve

---

in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Passionate Spirituality. As third essential quality of a healthy church for natural church development, he emphasizes passionate spirituality. The point separating growing and non-growing churches is a different one, namely: “Are the Christians in this church ‘on fire?’ Do they live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm?”

4. Functional Structures. Functional structure is the fourth essential quality of a healthy church for natural church development. Growing churches eliminate traditional elements such as discouraging leadership structures, inconvenient worship service times, and demotivating financial concepts. He states that through this process of continual structural self-renewal, traditionalistic ruts can, to a large extent, be avoided.

5. Inspiring Worship Service. Growing churches have inspiring worship service. He points out that people attending truly “inspired” services typically indicate that “going to church is fun.”

6. Holistic Small Group. Holistic small groups are the natural place for Christians to learn to serve others—both in and outside the group—with their spiritual gifts. The planned multiplication of small groups is made possible through the continual development of leaders as a by-product of the normal group life. He emphasizes the holistic small group as the sixth essential quality of a healthy church for natural church development.

7. Need-Oriented Evangelism. He describes that the key to church growth is for the local congregation to focus its evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians. Therefore, this “need-oriented” approach is different from “manipulative programs” where pressure on non-Christians must compensate for the lack of need-orientation. Especially, it is more necessary evangelism method today.

8. Loving Relationships. He identifies that unfeigned, practical love has a divinely generated magnetic power far more effective than evangelistic programs which depend almost entirely on verbal communication. For, people do not want to hear us talk about love; they want to experience how Christian love really works.

Stephen A. Macchia

In his book *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry*, Stephen A. Macchia identifies ten characteristics of a healthy church that he discovered with
1,899 survey opinions of 100 different churches. The following are his list of the characteristics of a healthy church.

1. God’s Empowering Presence. God’s empowering presence is clearly seen in healthy churches that advance the cause of God’s Kingdom here on earth. Experiencing God’s presence is of utmost importance to the entire church family—pastors, leaders, and members alike.

2. God-Exalting Worship. The healthy church gathers regularly as the local expression of the body of Christ to worship God in ways that engage the heart, mind soul, and strength of the people.

3. Spiritual Disciplines. The healthy church provides training, models, and resources for members of all ages to develop their daily spiritual disciplines.

4. Learning and Growing in Community. The healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment.

5. A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships. The healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve.

6. Servant-Leadership Development. The healthy church identifies and develops individuals whom God has called and given the gift of leadership and challenges them to become servant-leaders.

7. An Outward Focus. The healthy church places high priority on communicating the truth of Jesus and demonstrating his love to those outside the faith.

8. Wise Administration and Accountability. The healthy church utilizes appropriate facilities, equipment, and systems to provide maximum support for the growth and development of its ministries.

9. Networking with the Body of Christ. The healthy church reaches out to others in the body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing, learning opportunities, and united celebrations of worship.

10. Stewardship and Generosity. The healthy church teaches its members that they are stewards of their God-given resources and challenges them to sacrificial generosity in sharing with others.

---

Waldo J. Werning

In his book *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*, Waldo J. Werning introduces the twelve characteristics of a healthy church that are based on eight essential qualities of a healthy church that Christian A. Schwarz wrote about. The following are his list of the characteristics of a healthy church:

1. Empowering Leadership. Empowerment of leaders as mentors is foundation in the life of a healthy church.

2. Gift-Oriented Service/ Ministry. Healthy churches should assist Christians to serve in their area of giftedness, functioning more in the power of the Holy Spirit, and less in their own strength.

3. Passionate Spirituality. Passionate spirituality is the spiritual principle on which our life is to be build.

4. Functional Structures/ Administration/ Servant Leadership. A healthy church wants to avoid barriers of traditionalism and institutionalism, where a change in methods is fiercely rejected and considered disloyal to the past.

5. Inspiring/ High Impact/ God-Exalting worship services. Healthy churches seek to have inspiring worship that glorifies God and engages the heart, mind and emotions of the people with God, expressed in a spirit of joy.

6. Multiplied Small Groups/ Intentional Disciple-Making/ Growing in Community. Spiritual growth of people and churches was experienced through Christ-centered small group.

7. Witnessing/ Fruitful Evangelism/ Missions. Regular mission outreach was a way of life for Jesus, as for Paul. The pastor, leaders and members should become increasingly involved in mission and servant activities locally, in our country, and throughout the world.


9. Centrality of God’s Word/ Gospel/ Grace. The centrality of God’s Word, gospel, and grace will assure that members do not have a superficial view or understanding of God—God of Justice—God of Love, and the killing power of His Law and the reviving power of His gospel.

---

10. Mission and Vision-Driven. Leaders help create an environment conducive to understand, own and live the vision.


12. Church Planting. Biblical and strategic vision requires us to focus on planting churches which will, in turn, provide the dynamic to reproduce themselves.

J. Robert White

In his book *Healthy Kingdom Church: Ten Qualities of Healthy Churches*, J. Robert White describes the ten qualities of a healthy church. The following is his list of the characteristics of a healthy church.

1. Preach and Teach the Gospel of Christ. The first characteristic of a healthy church is to preach and teach the gospel of Christ. If a church is to be a healthy church there is no substitute for preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. No church can be healthy without it.

2. Worship that Inspires. Worship that inspires is the second characteristic of a healthy church. He writes that every worship service should have a consistent spiritual appeal that will draw people time and time again to a meaningful and inspiring worship experience.

3. Priority on Prayer. The third characteristic of a healthy church is prayer. He describes that one of the clearest signs that a church is a healthy church is that the church is deeply committed to the power of prayer as it goes about its Kingdom business.

4. Conscientious, Visionary Leadership. He emphasizes about visionary leadership as the fourth characteristic of a healthy church. The leader should approach his responsibility with prayer, humility, joy, enthusiasm, commitment, and energy. The conscientious, visionary leader sees his ministry in light of God’s Kingdom.

5. Engage in Church Multiplication. He states that new churches reach people for Christ at a more rapid rate than older churches. Church planting is one of the greatest outreach tools available to the church today.

---

6. An Environment of Unity and Joy. An environment of unity and joy is the sixth characteristic of a healthy church. This unity and joy should permeate the fellowship of the church in such a way that whenever anyone attends their church.

7. Cheerful Stewardship. The seventh characteristic of a healthy church is cheerful stewardship. He says that cheerful stewardship is norm in a healthy church.

8. On Mission for Christ. He describes, “Healthy Kingdom churches focused on being missionaries to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost.”

9. A Good Reputation in the Community. The ninth characteristic of a healthy church is a good reputation in community. The church can perform many ministries to develop a good reputation in their community. However, it can use for the ultimate purpose of opening the heart of the community to receive the message of the church.

10. People Being Added to the Church. Acts 2:27 says, “Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” He can do it again in churches that are healthy.

Mark Dever

In his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church: New Expanded Edition*, Mark Dever declares the nine marks of a healthy church. The following is his list of the healthy characteristics.

1. Expositional Preaching. The first mark of a healthy church is expositional preaching. He emphasizes expositional preaching as most important characteristic among marks of a healthy church. That is, this is the crucial mark for a healthy church.

2. Biblical Theology. Biblical theology is the second mark of a healthy church. Christians need to understand the truth that the Bible says about God and about us. Therefore, one of the chief marks of a healthy church that he speaks is a biblical understanding of God in His character and His ways with us.

3. The Gospel. To evangelize is the third mark of a healthy church. A healthy church knows what Christ’s gospel is. And, a healthy church evangelizes to non-Christians. He states that to really hear the gospel is to change.

---

4. A Biblical Understanding of Conversion. A biblical understanding of conversion is the fourth mark of a healthy church. Joel 2:13 says about that “Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God.”

5. A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism. The fifth mark of a healthy church is a biblical understanding and practice of evangelism.

6. A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership. A biblical understanding of church membership is the sixth mark of a healthy church. Church membership means being incorporated in practical ways into the body of Christ.

7. Biblical Church Discipline. One vital aspect of a healthy church is church discipline. He identifies that biblical church discipline is simple obedience to God and a simple confession that we need help.

8. A Concern for Discipleship and Growth. The eighth mark of a healthy church is a concern for discipleship and growth. A healthy church is characterized by a serious concern for spiritual growth on the part of its members. That is, in a healthy church, saints want to get better at following Jesus Christ.

9. Biblical Church Leadership. The final mark of a healthy church that he speaks is biblical church leadership. He describes that all four of those different aspects—the boss commanding, the out-front example, the supplying of what’s needed, and then the serving—will be part of biblical church leadership.

Bill Scheidler

In his book *Growing Strong Churches: 19 Keys to a Healthy, Growing Church*, Bill Scheidler states the nineteen characteristics of a healthy, growing church using the Bible. The following are his list of the characteristics of a healthy, growing church.

1. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to build in harmony with God’s eternal purpose.

2. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to choose the Word of God over tradition.

3. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to be responsive to present truth.

---

4. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to build according to the divine pattern for the church.

5. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to build to please God, not man.

6. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must place a high level of emphasis on the local church as the instrument that God uses to extend His Kingdom on the earth.

7. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to build up the saints on all levels.

8. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to strengthen all of the families of the church.

9. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to develop and release the gifts and ministries of its membership.

10. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to structure itself with a Biblical expression of team ministry.

11. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to exercise spiritual discipline relative to its membership.

12. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to promote the Biblical concepts of faith and sacrificial giving.

13. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to focus on those things that promote the manifest presence of God in its gatherings.

14. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to develop house-to-house ministries.

15. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to develop a strong corporate prayer life.

16. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to make unity a priority.

17. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must understand the principle of servanthood and practice it inside and outside of the church.
18. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to take Christ’s commissions seriously.

19. If a church is to grow and prosper from generation to generation, that church must determine to maintain a first-love experience among its membership.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the characteristics of a healthy church in today’s literatures were presented. From our study, we have discovered that many scholars and pastors present characteristics of a healthy church that God desires. There are differences of expressions; however, they all emphasize loving relationships, pastoral leadership, Bible teaching and preaching, evangelism, inspiring worship, spiritual discipline, small groups, gift-oriented ministry, and stewardship commonly as the most important factors that make a healthy church. Figure 3 on the next page shows the nine characteristics of a healthy church which are commonly spoken of.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Characteristic</th>
<th>P. Wagner</th>
<th>J. MacArthur</th>
<th>Dann. &amp; Gary</th>
<th>W. Gruenem</th>
<th>C. Schwarz</th>
<th>S. Macchia</th>
<th>W. Werning</th>
<th>R. White</th>
<th>M. Dever</th>
<th>B. Scheidler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loving relationship</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral leadership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible teaching and preaching</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiring worship</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual discipline</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift-oriented ministry</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: The Nine Characteristics of a Healthy Church which Authors Commonly Speak of
CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA IN REVELATION 2-3

Most Christians dislike reading the book of Revelation. They believe that the book is hard to understand. Many Christians are perhaps skeptical of some fanciful interpretations they have heard, and cannot easily accustom themselves to the book’s bizarre imagery.¹

In *The Revelation of St. John*, Leon Morris writes, “The book of Revelation is, I fear, a very neglected book. Its symbolism belongs to the first century, not to our own age. Twentieth-century men accordingly find it difficult and tend to dismiss it as irrelevant.”² Now, for the present generation, the book of Revelation is the most obscure and controversial book in Bible.³

In *Letters to the Seven Churches*, William Barclay describes on the obscurity of the Revelation.

The obscurity of the Revelation has been felt by scholars in all ages. Jerome complained that the Revelation contained as many riddles as it does words. Luther would have banished it from the page of the New Testament. He cited Revelation 1:3 and 22:18 where threats are made against the man who breaks the commandments of this book, and promises to the man who keeps them, and demanded how any man could possibly keep the commandments of a


book which no man has even been able to understand. Still another scholar said
that the Revelation either finds a man mad or leaves him so.4

Many scholars make mention of the ambiguity of the book of Revelation. However, they emphasize the importance of Revelation at the same time. Alan F. Johnson points out, “Those who study it with care agree that it is a unique source of Christian teaching and one of timeless relevance. Indeed, it may well be that with the exception of the Gospel, the Apocalypse is the most profound and moving teaching on Christian doctrine and discipleship found anywhere in Holy Scripture.”5

In his book, William Barclay clearly states, “There is indeed much that is obscure and difficult in the Revelation, but there is one section of it at least which is vivid and relevant, and which gains much new light when it is set against the background out of which it was written. That is the section which contains the letter to the seven churches.”6 Also, in The Letters to the Seven Churches: Updated Edition, William Mitchell Ramsay emphasizes, “One of the most remarkable parts of that strange and difficult book, the Revelation of St. John, is the passage 2:1 to 3:22, containing the seven letters.”7

The book of Revelation that includes the seven letters reveals, “What Christ thinks of His church?” In his book, John Stott clearly emphasizes, “What Christ thinks of the church is a question of great concern to all Christians. What we ourselves think of it from the inside and what others think of it from the outside are also important. But,

---


6William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 11-12.

far more significant is the view of Jesus Christ Himself, since He is the church’s Founder, Head, and Judge.”

Therefore, the passage 2:1 to 3:22, containing the seven letters is very important. These passages reveal Jesus Christ’s view of His churches. Just as the letters of Paul to the Romans, the Galatians and the Timothy convey the word of God to us as well as to them, to Washington D.C, Seoul, and Tokyo as well as to Rome and Galatia, so the passage 2:1 to 3:22 to the first-century Christian communities of Asia has His view for His churches today.

THE CHURCH THAT KEEPS JESUS CHRIST AS IT FIRST LOVE

The church in Ephesus, Revelation 2:1-7

Historical-Geographical Setting

The first of the seven letters is addressed to the church in Ephesus. The name “Ephesus” means desirable, and this was indeed the desirable church. Ephesus is important in the New Testament because of two Apostles, Paul and John, who wrote letters to their fellow Christians. The city of Ephesus was located 60 miles northeast of Patmos and the most important of the seven cities. Through Pergamum was the

---

8John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 7.


10The church in Ephesus is the only church in the New Testament to which two apostles addressed letters. Paul lived here for three years on his missionary journey (Acts 20:31) and later wrote the book of Ephesians from Rome. And, the book of Revelation was written through the Apostle John at Patmos.

official capital of the province of Asia, Ephesus was its greatest city and a city of the
greatest commercial importance.12

Ephesus was one of the four most powerful cities in the Roman Empire (with Rome, Alexandria, and Syrian Antioch), and was a city of more than 250,000 people. It lay at the harbor where the Cayster River met the Aegean Sea in western Asia Minor.13 Ephesus lay at the mouth of the Cayster River, and therefore it commanded the trade of the Cayster Valley. Ephesus was one of the greatest sea-ports of the ancient world.14 Therefore, much of the trade of the East came to the Aegean by way of the port of Ephesus.

Three great roads converged on Ephesus. The trade route from the Euphrates reached Ephesus by way of Colosse and Laodicaea, and brought the trade of the East to its markets. The road from Galatia came into Ephesus by way of Sardis, and poured into its lap the trade of Asia Minor. A third road came up from the south, and added the trade of the Maeander valley to the trade of the Cayster valley. Ephesus could fitly be called “The Vanity Fair of the Ancient World.”15

Ephesus was a city of political importance. She enjoyed the title “Supreme Metropolis of Asia.” It was what was known as a free city. That is to say that the

12Though Ephesus was a great harbor city, she was of much greater importance administratively than commercially. See, David E. Aune, Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation1-5 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 136. Strabo, writing of Ephesus about the time when St. John was born, says, “Owing to its favorable situation, the city is in all other respects increasing daily, for it is the greatest place of trade of all the cities of Asia west of the Taurus.” See, A. Plummer, The Pulpit Commentary: The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 56-57.


14William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 12. Situated near the mouth of the Cayster River, it was a great commercial centre (despite problems posed by the silting up of its harbor which have persisted so that the site is now several miles inland). See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 58.

15William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 12.
Romans had granted to it the right of self—government within its own limits, and it never had the indignity of having Roman troops compulsorily quartered upon it.\textsuperscript{16} Also, the Roman governor lived there.\textsuperscript{17} It served as an assize city in which the Roman governor on a regular schedule trialed important cases and dispensed justice. It boasted a major stadium, marketplace, and theater (Acts 19:29). The latter was built on the west slope of Mt. Pion overlooking the harbor, and seated some 25,000 people.\textsuperscript{18}

Ephesus was the center of the Pan—Ionian Games. It was in the month of May that these games were held. The Greek name for that month was Artemesion, the month sacred to Artemis. At that time, the people of Ionia flocked into Ephesus. There were public-spirited men who counted it an honor to make the arrangements for these games, and to bear the cost of them. These men were given the title “Asiarch,” which means the Chief of Asia.\textsuperscript{19}

Ephesus was a city of religious importance. The chief cult of the city was that of the goddess Artemis,\textsuperscript{20} whose temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world and the object of intense civic pride.\textsuperscript{21} The citizens of Ephesus were fanatically devoted to

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{17}Alan F. Johnson, \textit{The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation}, 433.
\textsuperscript{19}William Barclay, \textit{Letters to the Seven Churches}, 14.
\textsuperscript{20}This goddess Artemis identified with the Roman goddess Diana. See, Robert L. Thomas, \textit{An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 1-7} (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 129. The power of this cult is seen in the riot of Acts 19:23-24, caused simply by chanting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” cf. Acts 19:23, 24, 27, 28, 34, and 35.
\textsuperscript{21}The Temple of Artemis was one of the seven Wonders (with Pyramids of Egypt, Colosus of Rhodes, Status of Zeus at Olympia, the Hanging Garden of Babylon, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, and Mausoleum at Halicarnassus) of the Ancient World. See, J.T. Marlin, \textit{The Seven Churches of Asia Minor: An Historical, Geographical and Biblical Guide to the Seven Churches of Asia} (Nashville: Williams Printing Company, 1980), 34.
the worship of the goddess, and cherished her image,\textsuperscript{22} which was reputed to have fallen from heaven.\textsuperscript{23} The character of the people of Ephesus was notoriously bad. The people had the reputation all over Asia of being fickle, superstitious and immoral.\textsuperscript{24}

**The Origins of the Church in Ephesus**

The founder of the Ephesians church was the Apostle Paul. Although early in the second missionary journey Paul wanted to go to Asia, the Holy Spirit led him elsewhere (Acts 16:6). Paul’s first visit to Ephesus was while returning from Corinth to Jerusalem at the close of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21).\textsuperscript{25} He left for Antioch, leaving Priscilla and Aquila behind (Acts 18:18-26). After he left for Antioch, Apollos of Alexandria arrived in Ephesus. Their stay coincided with the persuasive ministry of Apollos of Alexandria, who had experienced only the baptism of John in the city (Acts 18:25).

Paul’s second visit was on his third missionary journey. After spending time in Antioch, Paul left for his third missionary journey. First, he went to the churches in the areas of Galatia and Phrygia and then arrived again in Ephesus (Acts 18:23; 9:1) and spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). He then began teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus and visited people privately in their homes, and the gospel spread

\textsuperscript{22}The image of Artemis was one of the most sacred objects of worship in the ancient world, but it was not beautiful. It was a grotesque, squat, black, many-breasted figure. See, Robert L. Thomas, *An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 1-7*, 129.


\textsuperscript{24}William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 18.

\textsuperscript{25}After a ministry of approximately one-and-a-half years in Corinth, Paul, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, arrived at Ephesus. See, Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 89-90.
throughout the whole neighborhood. Later he wrote them a letter (Ephesians) while a prisoner in Rome.

When Apostle Paul went to Macedonia, Timothy was left at Ephesus. According to the traditions of the second century, the Apostle John replaced Timothy towards the end of the first century as leader of the Ephesians church. John was in exile for the truth, he wrote them a letter which is dictated to him by Jesus Christ.

The Diagnosis

If a patient who is not healthy comes to hospital, the most important thing is the patient’s diagnosis. Likewise, one must diagnose whether or not the church is healthy. The basis of such diagnosis must be found in God’s word. One cannot receive a correct diagnosis and prescription if it is not founded on God’s word. The church in Ephesus also received her diagnosis from Jesus Christ’s word. The church received a commendation and a condemnation from Jesus Christ at the same time.

A Commendation

In New Testament Theology, Leon Morris describes that in the messages to the seven churches in chapter 2-3 there is the constant thought that God is interested in all that his people are doing; He knows their failures and their successes and will give them

---

26 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 22.

27 1 Timothy 1:3-4 (NIV) states, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.” From his first imprisonment in Rome he wrote his letter to the church in Ephesus and later his two letters to Timothy.

28 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 22.
his blessing. God is interested in all that his people are doing. God knows everything.

First of all, Jesus Christ commends the church in Ephesus.

In Revelation 2:2-3 (KJV), Jesus Christ says, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” These verses exhibit virtues which Jesus Christ could commend without qualification.

The term “I know,” occurs immediately following the Christological predications in each of the seven proclamations (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15), five times within the stereotypical phrase (2:2) or (2:19; 3:1, 8, 15). In contrast to which speaks of progress of knowledge, reflects full or complete knowledge. It depicts absolute clearness of mental vision, which photographs all facts of life as they pass. Jesus Christ knows everything of the church in Ephesus.

And, I know thy works, He says, and immediately adds by way of explanation, thy labour and thy


patience (moluk). William Barclay explained about this passage well:

The first **and** in that sentence is a special kind of **and**. It is called in Greek the epexegetical **and**. It does not simply add something to that which goes before, as if it were adding another item to a list in a catalogue; it explains what has gone before. The correct translation would be: I know thy works - by that I mean your labour and your patience.31

The two nouns which follow (labour and patience) show the active and passive sides of the energizing Christian life of Ephesians congregation.32 The Ephesians congregation had toiled to the point of exhaustion actively and borne patiently the hostility of a society at odds with their goals and efforts passively.33

First of all, Jesus Christ commended their labour.34 The Greek word for labour is **μεταξιον**, and **μεταξιον** means the toil which exhausts.35 The Ephesians church was an active church, busy in the service of God and others. Their toil was famous. Every member was doing something for Christ and others. They were not lazy. They were diligent and conscientious.36 They sweated hard for Jesus Christ and other members. They served the church and other members worked hard until they were tired and collapsed. Jesus Christ knew their labour, and commended them.

Jesus Christ also commends their patience. The Greek word for patience is **μαρτυρία**. Concerning the **μαρτυρία**, William Barclay describes

---


34NIV translates KJV’s “labour” as “hard work.” NASB translates “labour” as “toil.”


that this is not the patience which sits down and passively bears things, the patience which allows a tide of troubles to sweep over its bowed head.\(^{37}\) This word does not mean endurance simply. Patience means that one bears continually and wins over a faced barrier. The patience of the saints is to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12), and means “to bear” until the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:25).

At that time, the Christians of the church in Ephesus received environmental persecution. First, they received religious persecution. Ephesus was a very religious city, and was one of the centers of emperor worship in the province. In Acts 19: 23-41, everybody had a profound reverence for the great Diana of the Ephesians, the mother goddess of Asia, on account of whom the city had been put in ferment through the Apostle Paul’s preaching. Craftsmen feared for their sales of silver shrines, and their vested interests led them to oppose Paul violently.

Second, they received social and financial persecution. Some found business hard: they were losing customers because of their faith. Also, others found shopping a problem, as a number of tradesmen would not sell to them.\(^{38}\) Nevertheless, despite all this persecution, they had not denied the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ knew their patience, and commended them.

Jesus Christ commends that they can not bear them which are evil. The evil (\(\psi\xi\mathrm{v}\)\(\pi\nu\)) who tried the patience of the Ephesians were not their pagan neighbors, but the false brethren in church.\(^{39}\)

Also, Jesus Christ commends that they have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars. An “apostle” is one who is sent as a representative of another and bears the full authority of the sender. Concerning the apostle, Alan F. Johnson explains, “The word is applied first in the New Testament to the original circle of the Twelve (Mark 3:14; Acts 1:2, 26), who had a special place historically in the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14). But the New Testament further broadens this original circle to include others such as Paul (Galatians 1:1), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James the brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19), and still others (cf. Romans 16:7).”

However, they which call themselves apostles in Revelation 2:2 appear to be false apostles. Though there are a variety of views about false apostles, a group such as the Nicolaitans in Revelation 2:6 were definitely false apostles. The Christians of the church in Ephesus could discern between the true and the false apostles. They have tested those which are apostles, and which are not, and have branded the latter as liars. They were not deceived by false apostles. They tested and rejected false claims. Therefore, Jesus Christ commended their deeds.

Finally, Jesus Christ commends that they have borne (εἴρηκας), and have patience (μετέχετε), and for His name’s sake (καθὼς ἔσχάτων), and have laboured, and have not fainted.

---

39Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*. 25. In the New Testament, & εἴρηκας and μετέχετε (which frequently occur together, e.g. Romans 1:29; Ephesians 4:31; 1 Corinthians 5:8) only differ in so far as the one denotes rather the vicious disposition, the other the active exercise of it. See, J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 214.


41There are greatly three main views about the false apostles: 1) the Judaists that came from Jerusalem; 2) the Apostle Paul’s disciples; 3) the Nicolaitans.
Leon Morris comments on the verb “borne” well: The better text reads here, “And thou hast steadfastness, and hast borne for my name’s sake.” The verb “borne” is that used in the previous verse of their inability to bear evil men. However, for Christ’s sake they have borne.42

They have perseverance and have endured for His name’s sake. And, they have not grown weary. Jesus Christ commended them for this.

A Condemnation

In Revelation 2:4 (KJV), the Risen Jesus Christ condemns the church in Ephesus that they have a left their first love. Henry Barclay Swete writes on this passage: “Patience and unremitting toil in His cause are not all that Christ requires, and indeed are of little value, if the spirit of love is absent. But, at Ephesus love was waning, perhaps as the result of the controversies through which the church had passed.”43

About this spiritual condition of the church in Ephesus, William Barclay spoke, “It may mean that first enthusiasm of the Christian faith was gone, that the honeymoon period was over, and that the love of thine espousals (Jeremiah 2:2) was only a memory.”44

In Paul’s time, he emphasized much “love” interaction with the church in Ephesus (Ephesus 1:15; 3:7, 18; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:1, 2, 25, 28, 33; 6:23, 24). Also, in Ephesians 6:23-24 (NIV), Apostle Paul finishes with a benediction: “Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all

---

43Henry Barclay Swete, Commentary on Revelation, 26.
44William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 24.
who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” However, in Paul’s time, the church in Ephesus was a church where there was a lot of love. In Ephesus 1:15-16 (NIV), the Apostle Paul writes, “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” Actually, the apostle Paul commends the church in Ephesus for the love they have for each saint. However, in John’s times, at Ephesus the first love had waned.45

What does it mean by “first love” in Revelation 2:4? Many scholars assume that it is horizontal or brotherly love, and others take it primarily as love for God (e.g., Stauffer, *TDNT* 1:53, Prigent, Walvoord, P. Hughes, Stott), but a growing number (e.g., Mounce, Johnson, Krodel, Thomas, Giesen) recognize the difficulty of separating love for humans from love for God and Christ.46 The Words of Christ’s condemnation do not themselves make clear whether the first love which they had abandoned was love for God and Christ or love for their fellow brother. However, the clear thing is that the church in Ephesus’s first love had waned.

They worked vigorously, but not with love. They tested the message of false apostles, but had no love in their hearts. John Stott states that the Ephesians even hated the evil deeds and words of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6), so unimpeachable was

---

45Sang Chan Lee lists causes of a waned from the New Testament. He includes: 1) when the saints do not love each other (John 13:35); 2) when lawlessness is increased (Matthew 24:12); 3) when the saints do not love God (1 John 4:20); 4) when there is no labour of love (1 Thessalonians 1:3); 5) when there is no work of faith (1 Thessalonians 1:3); 6) when the saints are united together with one heart and purpose (Philippians 2:2). See, Sang Chan Lee, *The Seven Churches in Asia Minor.* (Seoul: Duremaleul Publishing, 1989), 58.

their theological correctness, but to hate error and evil is not the same as to love Christ.”

In Matthew 22, one of the experts in religious law tried to trap Jesus Christ with this question: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and your entire mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Indeed, it is the great thing in the universe. The first two commandments are to love God and our neighbor. If you love God, love your neighbor. A person who loves their neighbor has God’s love in the heart. Therefore, to love is to fulfill the law (Romans 13:10).

In John’s time, the church in Ephesus lost its first love. However, Jesus Christ does not want to leave the church in Ephesus as loveless or any church. So, He will recall His churches that failed in love and He will build the church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love. He will also issue to the church in Ephesus three terse words of a prescription.

The Prescription

In Revelation 2:5, Jesus Christ says the church in Ephesus as a church that has failed in love. First, the church in Ephesus was advised to “Remember (στήριξις) the height from which you have fallen (Revelation 2:5 NIV).” The church in Ephesus must remember when love overflowed between saints.

---

47John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 29.
Robert H. Mounce writes that memory can be a powerful force in effecting a return to a more satisfying relationship (cf. the prodigal son in Luke 15:17-18).48

The Greek word “keep on remembering” or “hold in memory.”49 Therefore, the way in which the Ephesians church can become a healthy church again is by remembering the first love which it felt. So, Jesus Christ commands the church to remember the height from which it had fallen. This is the first prescription that recovers love.

Jesus Christ’s second prescription for the church in Ephesus is to repent (the aorist points to a sharp break with evil).50 Repentance is not mere sorrow (though godly sorrow works repentance 2 Corinthians 7:10); but repentance is a changed state of soul.51 So, repentance is willful change and not mere change of emotion. It involves a reversal of thinking with a consequent change of standards and of direction.52 Therefore, the church in Ephesus must remember the height from which it has fallen, and repent. This is the second prescription that recovers love.

Finally, Jesus Christ’s third prescription for the church in Ephesus is to resume their first works. Albert Barnes comments, “The works which were done when the church was first established. That is, manifest the zeal and love which were formerly

50The present imperative “keep on remembering” indicates that the remembering is to continue; on the other hand, the aorist “repent” shows that repentance is a thing to be done immediately, once and for all. See, A. Plummer, The Pulpit Commentary: The Revelation of St. John the Divine, 58.
evincèd in opposing error, and in doing good.” ⁵³ Therefore, Ephesians church must do the first works. This is the third prescription that recovers love.

In short, the church in Ephesus must remember, repent and resume their first works. However, if they do not heed, dire consequences are sure and swift. Jesus Christ says that if you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. Robert H. Mounce states on this passage: “The reference is not so much to the parousia as it is to an immediate visitation for preliminary judgment. Remember that Christ walks in the midst of his churches (2:1). Without love the congregation ceases to be a church. Its lampstand is removed.” ⁵⁴

As mentioned earlier, they worked vigorously and tested the messages of false apostles. They were commended because of such works. However, Jesus Christ condemned them because their love had waned. A church can continue only for so long on a loveless course. Therefore, Jesus Christ wants them to come back to their first love.

To this warning for the impenitent, Jesus Christ adds a promise to the penitent. The promise is Revelation 2:7. “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God (NASB).” This promise offers free access to the tree of life in the Paradise of God, whose fruit was previously forbidden to fallen human being. This means the enjoyment of eternal life in the Paradise of God. ⁵⁵

The message to Ephesus is a message to Christians today as well. Today, many churches are waning in their love. Their love is spiritual warfare in church and saints.

⁵⁵ John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 32.
Many churches are collapsing slowly in spiritual warfare called “love.” However, the most serious problem is that many churches are not recognizing their condition. Jesus Christ wants His churches to become churches that keep Him as their first love like the church in Ephesus in Paul’s time.

Many scholars and pastors who have studied healthy churches emphasize that love is the essential of a healthy church. *Growing a Healthy Church*’s authors Dann Spader and Gray Mayes write that “An atmosphere of love” is one of the essentials of growing a healthy church.\(^{56}\) Also, in *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*’ author Christian A. Schwarz states “loving relationship” as one of eight essential qualities of healthy churches.

In *Becoming a healthy church: Ten traits of a vital ministry*’s author Stephen A. Macchia describes that the healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve.\(^{57}\) In *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*, Waldo J. Werning points out that loving relationships produce unity and accountability within the congregation, enabling the church to handle conflict and discipline Biblically and evangelically.\(^{58}\) Finally, in his book *Growing Strong Churches*, Bill Scheidler explained 19 keys to a healthy, growing church. The last key is “Maintaining first love.” He made the following conclusion from a series that studied Revelation 2:1-7. “If a church is to grow and prosper from

---


\(^{58}\) Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*, 46.
generation to generation, that church must determine to maintain a first-love experience among its membership.”

Therefore, undoubtedly, the church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love has a central aspect of a healthy church, which the Bible and Jesus Christ want.

THE CHURCH THAT SUFFERS FOR CHRIST’S SAKE

The church in Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11

Historical-Geographical Setting

If the first characteristic of a healthy church is that of keeping Jesus Christ as its first love, the second is that of suffering for Christ’s sake. In his book *Commentary on Revelation*, Henry Barclay Swete states that the church in Smyrna was characterized by its endurance of suffering and poverty in the cause of the Gospel. John Stott says that a willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of love. In other words, if there is no willingness to suffer for Him, then they are not genuine Christians. However, the church in Smyrna is genuine.

The second of the seven letters is addressed to the church in Smyrna. The Greek word “ץכץת” is actually a word of Semitic origin, the Hebrew root meaning

---

61 Ibid., 35.
The metropolitan, traveler setting out from Ephesus to visit the churches of Asia, would naturally go first to Smyrna. Smyrna is the only city that has continued to the present day, having the modern name Izmir. In New Testament times, Smyrna was a large and prosperous port city, not far north up the coastline from Ephesus. It had a magnificent port. Smyrna stood at the end of the road which served the valley that sent goods into its markets and out through its port. So, Smyrna, like Ephesus, was a city of wealth and of commercial greatness. Smyrna was a proud and exceptionally beautiful city. Three to four hundred years after it had been destroyed by Alyattes, king of Lydia, in the early sixth century BC, it was rebuilt in B.C. 290 by Lysimachus and Antigonus as a model city. The city of John’s time was one which had risen from the dead. This city boasted to be the birthplace of Homer, a famous stadium, an equally famous library, and public theater.

---

64 Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 127. Smyrna is modern-day by Izmir, the third city of Turkey and the largest city in Asia Minor behind the recently growing Ankara. See, Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Church of Asia: in Their Local Setting*, 60.
67 The Smyrnaeans were especially proud of the beauty of their city. The frequent inscription on their coins, “first of Asia,” was contested by Pergamum and Ephesus; all three were the “first of Asia” in varying respects. Smyrna defined her rank on some coins as “first of Asia in beauty and size.” See, William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches: Updated Edition*. ed., Mark W. Wilson, 185.
Smyrna was also a center of emperor worship, having been granted the privilege to build the first temple honoring Tiberius. Under the emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) worship became compulsory for every Roman citizen on threat of death. Each year every citizen had to burn incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar, after which he was issued a certificate. Smyrna was a faithful ally to Rome in the days before Rome was acknowledged in the region, so its loyalty meant something.

The Origins of the Church in Smyrna

The founding of the church in the Smyrna is a mystery. We do not know when the church was first founded. The church is mentioned neither in Acts nor in the New Testament. However, it is reasonable to guess that it could have been founded during Paul’s three years stay in nearby Ephesus (Acts 19:10, 26; 20:31).

The Diagnosis

The only churches of the seven that did not receive condemnation were Smyrna and Philadelphia. The churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia received only sympathy and encouragement from Jesus Christ.

A Commendation

Concerning the letter to Smyrna, John Stott writes that the church in Smyrna was a suffering church, and this letter is devoted exclusively to an account of their past and present afflictions, a warning of severer trials to come, and encouragement to endure.\(^7^4\) Also, the church in Ephesus was in peril from inward weakening and the decay of love, but the church in Smyrna was in peril from its external enemies and the afflictions that were upon it from without.\(^7^5\) Certainly, the church in Smyrna was a suffering church. In Revelation 2:9, Jesus Christ commends them about the suffering that they received. “I know your afflictions (\(\text{}\)) and your poverty (\(\text{}\))—yet you are rich! I know the slander (\(\text{}\)) of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (NIV).”

The first suffering that they received was affliction (\(\text{}\)) which denotes a serious trouble, “the burden that crushes.”\(^7^6\) It is, for instance, used of a man who was tortured to death by being slowly crushed by a great boulder laid upon him.\(^7^7\) In the Christian life there is always affliction. However, the affliction that the church in Smyrna received was excessive suffering that is inexpressible. Clearly this was from persecution that the church received.

Various afflictions come out in Revelation (1:9; 2:9; 2:22; 7:14, and so forth). The causes of the persecution are not given. However, the affliction that the church in Smyrna received was persecution that was received because of refusal of emperor

\(^7^4\) John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 36.

\(^7^5\) Joseph A. Seiss, Letters To The Seven Churches (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), 71.


\(^7^7\) William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 40.
worship (2:9). In Hebrews 11:36-38, we can guess the persecution the church in Smyrna received and the threat which was at the back of every Christian life when the Book of the Revelation was written.

and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill—treated ([men] of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground (Hebrews 11:36-38. NASB).

William Barclay describes that this day Smyrna was a city of 250,000 inhabitants, half the population of Smyrna were Christian. Then, at that time, half the population of Smyrna received persecution. Probably, the affliction that they received would transcend our imagination. They lived the Christian life at the risk of life.

However, Romans 8:18 (NIV) says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Also, Romans 8:35 says, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” Therefore, the affliction that they received can not separate them from the love of Christ. Jesus Christ knew their Christian life, their sufferings and all their afflictions. He commended the church in Smyrna.

The second suffering that they endured was poverty (). Concerning their poverty, John F. Walvoord explains, “The word used for “poverty

---

78Sang Chan Lee, *The Seven Churches in Asia Minor*. 113. Smyrna had two features which made life for the Christians a constant and continued peril. The first peril was emperor worship, and the second was that in Smyrna there was a very large Jewish population. See, William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 31-35.

79Ibid., 29.
"is the word for abject poverty. They were not just poor. It may be that they were drawn from a poor class of people, but it is more probable that their extreme poverty is explained by the fact that they had been robbed of their goods in the process of their persecution and affliction."

Like Walvoord’s explanation, the poverty of the Smyrna Christians was extreme. In his book *What Christ thinks of the church*, John Stott conjectured reason why they were in poverty.

It seems probable that in their resolve to go straight in business, Christians had renounced shady methods and had thereby missed some of the easy profits which went to others less scrupulous than themselves. Or again, Jews and pagans may have been unwilling to trade with them. It may not have been easy for them to find employment. It is even possible that some of the Smyrna Christians had their homes pillaged.

The reason that they were in poverty was because they were Christian. It was a great pressure to live as a Christian in Smyrna. However, they did not regret or give up living as Christians. They lived enjoying poverty that was given to them. The reason that they could live and enjoy poverty is because their souls were not in poverty. Their poverty was a material poverty: spiritually they were rich. Jesus Christ knew that they were not poor spiritually. So, Jesus Christ commended that “yet you are rich.”

Also, the third suffering that they received was slander of those who said they were Jews and were not. In his commentary on Revelation, Alan F. Johnson comments on this passage well:

---

82In contrast, Laodicean church was rich materially but was poor spiritually. See, Revelation 3:17.
83Slander is incorrectly translated by the AV as “blasphemy,” which is a literal rendering of the Greek word. However, its proper meaning is not blasphemy of the name of God but slanderous
Trouble arose from the Jewish community. Certain Jews (not all of them) used malicious untruths (“slander”) to incite persecution to the impoverished saints in Smyrna. They “say they are Jews but are not” shows that even though these men claimed descent from Abraham, they were not his true descendants because they did not have faith in Christ, the “Seed” of Abraham (Galatians 3:16, 29). These unbelieving and hostile Jews probably viewed the Jewish Christians at Smyrna as heretics of the worst sort, deserving ridicule and rejection.

In 2 Corinthians 11:13 (NASB), the Bible says that “for such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” Also, in Romans 16:18 (NASB), the Bible says that for such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. Therefore, Jesus Christ said that they are not Jews but a synagogue of Satan. They slandered the Christians in Smyrna.

This Jewish hostility to the gospel was also seen in the middle of the second century A.D., when in this same city of Smyrna Bishop Polycarp was martyred. When Polycarp confessed that he was a Christian, the multitude of heathen and Jews living in Smyrna cried out intolerable wrath. They then joined (although it was the Sabbath) with the mob in gathering wood to burn Polycarp alive.

This affliction of Smyrna Christians challenges us who live in comparative ease. That is, because we always can encounter afflictions like them if we are genuine Christians. No, there can be many Christians who live receiving such afflictions now.

---

84 George E. Ladd describes that true Jews are the people of the Messiah. See, Ibid., 43.


However, the affliction from this world is part of the cost of Christian discipleship. Therefore, the living and true church certainly receives afflictions from the world, and has overcome it.

**The Prescription**

Affliction, poverty and slander were the three experiences of suffering which the church in Smyrna was already enduring. However, there was far more to come. To this Christ now refers: Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2:10 NIV).

Jesus Christ told them beforehand of future suffering. Under God’s permission, the devil would put some of them in prison to test them and they would suffer persecution for ten days. However, He says that do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer and be faithful, even to the point of death.

Faith and fear are opposites that cannot co-exist. The degree of one’s belief in Jesus Christ determines the degree of one’s fear. If belief in Jesus Christ is not defined, people shall wander in fear. However, if belief in Jesus Christ is absolute, our fear vanishes, and we shall be faithful—faithful, if necessary, even to the point of death.

---

87 Concerning the period of ten days, scholars hold various opinions. For more detailed opinions, see, Seong Su Kwon, Revelation (Seoul: Touch Press, 1999), 61.

88 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 43-44.
Jesus Christ promises to Smyrna Christians that I will give persons who so the
crown of life () and he who
overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death (Revelation 2:11 NIV).

Robert H. Mounce states, “The church is to continue faithful even though it may
lead to death (cf. Revelation 12:11; Hebrews 12:4). The reward for the faithful is the
crown of life.”

Today, many churches and Christians, with some exceptions, dislike suffering
for Christ. Many churches and Christians choose the easy way. That is to believe in
Jesus Christ, but refuse to receive suffering for Christ’s sake. However, Jesus Christ
says, “But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find
it (Matthew 7:14 NLT).” And, in 1 Peter 2:19-21 (NIV), Peter says,

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering
because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a
beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you
endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because

89Concerning the crown of life, Homer Hailay explains: In the New Testament two words are
used for crown;  occurs in all (Matthew 27:29; 15:17; John 19:2; 19:5; 1 Corinthians
9:25; Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:18; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10;
3:11; 4:10; 6:2; 9:2; 12:1; 14:14) but three references; in these,  is used of the
Dragon, the Beast, and Christ (Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 19:12), symbolizing rule or royalty over a particular
realm. The crown () was worn by athletic and military victors, by the populace during
festive seasons, and by the bride on nuptial occasions; it was thus the festive or victory crown. Scholars
differ as to whether the crown in this instance is to be considered a , a crown of royalty,
or victory crown. Trench and others believe that it is a royal crown offered by Lord, since we reign with
him. Others believe it is the crown of victory. A study of the word as it is used throughout the New
Testament leads to the conclusion that it is the festive crown of victory, given to the saint in honor of his
triumph over tribulation and death. See, Homer Hailey, Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 128.

90The second death explained in 2:6, 14; 21:8 in terms of the lake of fire; it seems to mean
eternal punishment: it is the negation of eternal life. See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John:

Revelation, 94.
Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

According to this text, we are called to receive suffering. Psalms 34:19 (NASB) says that many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all. The church is no exception. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers His church. If a church avoids receiving suffering for Christ’s sake, it is not Jesus’ church. A healthy church does not refuse to receive suffering for Christ’s sake.

In his book *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, John Stott describes that suffering for Christ’s sake as the mark of a true living church. A willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of love for Jesus Christ. Therefore, a willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake marks a true aspect of a healthy church that Jesus Christ wants.

**THE CHURCH THAT KEEPS GOD’S TRUTH**

**The church in Pergamum, Revelation 2:12-17**

**Historical-Geographical Setting**

As previously mentioned, love and suffering for Christ’s sake were two of the characteristics of a healthy church. The third characteristic of a healthy church is to keep God’s truth. This characteristic can be seen through the church in Pergamum. The third church to which Christ addressed a message was the church in Pergamum.

The word Pergamos or Pergamum means “to elevate.” After leaving Smyrna, the road from Ephesus led north along the Aegean coast for about 40 miles and then struck north-east up the valley of the Caicus, for a further distance of 15 miles, when it

---

reached Pergamum. Built on a cone-shaped hill 1,000 feet in height, it dominated the surrounding valley of the Caicus. Its very name in Greek means citadel.

Caesar Augustus made Ephesus the center of the financial and administrative functions for that province, but one special fact marked out Pergamum from all the other cities of the province of Asia. Pergamum was the official capital of the province of Asia.

Pergamum could never earn the financial eminence position of Ephesus or Smyrna. However, Pergamum was far superior to them in historical greatness. Pergamum had one of the most famous libraries, with no fewer than 200,000 volumes. Legend has it that parchment was invented there when the supply of papyrus from Egypt was cut off in reprisal for Eumenes’ attempt to lure a famous librarian by the name of Aristophanes away from Alexandria.

Pergamum was not only famous in the realm of literature; it was also a famous center of the religious life of the province. Concerning the religious life of Pergamum, in New Bible Commentary, George R. Beasley-Murray writes,

The most famous was the temple of Asclepios, the god of healing, closely associated with the snake, which gave Pergamum a reputation like Lourdes today. There was also a huge altar of Zeus, built to commemorate a notable

---

94 Henry Barclay Swete, Commentary on Revelation, 34.


96 Dennis E. Johnson, Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation, 75.

97 Pergamum was never important until it became the capital of the independent kingdom of the Attalids after Alexander the Great. Its last king willed it to Rome in B.C. 133, when it became the capital of the Roman province of Asia. See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 65.

98 Then, every book had to be written and copied by hand.

victory. Most important of all, Pergamum had the first temple in the area dedicated to Augustus and Rome; hence it became the center for the worship of the emperor in the province.100

So, Pergamum was a center of Caesar worship. Like Smyrna, Pergamum was a city where Caesar worship was at its most intense, a city dedicated to glorying in the worship of Caesar.101

The Origins of the Church in Pergamum

Like the church in Smyrna, the founding of the church in the Pergamum is a mystery. It is reasonable to guess that it could have been during Paul’s three years stay in nearby Ephesus (Acts 19:10, 26; 20:31). Also, Romans 15:19 (NIV) says that “by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”

The seven churches of Asia were located between Jerusalem and Illyricum. Therefore, at that time, it seems that he proclaimed the gospel in Pergamum. Then, it should seem that he founded the church in the Pergamum and nominated Antipas who was put to death in Pergamum (Revelation 2:13).102

The Diagnosis

101 William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 52.
102 Sang Chan Lee, The Seven Churches in Asia Minor, 156-157.
Like the church in Ephesus, this church received a commendation and a condemnation from Jesus Christ at the same time.

A Commendation

Robert H. Mounce writes, “The letter to Pergamum begins with an acknowledgment of the difficulty of living in an environment so distinctly pagan and a commendation for the church’s faithful witness in the face of severe opposition.” In Revelation 2:13 (KJV), the risen Jesus Christ commends, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith (I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith), even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

Jesus Christ knew that they lived in a hostile and difficult place. It is Satan’s seat. Satan’s seat means “Satan’s throne.” Alan F. Johnson comments that this certainly refers to the fact that Pergamum was a center for worship of the pagan gods, especially the emperor cult. Accordingly, Pergamene Christians lived receiving political persecutions. To be a Christian in Pergamum meant enduring persecutions. So, the simple services of the church had to exist against the background of the splendor and the magnificence of the worship of the Olympian gods.

Further, they were holding fast to His name and had not denied His faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was His faithful martyr, who was slain among them, where Satan dwelled. That is to say, they never lost their grip on Jesus Christ, even at the threat of death. The word “εἰρήνης (denied)” is the aorist tense of ἐπιθύμησας. In Greek, the aorist points to one particular action done and completed in past time.

William Barclay comments that this phrase then means that in Pergamum there must have been some definite hour of crisis, some definite outburst of persecution, in which the Christians of Pergamum had remained staunch and true.

So, the risen Jesus Christ went on to commend the Pergamene Christians because they were holding fast to His name and had not denied His faith, even at the threat of death.

A Condemnation

Pergamene Christians were holding fast to His name and had not denied His faith, even when Antipas was martyred. This is a great thing. Although they were so loyal, they not only receive commendation from Jesus Christ, but they also received a few condemnations from Him.

In Revelation 2:14-15 (NIV), the risen Jesus Christ condemns them.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin

---

106 Alan F. Johnson describes that he may have been the first or most notable of martyrs. See, Ibid., 440. However, about Antipas, we know nothing historical. A later legend tells us that he was roasted in a brazen bull. See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 67.

107 William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 57.
by eating food sacrificed to idols (\(\alpha \gamma \\\) and by committing sexual immorality (\(\pi \rho \lambda \mu \varepsilon \nu\)). Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

There were those in Pergamum who were trying to teach the people of the church in Pergamum to sin. As a result, they were guilty of allowing within their number some who held the teaching of Balaam. About Balaam, in his commentary, George E. Ladd explains,

Balak, king of Moab, threatened by the Israelites, had invited the prophet Balaam to curse them. Balaam had been restrained by God and to Balak’s disgust had blessed rather than cursed (Numbers 22-24). Subsequent to this, however, Israel had let herself become involved in harlotry and in the idolatrous worship of Baal of Peor (Numbers 25:1-3), and this sin was attributed to the advice of Balaam (Numbers 31:16). In our text Balaam is a prototype of those who promote compromise with paganism in idolatry and immorality.108

Therefore, the people who held the teaching of Balaam were people who claimed that compromise was the wisest method. They were encouraging Pergamene Christians to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. As a result, there were people who ate food sacrificed to idols among Pergamene Christians.109

There were people who committed sexual immorality among them.110

---

108George E. Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John, 47.
109“Food sacrificed to idols (\(\mu \epsilon \nu\))” is mentioned ten times in the New Testament (Acts 15:29; 21:25; 1 Corinthians 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19, 28; Revelation 2:14, 20). Concerning the food sacrificed to idols, Robert H. Mounce states that “things sacrificed to idols” probably refers to meat which was eaten at pagan feasts rather than that sold in the open market after having been offered to idols. See, Robert H. Mounce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation, 98.

Leon Morris states that it is more likely that both refer to idolatrous practices. Feasting on sacrificial meat and licentious conduct were usual accompaniments of the worship of idols, both in Old and New Testament times.\textsuperscript{111}

Actually, the Bible prohibits eating food sacrificed to idols. Numbers 25:2-3 (KJV) says, “And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.” Also, Psalms 106:28-29 (NIV) says, “They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods; they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them.”

Also, Acts 15:29 (NASB) says, “the believers should abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.” 1 Corinthians 10:20 (NLT) says, “but suppose someone warns you that this meat has been offered to an idol. Don’t eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you.” Therefore, to eat food sacrificed to idols is sin to God. There were people who ate food sacrificed to idols among Pergamene Christians. So, Jesus Christ condemned that.

The Bible also prohibits sexual immorality. Mark 5:32 (KJV) says, “but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” Ephesus 5:3 (NIV) says, “but among you there must not be even

a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”

In the Old Testament, the idolatry of Israel is frequently condemned through the use of the metaphor of prostitution and sexual immorality (Jeremiah 3:2; 13:27; Ezekiel 16:15-58; 23:1-49; 43:7; Hosea 5:4; 6:10).\(^{112}\) Actually, the idolatry of Israel and sexual immorality were inseparable in Israel’s history. However, Ephesus 5:3 says, “But fornication, let it not be once named among you”

To commit sexual immorality is a sin against God. There were people who committed sexual immorality among Pergamene Christians. Furthermore, the church in Pergamum had an even bigger problem; their indifference about the people who held the teaching of Balaam in church. This was a compromise with the society at that time.

At that time, many people who lived in Pergamum ate food sacrificed to idols and had fallen to sexual immorality. This was the social atmosphere and this atmosphere was formed within the church in Pergamum. The distinction between the church and the world became blurred. They were too tolerant of sin. So, the risen Jesus Christ condemned them, saying, “Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” The meaning of this Word is that Pergamene Christians because of the teaching of the Nicolaitans is repeating sin that Israel committed because of Balaam.

This aspect is a contrast to the church in Ephesus. The church in Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6), but the church in Pergamum had those who held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15). Although the church in Ephesus was the church that kept God’s truth, it was a church which lost its love. Although the church in Pergamum had love, it was the church which lost God’s truth.

\(^{112}\)David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation1-5*, 188.
and compromised with the world. Therefore, the church in Pergamum received condemnation from the risen Jesus Christ.

John Stott writes that the church in Pergamum had compromised two truths which are implicit in the letter to Pergamum, which was the truth about Christ and holiness.  

Christians need to preserve the balance of the Bible which tells them to hold the truth in love, to love others in the truth.

The guard of God’s truth is a major concern of Jesus Christ for His church. He is not only anxious that we should love Him, and that we should suffer bravely for Him, but also that we should believe in Him and hold fast to the truth about Him. Therefore, the church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love, the church that suffers for Christ’s sake, and the church that keeps God’s truth is a healthy church, which Jesus Christ wants.

The Prescription

Like the church in Ephesus and Smyrna, the church in Pergamum failed to keep God’s truth and received the prescription from the risen Jesus Christ. In Revelation 2:16 (NIV), the risen Jesus Christ says, “Repent (προστατάμεθα) therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Like the church in Ephesus, the risen Jesus Christ’s prescription was “Repent.”

The word “Repent (προστατάμεθα) is aorist imperative (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 26:20).


114 Ibid., 52.
Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19). This emphasizes urgent action. That is, this means urgent repentance.\footnote{Sang Chan Lee, The Seven Churches in Asia Minor, 199.} Robert H. Mounce comments on this passage: Only a portion of the church has fallen prey to the pernicious doctrine of the Balaamites, but all are guilty of not taking action against their presence.\footnote{Robert H. Mounce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation, 98.}

To repent means that the church should return again to God. If they do not repent, Jesus Christ will judge. However, Jesus Christ promises, “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna.\footnote{This has puzzled commentators for centuries. According to commentators, the interpretation differs about the hidden manna. However, more probably the meaning is simply that the believer who overcomes will receive celestial food not available to the world (cf. John 4:31-33). See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. 68. For reference, John Stott spoke that the hidden manna symbolizes Jesus Christ. See, John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 63.} I will also give him a white stone\footnote{Many views have been made about the meaning of the white stone. There are perhaps seven or more plausible interpretations. It is not easy to understand. However, one clear thing is that the white stone is a reward to be inherited in heaven.} with a new name\footnote{John Stott states that the new name also symbolizes Jesus Christ. See, John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 63. However, Leon Morris says that the new name represents a new character. See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 68. And, Robert H. Mounce holds that the new name is more likely the name of the victor himself. See, Robert H. Mounce, The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation, 98. While interpretations differ about the new name, it is clear that, a long with the hidden manna, and the white stone, the new name is a reward to be inherited in heaven.} written on it, known only to him who receives it (Revelation 2:17 NIV).” Jesus Christ wanted them to repent. He wanted them to keep God’s truth and the victory. He promised such persons reward of Heaven and blessing. The message to Pergamum is a message to Christians today as well. Today, many churches are compromising in the world. Many churches are losing direction to go forward. That is, like the church in Pergamum, the distinction between the church and the world is blurred. This is crisis of His Church. However, Jesus Christ wants to keep
God’s truth for His church to be strong.

Many scholars and pastors emphasize God’s truth as characteristics of a healthy church. In the 1959 essay “On the Councils and the Church,” Martin Luther articulates seven tangible marks of the church. One of the tangible marks of the church that Martin Luther speaks is “the preached word of God.” That is, God’s people and churches cannot be without God’s truth.

As mentioned earlier, in *Marks of a Healthy Church*, John MacArthur emphasized Bible teaching and preaching as eighth characteristics of a healthy church. He defines that the heartbeat of the church is a dynamic presentation of the truth of God. And, Wayne Grudem points out “biblical doctrine” as sign of a more-pure church. Also, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church: New Expanded Edition*, Mark Dever describes on nine marks of a healthy church. The second mark of a healthy church that he speaks is biblical theology. In his second mark of a healthy church, he writes about the importance of to understand the truth that the Bible says about God and about us.

A healthy church which faithfully provides the Word helps the church to be the church. Christians of a healthy church keep God’s Word and God’s truth. Therefore, the church that keeps God’s truth is a healthy church biblically, and is what Jesus Christ wants.

---


THE CHURCH THAT LIVES A HOLY LIFE

The church in Thyatira, Revelation 2:18-29

Historical-Geographical Setting

The fourth characteristic of a healthy church can be known through the church in Thyatira is to live a holy life. The fourth church to which Christ addressed a message was the church in Thyatira. The word Thyatira means “continual incense” and has reference to the bruising of incense to cause a fragrant smell.124

Concerning the letter to Thyatira, in his book, William Barclay describes that it is an odd fact that the longest of the letters to the seven churches was written to the church in the smallest and least important of the seven towns.125 In his book, Colin J. Hemer writes that the longest and most difficult of the seven letters is addressed to the least known, least important, and least remarkable of the cities126 The city of Thyatira was certainly smaller and less important than the previous three cities. To interpret the letter is difficult.127

Thyatira was located about 40 miles to the south-east of Pergamum – almost midway between the Caicus in the north and the Hermus in the south.128 Thyatira was founded in the third century B.C. as a military outpost by Saleucus Nicator (though a

124William G. Heslop, Riches From Revelation, 49.
125William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 64.
126Colin J. Hemer, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia: in Their Local Setting, 106.
small settlement had probably existed there earlier) in order to have a buffer against his neighbor Lysimachus.129

Thyatira was not a center of religious life and Caesar worship. It had temples of Artemis and Apollo, but they were not famous.130 If Thyatira was not a great religious center, it certainly was a great commercial center due to wool, linen, apparel, dyed stuffs, leatherwork, tanning, and excellent bronze work. Associated with its commerce was a wide trade guild or labor union network, which must have played an outstanding role in the social, political, economic, and religious life of the city.131

The Origins of the Church in Thyatira

The origin of the church in Thyatira is doubtful, but we can guess that the founding of the church in Thyatira was by the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:10). His first fruit in Europe was Lydia, who became a believer at Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:11-15).132 In his book, Colin J. Hemer guesses, “Lydia may have been an influential representative of the θάτιρα that Philippi, but nothing is subsequently recorded of her, and it is unknown whether she returned to Thyatira or played any part in its evangelization. Her presence in Philippi, however, reflects the continuing connection of the Thyatiran colonists with their Macedonian homeland.”133

---


131 The seller of purple came from Thyatira that Lydia (Acts 16:14). She was a distributor of garments made of a purple dye known as “Turkey red” and no doubt a member of the dyers’ guild. See, Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation*, 443.


133 Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia: in Their Local Setting*, 110.
The Diagnosis

Like the church in Ephesus and Pergamum, this church received a commendation and a condemnation from Jesus Christ at the same time.

A Commendation

As other letters, the risen Jesus Christ commends the church in Thyatira. In Revelation 2:19 (KJV), Jesus Christ commends, “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”

In verse 19 there is another example of Greek the epexegetic καί ἐπεξεργάζομαι. William Barclay remarks on Greek the epexegetic καί ἐπεξεργάζομαι:

It does not simply add something to that which goes before; it introduces something which further explains and defines that which goes before. So, then the translation of verse 19 should run: “I know your works - I mean your charity, and your service, your faith and your patience, and all that you do.”

Therefore, the church in Thyatira had four honorable qualities. They were charity, service, faith, and patience. Leon Morris comments on this passage: The opening thy works is explained in a series of praiseworthy Christian qualities: charity, better “love,” than which nothing is greater: service, for this is what the Master expects to find His servants doing; faith, for continuing trustful reliance on Christ is basic; and patience which is really “steadfastness.”

The commendation that the church in Thyatira received from Jesus Christ is similar to the commendation that the Thessalonians believers received from Paul. In 1

---

134 William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 73.
Thessalonians 1:3 (NIV), Paul commends that we continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul commends three things here. It is work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by hope. Therefore, it included all the commendation that the church in Thyatira received.

As John Stott says, Thyatira not only rivaled Ephesus in busy Christian service, but exhibited the love which Ephesus lacked, preserved the faith which was imperiled at Pergamum, and shared with Smyrna the virtue of patient endurance in tribulation.136 Further, the church in Thyatira is commended for its increasing works, for the last were more than the first from the risen Jesus Christ.137 G. Campbell Morgan writes that there had been progress and development resulting from this intermediate group of facts, the outward and evident activity of the church had broadened and deepened.138

As time passed, they were growing and progressing as Christian. However, although Jesus Christ did commend them for this, the church in Thyatira had part to be condemned.

A Condemnation

In Revelation 2:20 (NIV), the risen Jesus Christ condemns, “Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food


sacrificed to idols.” The reason that the church in Thyatira received condemnation was due to their toleration for the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess.\(^{139}\)

George E. Ladd comments that they recognized the presence of the false prophetess; they recognized also the evil character of her teaching, but they tolerantly refused to deal with her.\(^{140}\) Actually, the church in Ephesus hated the practices of the Nicolaitans and could not tolerate them (Revelation 2:6); the church in Pergamum had some who held the teaching of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:14, 15); but the church in Thyatira actually tolerated Jezebel and her brood (Revelation 2:20).\(^{141}\)

She was encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols, and commit sexual sin. John Stott says that the church in Thyatira displayed love and faith, service and endurance, but holiness is not included among its qualities.\(^ {142}\) Like his speech, the church in Thyatira did not live holy and pure life because of Jezebel’s false teaching. Therefore, they received condemnation from the risen Jesus Christ.

This condemnation is the same condemnation that the church in Pergamum received. The church in Pergamum committed sin because of the Nicolaitans’ false teaching. The church in Thyatira committed the same sin because of Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess.

However, there are differences between the two situations. Michael Wilcock explains these differences:

\(^{139}\)Concerning Jezebel, the interpretation differs among scholars. However, the clear thing is that she was as wicked and dangerous an influence in the church in Thyatira as Jezebel had been in Israel. See, John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 69.


\(^{141}\)In the case of the church in Thyatira, the reason that they compromise easily may be that sin entered through woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. See, Seong Su Kwon, *Revelation*, 81.

\(^{142}\)John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 68.
Against beleaguered Christians like those at Pergamum, Satan uses the pressures of the world to “squeeze” them “into its own mould” (Romans 12:2, JBP); but where the church is noted for its damage not by pressure without but by poison within. So, in Thyatira a particular woman takes on both the evil character of Jezebel and the prophetic role of Balaam, and begins to teach, as if from God, new “deep things” which some members of this strong and lively church are only too willing to explore.\(^{143}\)

The biblical metaphor is that the true God is Israel’s husband; the false gods are her lovers (Jeremiah 3:14, 20; Ezekiel 16:15-43; Hosea 2). Jezebel, like Balaam, was in the Old Testament story, an outsider who seduced God’s bride into this kind of unfaithfulness (1 Kings 16:31-33).

In the Old Testament, the original Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and Ahab, king of Israel, had taken her as his wife. She had brought gods and goddesses who she served into Israel. She had introduced the worship of their strange gods and goddesses into Israel, and had thus defiled the worship of the true God. She was one of the most evil characters of the Old Testament, who attempted to combine the worship of Israel with the worship of the idol Baal.\(^{144}\) Like the Old Testament’s Jezebel, Thyatira’s Jezebel was encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols, and commit sexual sin. She was corrupting the faith of the Christians of Thyatira.

**The Prescription**

The church in Thyatira tolerated Jezebel and her brood. As a result, they did not live holy and pure lives. Jesus Christ gave the opportunity of repentance to them.


\(^{144}\)John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 74.
However, they did not take the opportunity. Revelation 2:21 (NIV) says, “I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.”

According to His Word, it seems that the opportunity of repentance is already given to Jezebel. It is not known what form the opportunity was. The clear thing is that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Also, God wants all men to be saved. This mind is the same even for the church in Thyatira. However, Jezebel did not wish it. She does not wish to repent, as the Greek phrase of verse 21 should be literally translated. She did not repent.

Jesus Christ says, “So I will cast her on a bed () of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds (Revelation 2:22-23 NIV).” According to this Jezebel did not repent and those who commit adultery with her will surely be punished, unless they repent of their ways. The risen Jesus Christ does not stop with searching hearts and minds but brings recompense according to deeds: for faithfulness, reward; for unfaithfulness, judgment. Jesus Christ judges evil but He also offers atonement to those who have fallen, if they repent.

There was a godly remnant that had not defiled them in Thyatira. Jesus Christ says, “First, I will not impose any other burden on you” (Revelation 2:24 NIV), and

145 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 74.
146 The interpretation of the bed differs among scholars. The word translated ‘bed’ is ‘,’ There are two possible meanings.  is also the word for a banqueting-couch, and, if that meaning be taken, the meaning is: I will strike her down as she sits at her forbidden feasts. If  is taken to mean a bed, the meaning will be: If she goes on as she is doing, she will be cast upon a bed of sickness, and disaster will come upon her. See, William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, 76. Most take it to be a bed of sickness or pain. See, Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. 72.
then adds: “Only hold on to what you have until I come” (Revelation 2:25 NIV). “What you have” may be love, service, faith, and thy patience here (Revelation 2:19), or their insight into Jezebel’s teaching and evil deeds. The important thing is only to hold on it.

Jesus Christ promises rewards to overcomers. The promises to the overcomers and to people who keep His deeds until the end are authority over the nation and the morning star. Revelation 2:26-28 (NASB) says:

And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.

The first promise is a quotation from Psalm 2:8-9. Jesus Christ promises that He will give to the overcomer authority that is received from God. The second promise of Jesus Christ to the overcomer concerns his gift of the morning star.

Jesus Christ wants Christians today, as well as from the church in Thyatira, to get these blessings. Therefore, genuine Christians must not give up on earth in the battle for a holy life. People, including Christians, do not naturally hate sin. People generally love sin and are loath to part with it. However, as God is holy, God requires a holy life to His people (1 Peter 1:15-16). God has called His people to be holy, not to live impure

---

150 This Psalm was always held to be a prophecy and a picture of the triumphant work of God’s conquering Messiah. See, William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 79.
lives (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Holiness of life is indispensable characteristic of the real Christian and of a healthy church.

In *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem describes the twelve signs of a more pure church. In his book, he emphasizes “personal holiness of life among members” as sign of a more pure church. Jesus Christ wants His people who are God’s children to live a holy life. Therefore, the church that lives a holy life presents a true aspect of what a healthy church is.

**THE CHURCH THAT IS SPIRITUALLY ALIVE**

**The church in Sardis, 3:1-6**

**Historical-Geographical Setting**

The fifth characteristic of a healthy church can be seen in the church in Sardis, which is alive spiritually. The word Sardis means “to escape.” It signifies an escaping from a very dangerous position or condition.

Sardis, one of the oldest and most storied cities in Asia Minor, was located 30 miles south of Thyatira. Geographical position made it one of the great business cities in the world. Concerning Sardis’ greatest advantage, William Barclay explains,

Sardis’ greatest advantage was that it was the center of a knot of five different roads. One road led north-west to Thyatira and then on to Pergamum; another ran west to Smyrna, 54 miles away; another ran east and out to Phrygia; another ran south-east to Philadelphia, and then on to the towns of the Maeander valley; another led south-west to Ephesus, 63 miles away and linked Sardis with

---

the valley of the Cayster. A city centered like that could not be otherwise than a magnet to draw trade and wealth to itself.\textsuperscript{155}

In B.C. 6th century, Sardis was one of the strongest cities in ancient times as the kingdom of Lydia’s capital. In B.C. 549, it became a dependency of Persia by reduction of Cyrus. In B.C. 334, it became a dependency of Greece by reduction of Alexander the Great. After that, in B.C. 214, it became a dependency of Rome by reduction of Antiochus the Great.\textsuperscript{156}

It gradually fell on evil days and lost its earlier renown, until in A.D. 17 it was devastated by an earthquake. Through the generosity of the Emperor Tiberius, who remitted its taxes for five years, the city was rebuilt. However, it never regained its former glory.\textsuperscript{157}

Sardis was a huge center of the wool industry. Like Thyatira, it was a market of expensive dye. Sardis was not a center of Caesar worship. It was a center of the Cybele worship.\textsuperscript{158} Sardis was extravagant and extremely lewd.

**The Origins of the Church in Sardis**

Nothing is known of the origins of the church in Sardis, nor of its early growth, except what may be gathered from this letter.\textsuperscript{159} It is reasonable to guess that it could have been during Paul’s three years stay in nearby Ephesus (Acts 19:10, 26; 20:31).\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{155}William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 80.

\textsuperscript{156}Sang Chan Lee, *The Seven Churches in Asia Minor*, 205.

\textsuperscript{157}John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 82.

\textsuperscript{158}Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 48.

\textsuperscript{159}John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 82.

\textsuperscript{160}Seong Su Kwon, *Revelation*, 92.
The Diagnosis

In his commentary, *Revelation*, Alan F. Johnson writes that two letters contain no word of commendation (Sardis and Laodicea). Actually, unlike other churches, the risen Jesus Christ begins with condemnation without commendation from verse one.

A Condemnation

In Revelation 3:1 (NASB), the risen Jesus Christ condemns, “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead...” Robert H. Mounce comments that subsequent verses indicate that while the entire church had not fallen into a state of complete spiritual death (vss. 4-5), the majority had so fully compromised with the pagan environment that the church was Christian in name only (i.e., “nominally” Christian).

According to this word, they had the reputation of being alive. This church was a church that was respected by the surrounding churches. This church did not have references about Balaam, Nicolaitants and Jezebel. People who visited this church might have said “This church is alive.” All might have recognized the church in Sardis as a flourishing, active, successful church, except Jesus Christ, but they did not in fact measure up to the standard He expects. However, in reality they were spiritually dead. That is, materially it was alive; spiritually it was dead.

---

Man looks at the outward appearance. The church in Sardis mistook that to think they were alive. The Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Although the outward appearance of the church may be alive, the heart was dead spiritually.

This problem is the same today. Today, many churches do not diagnose their own spiritual condition. It can not be said that the church is alive spiritually even if many people gather in the church. Also, it can not be said that the church is alive spiritually even if many people serve and gather in the church. People can say that this church is alive. However, the church may have died spiritually in Jesus’ viewpoint, even while it may be seen as alive in a human’s view. Jesus Christ wants His church to be alive spiritually.

**The Prescription**

The problem with the church in Sardis was that they did not know their spiritual condition. The risen Jesus Christ gives the remedy to this problem. In Revelation 3:2-3 (NIV), Jesus Christ says that “Wake up (γυνακευομαι) and strengthen (συνεργησομαι) what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember (μνημονευομαι), therefore, what you have received and heard; obey (κοινωνοιμαι) it, and repent (καταλειπομαι). But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

---

In Greek, there are two different words that indicate “death”: θανατος and θαθενει. θανατος pertains to being liable to death (that which will eventually die). θαθενει pertains to being dead. was used in this text. See, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida. eds, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains Second Edition Volume 1*, 267.
The first remedy is to wake up (γυς απελπισμένως). Robert H. Mounce says that this word should be translated “show yourself watchful” rather than “Wake up.”

A. Plummer also comments on this word:

“The use of γυς απελπισμένως implies that the watchful state is not the normal one— a change is needed before the watching can come about. The use of the present participle instead of an adjective (“watching” for “watchful”) makes the charge more definite; not merely “be of a watchful character,” but “become a watcher.”

Therefore, the church in Sardis needs to reverse their attitudes. They lived in complacency. They might have lived in self-conceit in thinking their church was the best. However, they had fallen asleep spiritually (cf. Romans 6:13; 2 Timothy 3:5). So, Jesus Christ told them to “Wake up.”

The second remedy is to strengthen what remains and is about to die. They did not lose all entirely. Because there is something that still remains. John Stott comments on this passage: In the church’s sultry religious torpor a fresh breath of life-giving air from the Holy Spirit could be felt. Within that worldly congregation a godly remnant was left.

God always reserved remnants. In 1 Kings 19:18 (NIV), God says that “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.” And, Isaiah 6:13 says that the tree of Israel would be felled, and the holy seed would remain like a stump in the land. Also, there were

---


remnants to the church in Sardis. So, Jesus Christ says for them that “Strengthen what remains and is about to die.”

John Stott explains that the word used for “strengthen” was often used in the early church for the nurture of believers.\(^{168}\) That means that “nurture what remains and is about to die.” For, He has not found their deeds complete in the sight of God. Jesus Christ wants them to present complete deeds before God. So, Jesus Christ says that be nurture persons who die spiritually.

The third remedy is to remember what they have received and heard. The risen Jesus Christ had told the church in Ephesus to remember that forsaken first love (Revelation 2:5). The church in Sardis is told to remember what they have received and heard too.\(^{169}\) William Barclay comments on this phrase: “Remember” is a present imperative: and the present imperative expresses continuous action. It means: Go on remembering; don’t ever let yourself forget.\(^{170}\)

Therefore, they should remember without forgetting what they have received and heard continuously. John Stott describes that the shortest road to repentance is remembrance.\(^{171}\) The risen Jesus Christ wants the church is Sardis to be alive spiritually. He says to remember what they have received and heard.

\(^{168}\)Ibid., 88.

\(^{169}\)There are various interpretations about what they received and heard. John Stott states that the Holy Spirit is what is received and heard. See, John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 90-93. However, Alan F. Johnson writes, “What they received was the apostolic tradition of the gospel; what they heard probably were the teachings of the apostles and prophets who brought the gospel to them.” See, Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation*, 449.


The fourth remedy is to obey. Alan F. Johnson comments that “this word meant they would once more start obeying () the truth of Christ’s Word.”

Hold fast (present) enjoins a continuing activity. Therefore, the church in Sardis must continuously obey what they have received and heard.

The final remedy is to repent. This imperative () is the aorist imperative which implies one definite moment when we turned our backs upon sin and our faces to Jesus Christ. Therefore, like the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Laodicea, they are urged to repent (Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:19). They will revive again spiritually through repentance. However, if they do not wake up, the risen Jesus Christ will come like a thief and judge them.

As other letters, the last part of this letter ends with Christ’s rewards. Even if the majority of the church was secularized thoroughly, there were a few people in Sardis who had not soiled their garments (Revelation 3:4). They will walk with Jesus Christ in white, for they are worthy. He that overcomes, they shall be clothed in white raiment.

The Bible called those who are clothed in white “worthy” (Revelation 3:4). They are pure and will walk with Jesus Christ in white. They enjoy fellowship with the risen Jesus Christ in heaven.

Second, Jesus Christ will not erase their name from the book of life. He will confess their name before God and His angels (Revelation 3:5). Alan F. Johnson explains the meaning of this phrase in that it is the strongest affirmation that death can

---


never separate us from Christ and His life (Romans 8:38-39). Therefore, they can not be separated from God. Jesus Christ promised them this reward.

The message to Sardis is a message to Christians today as well. Jesus Christ wants His church to be alive spiritually. He is awakening churches which are dead spiritually like the church in Sardis. He is looking for a spiritually alive church and through such a church; the Kingdom of God may be extended.

There is difference of expression, but many scholars and pastors emphasize being alive spiritually as a characteristic of a healthy church. In Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, Wayne Grudem describes signs of a more-pure church. The tenth sign is personal holiness of life among members. He emphasizes a holy life as characteristic of a healthy church.

John MacArthur identifies godly leaders as characteristic of a healthy church. Jesus Christ wants to rule His church through people that is spiritually alive. Godly leader leads His church and people spiritually. If church leaders that are spiritually alive lead a church, the church can become a healthy church. That is, people that are spiritually alive make a healthy church.

Also, Christian A. Schwarz, Waldo J. Werning, and Robert White mention an inspiring worship service as one of characteristics of a healthy church. His people experience God’s presence through inspiring worship. When they experience God’s presence in inspiring worship, they meet God. In Psalms 23:3 says that He restores my

---

175 Alan F. Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation, 449.

176 Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, 874.

THE CHURCH THAT PERSEVERES IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS

The church in Philadelphia, Revelation 3:7-13

Historical-Geographical Setting

The sixth characteristic of a healthy church can be seen in the church in Philadelphia. It is to persevere in difficult situations and environments. Philadelphia means “brotherly love.” The city of Philadelphia was located in Lydia about 28 miles south-east of Sardis. Although Philadelphia is the most recently established of the seven cities of the Revelation, there is some confusion as to whether Eumenes II, king of Pergamum, or his younger brother Attalus II Philadelphus, who reigned from B.C. 159 to 138, founded the city. What is certain is that its name commemorates the loyalty and devotion of Attalus II to his brother.

Although Philadelphia as a city was not very ancient, it was one of the most strategic sites in the world. This strategic location at the juncture of trade routes leading...
to Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia (the imperial post route from Rome via Troas passed through Philadelphia and continued eastward to the high central plateau) had helped it earn the title “gateway to the East” and made it a city of commercial importance.\textsuperscript{181}

In his book, William Barclay explains on Philadelphia’s function: “Philadelphia had been built with the deliberate intention that it might become a missionary city. Beyond Philadelphia lay the wilds of Phrygia and the barbarous tribes; and it was intended that the function of Philadelphia should be to spread the Greek language, the Greek way of life, the Greek civilization throughout the regions beyond.”\textsuperscript{182}

Philadelphia was constantly suffering from great earthquakes (cf. Revelation 3:12).\textsuperscript{183} Like Sardis, it was destroyed in the catastrophe of A.D. 17,\textsuperscript{184} and was assisted to rebuild by a donation of Tiberius the Roman Emperor.\textsuperscript{185}

---


\textsuperscript{182}William Barclay, \textit{Letters to the Seven Churches}, 95.


\textsuperscript{184}A. Plummer, \textit{The Pulpit Commentary: The Revelation of St. John the Divine}, 110. Concerning the great earthquakes A.D. 17, Robert L. Thomas comments, “In A.D. 17 an earthquake, unparalleled in the annals of history up to that time, destroyed twelve cities in the Lydian Valley, including Sardis and Philadelphia. It was this earthquake that brought Philadelphia to the attention of ancient writers. Three years later, the Greek writer Starbo tells of a lingering fear of the repeat of such a catastrophe that plagued the city subsequently, with aftershocks serving as reminders of the continuing danger. Though Sardis suffered more serious initial damage, Philadelphia was apparently nearer the epicenter of the quake and suffered substantial damage for a period of time long after the initial shocks. Some of the city’s residents even chose to live outside the city in hurt erected a distance away rather than return to rebuild their house in the city.” See, Robert L. Thomas, \textit{An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 1-7}, 271. The city was probably slow to recover, and its fears may have been renewed by later shocks in the area, notably that which destroyed Laodicea in A.D. 60. There is probably a reference to the conditions of life in Philadelphia in the promise to the conqueror: “he shall no more go outside” (Revelation 3:12). See, Colin J. Hemer, \textit{The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia: in Their Local Setting}, 157.

However, concerning Philadelphia’ greatest advantage, A. Plummer explains that the advantage of its position, commanding the way to the pass between the Hermus valley and the Maeauder valley, and the richness of its vine-produce, seem to have induced the inhabitants to cling to the site.\footnote{A. Plummer, \textit{The Pulpit Commentary: The Revelation of St. John the Divine}, 110.}

Philadelphia was also a famous center of heathen worship. Not unnaturally her principal god was Dionysius, the god of wine. Also, Philadelphia had so many gods and so many temples that sometimes men called her ‘little Athens.’ William Barclay describes that to walk through her temple—scattered streets were to be reminded of Athens, the center of the worship of the Olympian gods.\footnote{William Barclay, \textit{Letters to the Seven Churches}, 98.}

**The Origins of the Church in Philadelphia**

Although nothing is known about the origins of the church in Philadelphia, William Ramsay quotes Eusebius’ book “Ecclesiastical History.” He says, “In A.D. 100-160 flourished under prophetess’s ministry named Ammia who was universally recognized as ranking with Agabus and the four daughters of Philip, as one of the few in the later time who were truly gifted with the prophetic power.”\footnote{William Mitchell Ramsay, \textit{The Letters to the Seven Churches: Updated Edition}, ed., Mark W. Wilson, 292.}

**The Diagnosis**

As already said, the churches which did not receive a condemnation among the seven churches of Asia were only the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna. The
churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna received only sympathy and encouragement from Jesus Christ.

**A Commendation**

The sixth church to which Christ addressed a message was the church in Philadelphia, in which the risen Jesus Christ expresses warm approval of His people. In Revelation 3:8 (NASB), the risen Jesus Christ commends, “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”

Like other churches, He knows their deeds. The church in Philadelphia has a little power. John Stott guesses that perhaps the congregation was small or perhaps it was composed largely of the lower classes of Roman society, so that it had little influence on the city. Therefore, the Christians of Philadelphia lived in difficult situations and environments. They were clearly socially persecuted. However, they had kept His Word and had not denied His name. That is, the Christians of Philadelphia had stood firm.

Like the church in Philadelphia, if there is social persecution to modern Christians, they will give up their belief. They will go to wide path. They may not deny Christ directly. However, many Christians will compromise in the world. This phenomenon already can be known through Bible history and other churches of Asia.

The Christians of Philadelphia did not compromise with the world. They kept His Word and did not deny His name. The risen Jesus Christ said to love them

---

(Revelation 3:9) and they have kept the Word of His perseverance (Revelation 3:10). So, the risen Jesus Christ says, “I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10 NASB). Therefore, Jesus Christ wants His church to persevere in difficult situations and environments.

The Prescription

The church in Philadelphia received great commendations from Jesus Christ. For, they persevered in fierce oppositions. First, the Christians of Philadelphia received social persecution because of their little power (Revelation 3:8). Second, the Christians of Philadelphia received persecution from the Jews (Revelation 3:9). They claimed to be Jews, but they were not Jews. They were the synagogue of Satan

\[
\text{   }^{190}
\]

Third, the Christians of Philadelphia received the threat of future tribulation. With one breath he warns them of coming trial, and with the next urges them to step through the open door without fear. Therefore, the threat of future tribulation was another affliction of the Christians of Philadelphia. They persevered through three fierce oppositions. So, Jesus Christ says to them who did persevere in fierce opposition that “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (Revelation 3:11 NIV). Leon Morris comments on this passage that “The present

---

190 About the synagogue of Satan, Alan F. Johnson explains: A synagogue of Satan (   ) appears to describe a Jewish element that vehemently denied Jesus as the Messiah and that actively persecuted others who made this claim. A true Jew in the view of Jews like John and Paul is one who has found forgiveness and life in Jesus the Messiah, while a false Jew is one who rejects those who believe in Jesus and openly persecutes them; such a one is an antichrist (1 John 2:22). See, Alan F. Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation, 453.
imperative rendered *hold* … *fast* means “keep a firm grip on,” “hold on to.” No-one, of course, can steal their crown.”

Therefore, the Christians of Philadelphia must keep a firm grip on to what they have, so that no one will take their crown. The crown is \( \text{φυγάξ} \). It was the wreath awarded to the winner of an athletic contest, and used of the festive garland worn at banquets by all the guests. Jesus Christ wants them to receive a crown. Therefore, they have to keep a firm grip on to what they have. That is, they have to persevere in difficult situations and environments.

As in other letters, the last part of this letter ends by Christ’s rewards. In Revelation 3:12 (NASB), Jesus Christ promises, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.”

John Stott comments, “If we risk our name for Christ in this world, then on our pillar in the next, three names will be permanently engraved. The first will be the name

---


193 Various interpretations for the figure of the pillar “in the temple of My God” have been suggested. R. H. Charles notes that it was customary for the provincial priest of the imperial cultus at the close of his year of office to erect his statue in the confines of the temple. See, R. H. Charles, *The International Critical Commentary: The Revelation of ST. John I Vols*, 91. However, Colin J. Hemer writes that no provincial temple of the cult existed in Philadelphia until its neocorate was conferred about A.D. 213. See, J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia: in Their Local Setting*, 166. Also, Leon Morris does not agree with Charles’s interpretation. He refutes, “This may be so \( \text{φυγάξ} \), rendered upon him (the believer) is understood instead to mean ‘upon it’ (the pillar). This is possible grammatically, but not necessary. In other parts of this book we have the name written on the heads of the faithful (14:1; 22:4).” See, Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 81. Others suggest the twin pillars (Jachin and Boaz) in Solomon’s temple that bore personal names, the colonnades of the Artemisium at Ephesus, or the occasional sculpturing of pillars in human shapes. See, Robert H. Mounce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation*, 121.
of God, the second the name of the New Jerusalem (the church triumphant), and the third Christ’s, own new name.”

To the overcomer is given the first promise of being made a pillar in the temple of God. A further promise to them is that Christ will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from God, and his own new name.

Christ’s promise is applied to us. If we do persevere in difficult situations and environments like the church in Philadelphia, He will give us the same rewards. Hebrew 10:36 (NIV) says, “You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” God wants to reward His people. However, God requires His people to persevere in difficult situations and environment because suffering forces His people to look to God and depend on him instead of themselves. To persevere is hard. However, the secret of perseverance is to remember that His people’s pain is temporary but their reward will be eternal.

In Luke 21:19, Jesus Christ encourages, “By your endurance you will gain your lives.” Jesus speaks of enduring even if the end comes. Romans 8:24 (NASB) says, “But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” True Christians are people who desires that are not seen. True Christians must persevere. Christian who desires that are not seen can persevere in difficult situations and environments. Through such a people, a healthy church is made. Therefore, the church

---

194 John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, 110. Alan F. Johnson annotates that Christ’s new name could be either the unknown name that he alone knows, signifying his absolute power over all other powers (19:12), or the new name of Christ given to the believer, i.e., his possession by Christ through redemption (Isaiah 62:2; 65:15). See, Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation*, 455.
that perseveres in difficult situations and environments, it is true aspect of a healthy church that is biblical and one in which Jesus Christ wants.

**THE CHURCH THAT HAS A SPIRITUAL PASSION FOR CHRIST**

**The church in Laodicea, Revelation 3:14-22**

**Historical-Geographical Setting**

The seventh characteristic of a healthy church can be known through the church in Laodicea, it is a spiritual passion for Christ. The seventh church to which Christ addressed a message was the church in Laodicea. The word Laodicea has reference to the customs or rule of the people. LAO means “laity” and Dike “custom” or “rule.”¹⁹⁵

The city of Laodicea was located 43 miles south-east of Philadelphia, and about 100 miles from Ephesus. Along with Colosse and Hierapolis, it was one of the cities in the fertile Lycus valley. Antiochus II fortified the earlier city of Diospolis as a Seleucid outpost between B.C. 262 and 253, named it after his wife or sister, Laodice.¹⁹⁶ In his book, concerning a commending geographical position, William Barclay describes: “Laodicea was a town of great commercial prosperity, for it controlled the trade which flowed down the river valley towards the sea-coast. To add to its importance, there came three great roads to center upon Laodicea. There came the road from the sea-coast from Attaleia and Perga. There came the road from north-west which linked her with Philadelphia and Sardis. There came the road from the north-east which came in from Dorylaeum and from Phrygia.”¹⁹⁷

---


In B.C. 133, Laodicea became part of the Roman Empire. In Roman times, Laodicea became the wealthiest city in Phrygia. Prosperity of agriculture and commerce brought the banking industry to Laodicea. When Cicero, the Roman statesman and philosopher of the last day of the Republic, was traveling in the East in B.C. 51, it was in Laodicea that he cashed his letters of credit.\textsuperscript{198}

The most striking indication of the city’s wealth is that following the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60 the city was rebuilt without financial aid from Rome.\textsuperscript{199} The local inhabitants were proud of their city. A very considerable part of the wealth of Laodicea came from the cloth and the clothing industry. Known for its soft, raven-black wool, it outstripped other garment manufacturers in the district and became wealthier still.\textsuperscript{200} Laodicea had a famous school of medicine; and a special ointment known as “Phrygian powder,” famous for its cure of eye defects, was either manufactured or distributed there, as were ear ointments also. Near the temple of the special god associated with healing, Men Karou (who later became identified with Asclepius), there was a market for trading all sorts of goods.\textsuperscript{201}

**The Origins of the Church in Laodicea**

\textsuperscript{198}Ibid., 109-111.


\textsuperscript{201}Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation*, 456.

Concerning the Men Karou and a market, Ramsay explains, “The Men Karou was the original god of the valley. His temple was the center of society and administration, intercourse and trade, as well as of religion,—or rather, that primitive religion was a system of performing those duties and purpose in the orderly way that the god approved and taught—for the valley in which the Lycus and the Meander meet. A market was held under the protection of his sacred name, beside or in his own precinct, at which the people of the valley met and traded with strangers from a distance.” See, William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches: Updated Edition*, ed., Mark W. Wilson, 307.
Nobody knows when the seeds of the gospel were sown in it or how the church took root there.\textsuperscript{202} The Apostle Paul probably never visited the cities of the Lycus valley. But, many scholars state the possibility that the church was founded by Epaphras.\textsuperscript{203}

The Diagnosis

As already referred to earlier, in his commentary, Alan F. Johnson writes that two letters contain no word of commendation (Sardis and Laodicea).\textsuperscript{204} Actually, like the church in Sardis, the risen Jesus Christ begins the letter with condemnation without commendation. So, John Stott describes that the letter that was sent to the church in Laodicea combines a fierce denunciation of complacency with a tender appeal for wholeheartedness.\textsuperscript{205}

A Condemnation

\textsuperscript{202}John Stott, \textit{What Christ Thinks of the Church}, 112.

\textsuperscript{203}Concerning the founder of the church in Laodicea, Grant R. Osborne states, “It is likely that the three sister churches (Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse) were established at the same time by Epaphras, who founded the Colossian church (Colossians 1:7) as well as evangelized Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13) during Paul’s three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19). Paul had not visited these churches at the same time of his first imprisonment (Colossians 2:1), though he may have done so subsequently (Philemon 22).” See, Grant R. Osborne, \textit{Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament}, 202. Robert H. Mouence and Alan F. Johnson also write about the possibility that the church was founded by Epaphras. See, Robert H. Mounce, \textit{The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation}, 124. See also, Alan F. Johnson, \textit{The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation}, 457. And, Sang Chan Lee describes, “The first leader of the church in Laodicea seems to be Epaphras. And, the next leader seems to be Archippus.” See, Sang Chan Lee, \textit{The Seven churches in Asia Minor}, 383. Leon Morris speaks that the Christian church had apparently been established by the preaching of Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; 4:12f). See, Leon Morris, \textit{The Revelation of St. John: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries}, 82.

\textsuperscript{204}Alan F. Johnson, \textit{The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 12: Revelation}, 431.

\textsuperscript{205}John Stott, \textit{What Christ Thinks of the Church}, 112.
In Revelation 3:15-16 (NASB), the risen Jesus Christ condemns, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”

According to this Word, their deeds were neither cold nor hot. That is, it was not a spiritual passion in their mind. He wanted them to either be cold or hot. They were lukewarm (3:16), so that the adjective “Laodicean” has passed into our vocabulary to describe somebody who is lukewarm in religion or politics or any other sphere. So, Jesus Christ condemns that I will spit you out of my mouth.

About the phrases in verses 15-16, Henry Barclay Swete annotates that there is probably an allusion to the hot springs of Hierapolis, which in their way over the plateau become lukewarm, and in this condition discharge themselves over the cliff right opposite Laodicea.

About this local background, Robert H. Mounce explains: “Six miles north across the Lycus was the city of Hierapolis, famous for its hot springs which, rising within the city, flowed across a wide plateau and spilled over a broad escarpment directly opposite Laodicea. The hot water traveled across the plateau, it gradually became lukewarm before cascading over the edge.”

The church in Laodicea was a lukewarm church like this lukewarm water. Such a church is neither cold nor hot. Alan F. Johnson explains as following about the spiritual condition that is neither cold nor hot.

---

206Ibid., 113.
207Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 60.
There is good reason why we should not try to take both of these words as if Christ meant I wish you were either spiritually cold (i.e., unsaved or hostile) or spiritually hot (i.e., alive and fervent). In the first place, it is inconceivable that Christ would wish that people were spiritually cold, or unsaved and hostile. Furthermore, the application of “hot” and “cold” to spiritual temperature, though familiar to us, would have been completely foreign to first-century Christians. The two adjectives in “neither hot nor cold” should be understood together as equivalent to “lukewarmness” (3:16). That is to say, they were useless to Christ because they were complacent, self-satisfied, and indifferent to the real issues of faith in him and of discipleship.209

Therefore, a church that is neither cold nor hot is complacent, self-satisfied, and indifferent to the real issues of faith in Jesus Christ and of discipleship. Such a church loses its spiritual passion for Christ slowly. Such a church does not recognize exactly their spiritual condition. Also, in Revelation 3:19 (NIV), the risen Jesus Christ says, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched (καθαρός), pitiful (οριζόμενος), poor (πεπόνησος), blind (ομματικός) and naked (ωκύνημα).” John Stott comments that to be lukewarm is to be blind to one’s true condition.210

Actually, the church in Laodicea was blind about their spiritual condition. So, the Christians of Laodicea think that I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. However, Jesus Christ does not look so. Preferably, Jesus Christ says that you are wretched (καθαρός), pitiful (οριζόμενος), poor (πεπόνησος), blind (ομματικός) and naked (ωκύνημα).211

---


210 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 115.

211 Robert L. Thomas explains well about their spiritual condition:
καθαρός (wretched) is found only once elsewhere in the NT, in Romans 7:24 where Paul cries, “O wretched man that I am.” There Paul was well aware of his condition, but not so with the Laodiceans. οριζόμενος (miserable) occurs in the NT only here and in 1 Corinthians 15:19 where it describes the pitiable condition of one who doubts the doctrine of bodily resurrection. It pictures one worthy of extreme pity because he is in peril of eternal death if he should remain in his present state. πεπόνησος (poor), an adjective, is derived from πεπόνησις, which names the action of one who
The Christians of Laodicea were not in need materially.\textsuperscript{212} As already stated, the most striking indication of the city’s wealth is that following the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60 the city was rebuilt without financial aid from Rome. So, the local inhabitants were proud of their city. As well as, the Christians of Laodicea had been proud like them. So, the Christians of Laodicea was proud. They mistook that there was not any problem spiritually. However, they had a very serious disease spiritually.

Unfortunately, this phenomenon is one of spiritual problems of modern churches. Many modern churches have been losing a spiritual passion for Christ. Also, many churches have been falling into spiritless ness. Many churches are insensible spiritually and zeal has vanished (Revelation 3:19). By the way, Christians of such churches do not realize their spiritual condition. So, Jesus Christ that loves His church gives prescription to them.

The Prescription

In Revelation 3:18-20 (KJV), the risen Jesus Christ counsels them:

\begin{quote}
I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
\end{quote}

crouches and cowers as a beggar. Of the five adjectives, this one is the most specific antonym of the Laodiceans’ self-concept, that of being rich. (blind) was often used of mental blindness (e.g., Matthew 23:17). Written to a city famous for producing eye medications, its reference here is to an inability to see spiritual values. To be spiritually “naked (\textit{\textsuperscript{212}It is frequently noted that Laodicea prided itself on three things: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry, and a popular eye-salve which was exported around the world. These three things gave wealth to the local inhabitants mainly. See, Robert H. Mounce, \textit{The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Revelation}, 126.}) was especially shameful in a city famous for its woolen garments. See, Robert L. Thomas, \textit{An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 1-7}, 312.)
Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the
doors, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

According to this Word, Jesus Christ counsels them to buy of Him gold tried in
the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve. That is, they must buy from Jesus Christ gold tried
in the fire so that they may become genuinely rich. Robert H. Mounce describes that the
gold is spiritual wealth that has passed through the refiner’s fire and has been found to
be totally trustworthy. They must buy the gold and become rich spiritually.

Therefore, they must buy the gold and become rich spiritually. A. Plummer explains: “Stripping,” in the Bible, is commonly used to denote
putting to shame. The white raiment symbolize righteousness in Revelation (3:4, 5;
4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14). Therefore, they must cover the shame of their nakedness
by the righteousness.

Also, they must buy from Jesus Christ eye-salve to see. In John 9:39, Jesus
Christ says that I have come into this world, so that the blind will see. Therefore, they
need Jesus Christ to see.

As well as, they need zeal and repentance (3:19). Jesus Christ urges zeal and
repentance to them. Already, Jesus Christ has called on the Christians of Ephesus and
Sardis to repent (2:5; 3:3) and the same message is addressed to the Christians of
Laodicea too. Therefore, they must repent immediately and recover a spiritual passion
for Christ. They must hear Jesus Christ’s voice and open the door (3:20). He is there
now standing at the door, and knocking, where the present tense signifies not a
perfunctory rap, but a knocking continued in the hope of response. If they do open

---

213 Ibid., 127.
the door of their heart to Jesus Christ and let Him in, He will sup (Ω ἀρχὴς τῆς ζωῆς) with them, and they shall be permitted to sup with Him.  

Although, the Words are addressed to the church, the Words must apply to individual members of the church. That is, they must hear Jesus Christ’s voice and open doors of their hearts individually. This Word is meaning that they did not open the door of their heart to Jesus Christ. So, Jesus Christ came to them and knocked on the door. They must open the doors of their hearts now and let Him in. Jesus Christ urges it now.

Like the previous six letters, the last part of this letter ends with Christ’s rewards. In Revelation 3:21 (NIV), Jesus Christ promises that to him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. John Stott comments that a throne is the symbol of conquest and authority. 

It is a high honor that Christians sit on His glorious throne with Jesus Christ. A. Plummer describes that as the climax of the promise made to the seven churches. Jesus Christ gives the glorious promise to them. That is, like the twelve, Jesus Christ promises that the Christian overcomer will sit on His glorious throne with Him. Jesus Christ loves His churches. The church in Laodicea was a lukewarm church which lost their spiritual passion for Christ. Jesus Christ wishes them to recover this spiritual passion.

---

216 The “will sup (Ω ἀρχὴς τῆς ζωῆς)” was the main meal of the day and was a leisurely affair, not a hurried snack. This phrase means that the believer and Jesus Christ have active fellowship. It is not really necessary for the sense, but it emphasizes the continuing fellowship. See, Ibid., 84.

217 John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, 122.

The message to Laodicea is a message to Christians today as well. Today, many churches are waning in their spiritual passion for Christ. Church members lose the sense of urgency about the calling to serve Christ. The energy generated by the exhilaration of striving to fulfill the cause has been replaced by the comfort and security of habit and routine. However, the most serious problem is that many church members and churches are not recognizing their lukewarm condition. Their Christian life is formal and obligatory.

In his book *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, Christian A. Schwarz presents “passionate spirituality” as the third among eight essential qualities.\(^{219}\) One element that separates growing or non-growing churches is passionate spirituality. The Christians must be on fire in their church. This means they must live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm. Jesus Christ wants His church to have passionate spirituality.

In *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*, Waldo J. Werning identifies “passionate spirituality” as one of the twelve characteristics of a healthy church. He writes that passionate spirituality is the spiritual principle on which our life is to be built.\(^{220}\)

People look at the outward appearance. However, the Lord looks at the heart. God is looking for people who have a passion for Christ and the churches. God builds a healthy church through the people. Therefore, the church that has a spiritual passion for Christ is a healthy church biblically and is one which Jesus Christ wants.

**THE CHURCH THAT HEARS AND OBEYS WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS**

The seven churches of Asia, Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

---


\(^{220}\)Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*, 29.
The eighth characteristic of a healthy church which can be found in the seven churches of Asia is to hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says. To hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says is possible with the Fullness of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, it may be the most important characteristic among the eight characteristics of a healthy church. All these characteristics are important characteristics of a healthy church: 1) with the church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love, 2) the church that suffers for Christ’s sake, 3) the church that keeps the God’s truth, 4) the church that lives a holy life, 5) the church that is spiritually alive, 6) the church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments, 7) and the church that has a spiritual passion for Christ.

However, are all these characteristics under the Holy Spirit’s control? Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB) says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” The fruit of the Spirit does not come simply by human effort. This is not saying that the human effort is not needed at all. The human will is needed. However, human will must be under the Holy Spirit’s control.

As already stated, the church in Ephesus had lost its first love. The church needs love, but love is a fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, if the Christians of the church are filled by the Holy Spirit, the church will become a church where love is abundant. The church in Smyrna was a church which received suffering for Christ’s sake. Suffering can be tolerated if persons who receive suffering are filled by the Holy Spirit. As everybody knows, in Acts 7, Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit when he was stoned and martyred.

The church in Pergamum did not keep God’s truth. In John 15:26, the Bible says that the Counselor is the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father. And, John 16:13
says that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Also, 1 John 5:7 says that the Spirit is the truth. Therefore, if the Christians are filled by the Holy Spirit, they can keep God’s truth.

The church in Thyatira did not live a holy life. 1 Corinthians 6:11 (NASB) says, “And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.” Also, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2 also talk about sanctification of the Spirit. Therefore, if Christians are filled by the Holy Spirit, they will live a holy life.

The church in Sardis was a spiritually dead church. In Romans 8:6, the Bible says that the mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life. Romans 8:11 (NIV) says, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” Therefore, the Holy Spirit gives life to spiritually mortal bodies.

The church in Philadelphia persevered in difficult situations and environments. The perseverance is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If a church is filled by the Holy Spirit, the Christians of the church can persevere easily in difficult situations and environment. The church in Laodicea had no a spiritual passion for Christ. That is, the church needs faithfulness for Christ. But, faithfulness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit will recover their spiritual passion for Christ. The Holy Spirit makes His church healthier.

So, the last part of the letters sent to the seven churches always finishes, “He that hath an ear (   ), let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches
Henry Barclay Swete explains that (He that has an ear) is an individualizing note, calling upon each of the hearers of the book (1:3) to appropriate the warnings and promises addressed to the churches (That is, although the letter is addressed to each church, yet the concluding exhortation is always addressed to the individual Christians in the church. William Barclay states that we must always remember that every promise and every command of the Bible is offered and addressed personally to us.

Not anyone can hear what the Spirit says. Only, people that have spiritual ears can hear what the Spirit says. Therefore, Jesus Christ exhorts, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

In fact, Jesus Christ spoke the same emphasis on hearing and doing several times during His public life. In Mark 4, Jesus Christ spoke a parable of the Kingdom of God. Then, Jesus Christ says, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear (Mark 4:9, 23).” And, in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 7, Jesus Christ says,

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who

---


223 William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, 27.
built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (Matthew 7:24-27 NIV).

Therefore, everyone who hears the Words of Jesus Christ is a wise man. But, everyone who hears the Words of Jesus Christ and does not put them into practice is a foolish man. Also, in Luke 14, When Jesus Christ says about His true disciple, He says, “He, who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Therefore, Jesus Christ emphasizes to hear His voice and obey (14:35).

The exhortation in Revelation is almost the same, and only adds what the Spirit says to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The letters are the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John (Revelation 1:1), but the message is the Word of the Holy Spirit. That is, according to the opening formula the speaker is Christ; but the Spirit of Christ in the prophet is the interpreter of Christ’s voice. 224 Therefore, the glorified Christ speaks to his church through the Holy Spirit, and it is at the same time the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of Jesus Christ. 225

In his book The Holy Spirit, John F. Walvoord states that the Holy Spirit gives revelation in the primary sense of making known the will of God and His wisdom. 226 In John 14:26 (NIV), the Bible says, “But, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

224 Henry Barclay Swete, Commentary on Revelation, 29.

225 George E. Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John, 40.

As already stated, a healthy church is headed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the body in vital union with it through the Holy Spirit. A healthy church must hear what Jesus Christ says. What Jesus Christ says is heard through the Holy Spirit today. John Stott mentions that his will for His church is the same, for every congregation of every age and every place. It would be foolish to turn a deaf ear to this urgent message. In his book *Turnaround Churches*, George Barna points out that naturally, the key to spiritual revival of any kind is the presence of the Holy Spirit and the openness of the people to the working of God’s Spirit.

Today, unfortunately, many church leaders and saints ignore what Holy Spirit says. The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer, and in the church he is the bond of unity in Christ. A man who is in Christ is in the Holy Spirit. If they are to become a healthy church, then their local fellowships need to be filled with people who are willing to abide in Jesus Christ and remain empowered by the Holy Spirit. Church leaders and members must depend on the Holy Spirit’s direction rather than depend on its own ability and strength. They must experience His empowering presence for daily life and ministry. Actually, if church leaders and members ignore what Holy Spirit says, they can not lead a church as Jesus Christ wants.

Many scholars and pastors who have studied healthy churches describe that to hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says is the essential of a healthy church. As noted previously, Wayne Grudem emphasizes “spiritual power in ministry” as sign of a more-pure church. Stephen A. Macchia presents God’s empowering presence as first

---


228 George Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 42.

characteristics of a healthy church. In his book *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry*, Stephen A. Macchia writes that a healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit’s direction and empowerment for daily life and ministry.\(^\text{230}\) Donald J. MacNair and Ester L. Meek say that the church must retain its commitment to the Holy Scriptures without compromise.\(^\text{231}\) Therefore, a healthy church is the church that hears and obeys what the Holy Spirit says.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In chapter two, the characteristics of a healthy church in today’s literatures were presented. There are differences of expressions; however, they all emphasize loving relationships, pastoral leadership, Bible teaching and preaching, evangelism, inspiring worship, spiritual discipline, small groups, gift-oriented ministry, and stewardship commonly as the most important factors that make a healthy church. In this chapter, eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia were analyzed. From our study, we have discovered that the healthy characteristics from the seven churches of Asia are:

1) The church that keep Jesus Christ as first love,
2) The church that suffers for Christ’s sake,
3) The church that keeps God’s truth,
4) The church that lives a holy life,
5) The church that is spiritually alive,
6) The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments,


7) The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ, and
8) The church that hears and obeys what the Holy Spirit says.

In today’s literatures, many scholars and pastors also emphasized the characteristics of a healthy church from Revelation 2-3. Figure 4 shows it well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author Characteristic</th>
<th>P. Wagner</th>
<th>J. MacArthur</th>
<th>Dann. &amp; Gary</th>
<th>W. Gruemm</th>
<th>C. Schwart</th>
<th>S. Macchia</th>
<th>W. Werling</th>
<th>R. White</th>
<th>M. Dever</th>
<th>B. Scheidler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A holy life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual aliveness</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Spirit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Emphasis of the Characteristics of a Healthy Church from Revelation 2-3 in Today’s Literature

The church in Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira received both a commendation and a condemnation from Jesus Christ. The church in Smyrna and Philadelphia received only a commendation from Jesus Christ. The church in Sardis and Laodicea received only a condemnation from Jesus Christ.

The message to each church is at the same time a message to all churches of today. No one denies that the messages to the seven historic churches in Asia are at the same time a composite Word to the church universal throughout time.232 We can know Jesus Christ’s mind and thinking toward modern churches by studying the seven

---

churches of Asia. In a word, Jesus Christ wants His church to become a healthy church that has all eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia.

As noted previously, the Bible calls the Church the “body of Christ.” He is also head of the body. That is, a Jesus Christ-driven church is a healthy church. Therefore, a church where Jesus is head has all eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia.

However, a healthy church means that the saints of the church are healthy spiritually. Healthy Christians make a healthy church. Therefore, the leaders of the church must lead in such a way that all the saints may become healthy spiritually. Also, the leaders of the church always must diagnose themselves spiritually. The Apostle Paul says that “Be imitators of me” to the Christians of Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:16). The Apostle Paul lived exemplary Christian life. Like the Apostle Paul, the leaders of the church must live exemplary Christian lives in front of God and all saints. In chapter two, to think importantly for church health in today’s literatures was pastoral leadership. Leadership is influence. Therefore, first, when the leaders of the church are healthy spiritually, the church and saints may become healthy.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH

The Birth and Growth of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church

Pastor Kyu Dong Kim who is the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church’s (hereafter YTCC) founder was dispatched to Japan as a missionary in April, 1986. He evangelized Japanese university students in Tokyo. However, he knew that the Korean students studying abroad believed in Jesus Christ more than the Japanese university students. So, he first developed a worship service that centered around Korean students studying abroad at the Yodobashi Church.¹ Sixteen people attended the first worship service on October 2, 1988.

The YTCC has become the largest church in Japan. This church has grown continually. Presently, the church has about 2,200 Korean adult church members (not including children), 1,100 Japanese adult church members, and 200 Chinese adult church members. This church has planted sixteen other churches in Japan, South Korea, and China. If this church includes the sixteen mission churches, this church is a mega church with 4,500 Korean church members, 1,600 Japanese church members, and 200 Chinese church members. This church has about sixty full time ministers. It is clear that this church is writing a new history of Japanese missionary work everyday.

¹The Yodobashi Church which is Wesleyan Holiness denomination locates north-Shinjuku Tokyo, Japan. This church was established in 1904. For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yodobashi-church.com.
This church is a mission-centered church. The pastor Kyu Dong Kim has five strategies for missions in Japan. His strategy can be summarized in the word YOHAN. The first strategy is that “Youngsters-oriented ministry.” When he was a university student, he met Jesus Christ personally through the discipleship training in C.C.C. He knows well how important it is that the young be trained. He knows well that young people are the future of the church. He also knows that trained young people can dominate the fate of the country and the nation. His work is to change young people through Jesus Christ. Actually, most of their church members are young in age.

The second strategy is called “Organize and pass over.” Kyu Dong Kim says, “An organization must make simply so that only essence can be observed well.” The organization of this church is very simple. It is a small group church. There is a large group which distinguishes age and gender. There are also a lot of small groups inside the large group. The ministries train small group’s leaders concentrically, and those leaders care for their own group members. In short, this church is a simple organization which is consisted of ministry, small group leader, and group member.

YTCC is a discipleship training church. This church knows that early, simple and clear discipleship training is more effective. So, because this church has developed manuals for all discipleship training programs, this church can train group members according to the manual. There is no problem with discipleship training. This church keeps consistency to training even if some other ministry does discipleship training.

The third strategy is the “Horizontal scope.” Most of these church ministers have more than a master’s degree from the university in Japan. They are superior, competent

---


3Ibid., 185.
persons, but they are suffering from a lot of spiritual stresses because of the works of God. Therefore, this church is giving a lot of opportunities for spiritual reeducation and opportunities of learning that can develop the members’ own spiritual ability through seminars, conferences, and study abroad. The ministers develop their own spiritual ability continually through such opportunities. They have the same team spirit and grow together.

The fourth strategy is that of “Approaches renewed.” The world, including Japan, is changing each day. A church must be able to react to the change. This church receives the change of the world positively. This church is a church where a lot of young people gather. So, this church approaches the culture with various methods. This church uses skit drama, rap, and dancing actively at worship. This church does not change essence, but this church approaches the culture by various methods to convey the essence.

The fifth strategy is “Nippon only.” This church was begun with a vision of Japanese missionary work. The church was Korean centered for the first seven years. Then, God gave a great revival in this church. However, this church did not forget the vision of Japanese missionary work. The pastor Kyu Dong Kim always emphasizes that Korean people’s revival is God’s gift for Japanese missionary work. He emphasizes that the purpose of this church existence is Japanese missionary work.4

Pastor Kyu Dong Kim was persecuted by terrorists of a Japan leftist organization on October 18, 1998. The terror of this Japan leftist organization was reported greatly in Japan and Korea. They intended to kill him because of YTCC evangelizing in Japan. He could die anytime by the terror. However, God has

4Ibid., 216.
persevered him. The persecution did not disturb the revival of this church. Figure 5 shows the average attendees of adult Sunday worship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The average attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2, 1988</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1989</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1990</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1991</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1992</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1993</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1994</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1995</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1996</td>
<td>889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1997</td>
<td>1,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1998</td>
<td>1,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1999</td>
<td>1,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2000</td>
<td>1,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2001</td>
<td>1,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2002</td>
<td>1,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2003</td>
<td>1,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2004</td>
<td>1,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2005</td>
<td>2,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: The Average Attendance of Adult Sunday Worship (not including children)

The Planting of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church

This church is planting churches from the main train station of Shinkansen.

The churches YTCC have planted are Yohan Waseda Christ Church, Yohan Osaka Christ Church, Yohan Hukuoka Christ Church, Yohan Sendai Christ Church, Yohan Seoul Christ Church, Yohan Nagoya Christ Church, Yohan Yokohama Christ Church, Yohan Hiroshima Christ Church, Yohan Utsunomiya Christ Church, Yohan Kyoto

---

5For more detailed information, See, Kyu Dong Kim, God Works at Barren, 83-104.

6See, Yohan Tokyo Christ Church, ed. A Step of 15 years of Yohan Tokyo Christ Church, (Seoul: Yohan Press, 2003), 17-378.

7The Shinkansen is a network of high speed rail lines in Japan, upon which the famous “Bullet Trains” run.
Christ Church, Yohan Saitama Christ Church, Yohan Okayama Christ Church, Yohan Shizuoka Christ Church, Yohan Chiba Christ Church, Yohan Hachioji Christ Church and Yohan Koriyama Christ Church.\textsuperscript{8}

The Yohan Waseda Christ Church is a Japanese church within YTCC.\textsuperscript{9} In the beginning of YTCC, the Japanese university students were invited by Korean students to the Yodobash Church. However, because there were no Korean friends who invited them there they did not adapt well in the Yodobash Church. So, YTCC began a worship service for Japanese in 1995. This worship service was developed by the Yohan Waseda Christ Church. This church has grown to about 1,100 church members (not including children). Figure 6 shows the average attendance of the Japanese adult worship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The average attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December, 1995</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1996</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1997</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1998</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1999</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2000</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2001</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2002</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2003</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2004</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2005</td>
<td>1,064</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: The Average Attendance of Japanese Adult Worship\textsuperscript{10}

The Yohan Seoul Christ Church was founded in November of 1995. This church consisted of people who returned to Japan. They took family, friends, and new saints to

\textsuperscript{8}For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp.

\textsuperscript{9}For more detailed information, go to the website, http://waseda.yohan.or.jp.

\textsuperscript{10}See, Yohan Tokyo Christ Church, ed. \textit{A Step of 15 years of Yohan Tokyo Christ Church}, 17-378. For reference, the average attendees of Japanese church are about 20 people.
this church continually. This church has discipleship training and small group-centered church like YTCC. This church’s growth from 1995 to 2004 is shown in Figure 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The average attendance (not including children)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December, 1995.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1996.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1997.</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1998.</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 1999.</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2000.</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2001.</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2002.</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2003.</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2004.</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: The Average Attendance of Adult Worship of Yohan Seoul Christ Church

The Yohan Osaka Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Osaka in October of 1996. This church is a missionary work for the Osaka area through discipleship training and worship. This church has 70 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Hukuoka Christ Church was planted in Hukuoka in May of 2000. This church has 40 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Sendai Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Sendai in May of 2001. Sendai is the place that pastor Kyu Dong Kim went first to study abroad. This church has 60 Japanese church members (not including children).

11For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.com.
12For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohanosaka.org.
13For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohanfukuoka.com.
14For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/sendai.
YTCC dispatched missionaries to YanBian, China, in July of 2001. This church is praying for North Korea and China missionary work. Also, this church is setting up a sisterhood relationship with YanBian University of Science & Technology in YanBian. Pastor Kyu Dong Kim is this University’s director.\(^{15}\)

The Yohan Yokohama Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Yokohama in November of 2001.\(^{16}\) Yokohama is a trading port and huge business city. That is, it is second in size to Tokyo. This church is growing continually through campus evangelism and discipleship training. This church has 60 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Nagoya Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Nagoya in December of 2001.\(^{17}\) Nagoya is one of the three largest cities in Japan. In Japanese Christianity history, Nagoya was one area that the good news of the gospel spread very fast. This church has 40 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Hiroshima Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Hiroshima in November of 2002.\(^{18}\) Hiroshima was destroyed by the atom bomb at the time of the Second World War. Since the event, this city has been reconstructed. To evangelize them, YTCC planted Yohan Hiroshima Christ Church. This church has 20 Japanese church members (not including children).

\(^{15}\)YanBian University of Science & Technology is the first Chinese joint venture university in Yanbian autonomous prefecture. This university was founded in 1992 here in China, which is the center of north-east Asia in the 21th century. For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yust.edu/yust/English/index1.htm.

\(^{16}\)For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/yokohama.

\(^{17}\)For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/nagoya.

\(^{18}\)For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/hirosima.
The Yohan Utsunomiya Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Utsunomiya in November of 2002. Like other churches, this church is growing continually through campus evangelism and discipleship training. This church mostly contains Japanese university students. The University of Tsukuba is 43 miles from Utsunomiya. There are about 200 research institutes near this university. So, missionaries of all the countries of the world are in this university neighborhood. This church has 30 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Kyoto Christ Church is the church which Yohan Osaka Christ Church planted in 2003. Kyoto was the capital for thousands of years. Kyoto has 22 universities and 2,200 Buddhist temples including ancestral shrines. Spiritual warfare is very serious in this place. This church has 40 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Saitama Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Saitama in October of 2003. This church offers opportunities to experience Korean food and Korean culture to the Japanese. Through these opportunities many Japanese have believed in Jesus. Like other churches, this church emphasizes small groups and discipleship training. This church has 20 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Okayama Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Okayama in July of 2004. Like Yohan Saitama Christ church, this church offers

19For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/utsunomiya.
20For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/kyoto.
21For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/saitama.
22For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/okayama.
opportunities for Japanese students to experience Korean food and Korean culture. This church has 20 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Shizuoka Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Shizuoka in July of 2004.23 This church evangelizes Japanese through Korean food and Korean education. This church has 20 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Chiba Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Chiba in December of 2004.24 This church has 10 Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Hachioji Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Hachioji in October of 2005. This church has seven Japanese church members (not including children).

The Yohan Koriyama Christ Church is the church which YTCC planted in Koriyama in December of 2005. This church has seven Japanese church members (not including children).

The Program of the Yohan Tokyo Christ Church

The YTCC is a church which emphasizes personal evangelism and discipleship training. If a new church member joins this church, this church requires the person to go through discipleship training. This is the principal work of this church, which it applies to the Japanese as well as Korean people. Many ministers thought that it would be difficult to make Japanese do discipleship training. At first, the work was hard.

---

23For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/sizuoka.

24For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.yohan.or.jp/chiba.
However, a lot of ministers came out among people who had the training. The Japanese church expects to receive discipleship training now.

The church begins the New Year with fasting. Many saints gather in the church and fast from December 29 to January 1, including the branch church’s saints and Japanese participate. In this fasting prayer period, they pray their prayer list and their church’s prayer list. Then, they hear famous speaker’s lectures, worship God, and praise God. The New Year fasting prayer of 2006 was from January 1 to 3. One thousand nine hundred eighty three people attended this New Year fasting prayer.

Korean students enter for study in Japan concentrically in April and October. At this time, this church evangelizes Korean students studying abroad in Japanese language school concentrically. If Korean students studying abroad come to Japan for study, they study in Japanese language school first. These church members visit their school and invite them to a meal meeting. Through such meeting, these church members lead them to church.

There is “concentration training for faith growth” executed during two weeks in May and October. This training is Bible study for faith growth for three hours each day during ten days. Through this training, the saints are matured spiritually by the Word. People who have previously received this training pray for people in church or their home during this period.

There is a conference called “KOSTA-JAPAN” in August. The KOSTA means Korean Students Abroad.\textsuperscript{25} The KOSTA-JAPAN is the conference of Korean students abroad in Japan. Korean students studying abroad in the foreign countries gather and they hear God’s Word at this conference. This conference gathers in South America,

\textsuperscript{25}For more detailed information, go to the website, http://www.kosta.org.
Russia, South Europe, North Europe, Canada, USA, China, Japan, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, and Philippines every year. The messengers are famous pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders. Through those conferences, many students studying abroad become devoted to God. Also, they devote their lives to God by becoming missionaries and sincere saints. The YTCC church prepares this conference every year.

This church often has an invitation party to Japanese. There are famous CCM singer’s performances, talent shows, Biblical dramas, sermons, and various programs including food at this invitation party. In June of 2005, 1,000 Japanese who had not come to church before came out to the invitation party.

This church has mission training center called “JMTC.” The JMTC means Japan Mission Training Center. The JMTC was built in April of 1996. The JMTC has been training for ten years. Through this JMTC, this church trains trainees who help Japanese missionaries. The training course consists of four semesters. If trainees finish all this process, the trainees can be Japanese missionaries.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Pastor Kyu Dong Kim led the first worship service that centered around Korean students studying abroad at the Yodobashi Church on October 2, 1988. At that time, sixteen people attended the first worship. However, the YTCC has become the largest church in Japan. This church is planting churches from the main train station of Shinkansen. This church planted sixteen other churches in Japan, South Korea, and China. If this church includes the sixteen mission churches, this church is a mega church with 4,500 Korean church members, 1,600 Japanese church members, and 200
Chinese church members. It is clear that the church is writing a new history of Japanese missionary work everyday.

This church is a mission-centered church. The pastor Kyu Dong Kim has five strategies for missions in Japan. His strategy can be summarized in the word YOHAN. The first strategy is “Youngsters-oriented ministry.” The second strategy is called “Organize and pass over. The third strategy is the “Horizontal scope.” The fourth strategy is that of “Approaches renewed.” The fifth strategy is “Nippon only.”

This church is a small group-based church and a discipleship training-centered church. The YTCC is a church which emphasizes personal evangelism and discipleship training. If a new church member comes to this church, this church requires the person to go through discipleship training.

The church begins the New Year with fasting. This church evangelizes Korean students studying abroad in Japanese language school concentrically at April and October. There is “concentration training for faith growth” during two weeks in May and October. There is a conference called “KOSTA-JAPAN” in August. This conference gathers in South America, Russia, South Europe, North Europe, Canada, USA, China, Japan, Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, and Philippines every year. The YTCC church prepares this conference every year.

This church often has the invitation party to Japanese. There are famous CCM singer’s performances, talent shows, Biblical dramas, sermons, and various programs including food in this invitation party. This church has a mission training center called “JMTC.” Through this JMTC, this church trains trainees who help Japanese missionaries.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE APPLICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH TO
YOHAN TOKYO CHRIST CHURCH

EVALUATION OF YTCC SPIRITUAL HEALTH CONDITION

As noted previously, this writer visited Japan beginning June 15, and the survey was conducted on June 17-19, 2005. One-hundred Korean women and 100 men, and 37 Japanese women and 18 men were involved in this survey. There are two main sections to the survey. The first section asks general questions of the church members. The second section allows them to evaluate their spiritual health condition according to each of the characteristics of a healthy church which were presented in this project. In this section, church members circled the appropriate number on a ten point scale with #1 representing a strongly disagree reply and #10 representing a strongly agree reply.

Questionnaire

I. Answer the following general questions.
   1. What is your gender?
   2. What is your age?
   3. How long have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
   4. How long have you been attending this church?
   5. Were you born into a Christian family?
   6. Are you married?
   7. Did you receive baptism?
   8. If you have received baptism, where did you receive it?
   9. Do you have an assurance of your salvation?
  10. Do you think that your church is biblically healthy?
  11. Do you think that your church is interested in being a healthy church?
II. Evaluate your Spiritual Health Condition.

1. The church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love:
   A. Do you keep Jesus Christ as your first love?
   B. Do you serve others with the love of Christ?
   C. Are you served by them with Christ’s love?

2. The church that suffers for Christ’s sake:
   A. Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ?
   B. Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ?

3. The church that keeps God’s truth:
   A. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim and not deny that Jesus is Christ the Lord and the Son of God, and that He died for your sins?
   B. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Word is fully truth?

4. The church that lives a holy life:
   A. Do you try to live a holy life?
   B. Do you try to get others to turn back from sinning?

5. The church that is spiritually alive:
   A. Are you spiritually alive?
   B. Do you serve the Lord whole-heartedly and without reservation?

6. The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environment:
   A. Do you persevere, not giving up when you are serving God in difficult situations and environments?
   B. Have you had many experiences of winning spiritual warfare in difficult situations and environments?

7. The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ:
   A. Do you have a spiritual passion for Christ?
   B. In the church, do you participate actively with a spiritual passion?

8. The church that hears and obeys what the Holy Spirit says:
   A. Do you have an earnest desire to hear the voice of Holy Spirit?
   B. When you are convinced of the Holy Spirit’s voice, do you obey absolutely?
Analysis of General Questions (Korean)

Survey Result

1. What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: Gender (Korean)

One-hundred women and 100 men each answered the above question. So, the women and the men were each 50% of the total 200 surveyed.

2. What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Average Age</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: The Average Age (Korean)

As the figure shows, five people, or 2.5%, were less than 20 years old. One-hundred people, or 50%, were 21-30 years old. Eighty-one people, or 40.5%, were 31-40 years old. Fourteen people, or 7%, were 41-50 years old.

3. How long have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of being a Christian</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 years</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 41 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Time of Being a Christian (Korean)

As the figure shows, 108 people were less than 10 years which was 54%. Fifty-nine people were between 11-20 years, which was 29.5%. Twenty-nine people
were between 21-30 years, which was 14.5%. Three people were between 31-40 years, which was 1.5%. One person was more than 41 years, which was 0.5%.

4. How long have you been attending this church?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Average Attending Period</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9 years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 18 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: The Average Attending Period (Korean)

Over 50% of the responders had been attending for five years or less than 20% had been attending for over ten years.

5. Were you born into a Christian family?
There were 72 people were born into a Christian family, which was 36%. One-hundred twenty eight people were born into a non-Christian family, which was 64%.

6. Are you married?
62 people were married which was 31%. And, 138 people were unmarried which was 69%.

7. Did you receive baptism?
All the people received baptism.

8. If you have received baptism, where did you receive it?
People who received baptism in YTCC were 37.5% or 75 people. People who received baptism at other churches were 62.5%, or 125 people.

9. Do you have an assurance of your salvation?
All the people reported to have an assurance of their salvation.

10. Do you think that your church is biblically healthy?
All the people reported that their church is biblically healthy.
11. Do you think that your church is interested in being a healthy church?
   All the people reported that their church is interested in being a healthy church.

### The Diagnosis of Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)

#### The Diagnosis Result

1. The church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love:
   A. Do you keep Jesus Christ as your first love? Average: 7.37 Points.
   1(0)  2(3)  3(1)  4(7)  5(19)  6(18)  7(57)  8(46)  9(23)  10(26)
   B. Do you serve others with the love of Christ? Average: 6.95 Points.
   1(1)  2(2)  3(3)  4(8)  5(26)  6(26)  7(51)  8(54)  9(22)  10(7)
   C. Are you served by them with Christ’s love? Average: 7.7 Points.
   1(0)  2(3)  3(4)  4(1)  5(14)  6(18)  7(39)  8(54)  9(35)  10(32)

2. The church that suffers for Christ’s sake:
   A. Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ? Average: 5.8 Points.
   1(3)  2(12)  3(17)  4(22)  5(39)  6(25)  7(34)  8(28)  9(13)  10(7)
   B. Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ? Average: 8.16 Points.
   1(1)  2(0)  3(2)  4(1)  5(10)  6(16)  7(31)  8(47)  9(39)  10(53)

3. The church that keeps God’s truth:
   A. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim and not deny that Jesus is Christ the Lord and the Son of God, and that He died for your sins? Average: 9.47 Points.
   1(1)  2(0)  3(0)  4(0)  5(1)  6(5)  7(11)  8(17)  9(15)  10(151)
   B. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Word is fully truth? Average: 9.56 Points.
   1(1)  2(0)  3(0)  4(0)  5(1)  6(4)  7(4)  8(18)  9(19)  10(154)

4. The church that lives a holy life:
   A. Do you try to live a holy life? Average: 8.17 Points.
   1(0)  2(1)  3(0)  4(3)  5(4)  6(12)  7(32)  8(60)  9(52)  10(35)
   B. Do you try to get others to turn back from sinning? Average: 6.66 Points.
   1(0)  2(1)  3(0)  4(3)  5(4)  6(12)  7(32)  8(60)  9(52)  10(35)

5. The church that is spiritually alive:
   A. Are you spiritually alive? Average: 7.54 Points.
   1(1)  2(1)  3(2)  4(4)  5(14)  6(19)  7(48)  8(62)  9(24)  10(25)
   B. Do you serve the Lord whole-heartedly and without reservation? Average: 7.09 Points.
   1(0)  2(2)  3(4)  4(6)  5(21)  6(28)  7(50)  8(54)  9(28)  10(7)
6. The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments:
   A. Do you persevere, not giving up when you are serving God in difficult situations and environments? Average: 7.36 Points.
      1(1)  2(0)  3(2)  4(11)  5(13)  6(31)  7(40)  8(53)  9(28)  10(21)
   B. Have you had many experiences of winning spiritual warfare in difficult situations and environments? Average: 7.52 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(3)  4(6)  5(20)  6(21)  7(40)  8(47)  9(34)  10(28)

7. The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ:
   A. Do you have a spiritual passion for Christ? Average: 7.95 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(2)  4(3)  5(7)  6(22)  7(35)  8(46)  9(50)  10(34)
   B. In the church, do you participate actively with a spiritual passion? Average: 7.8 Points.
      1(1)  2(2)  3(1)  4(2)  5(11)  6(25)  7(31)  8(48)  9(52)  10(27)

8. The church that listens and obeys the Holy Spirit:
   A. Do you have an earnest desire to hear the voice of Holy Spirit? Average: 9.04 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(1)  4(1)  5(3)  6(2)  7(17)  8(37)  9(31)  10(108)
   B. When you are convinced of the Holy Spirit’s voice, do you obey absolutely? Average: 8.38 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(0)  4(2)  5(3)  6(14)  7(33)  8(46)  9(42)  10(59)

Concrete Diagnosis and the Prescription

1. Spiritual Health Condition

![Figure 12: Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)](image-url)
As Figure 12 shows, the average of love was 7.34 points. Suffering for Christ’s sake is 6.98 points. God’s truth is 9.51 points, and a holy life is 7.41 points. Spiritual aliveness came out at 7.31 points. Perseverance in difficult situations and environments came out at 7.42 points. A spiritual passion for Christ is 7.88 points and to listen and obey what the Holy Spirit says is 8.71 points.

We can discover some characteristics through Figure 12. First, their spiritual health condition, according to each of the characteristics of a healthy church, is generally high. Also, they have a good balance of the characteristics of a healthy church, which means that their spiritual health condition is very good.

Second, their spiritual strong point is to keep God’s truth. This church studies the Bible hard and is a discipleship training church. They recognize absolute authority in God’s word. Therefore, this church must encourage keeping God’s truth continually.

Third, their spiritual weak point is suffering for Christ’s sake. This was the second characteristic of a healthy church and they were to answer two questions about it. The first question was “Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ?” Their average answer was very low at 5.8 points. However, in the second question which was “Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ?,” their average answer was very high at 8.16 points. Therefore, the second characteristic was not a serious weak point in them.

Fourth, the second highest characteristic is to hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says. God’s truth and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. God talks to His people through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they have a balanced faith in Jesus Christ.

Finally, the standard of their spiritual health is the third characteristic. They should try to have the other characteristics receive as high a point as the third
characteristic. Through such effort, they can become a healthier church. This church must especially not forget to emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake.

2. Gender and Spiritual Health Condition

![Gender and Spiritual Health Condition](image1)

Figure 13: Gender and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)

Figure 13 shows the relation of gender and spiritual health condition. This church revealed that the male's spiritual health condition on the whole is higher. Therefore, this church should emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake to the females of the church.

3. Age and Spiritual Health Condition

![Age and Spiritual Health Condition](image2)

Figure 14: Age and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)
Figure 14 shows the relation of age and spiritual health condition. The spiritual health condition of more than 40 years old was generally high. Less than 20 years old appeared low in love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and a holy life. Therefore, this church should emphasize love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and a holy life to people less than 20 years old.

4. Time of being a Christian and Spiritual Health Condition

![Time of being a Christian and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)](image)

Figure 15: Time of being a Christian and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)

Figure 15 shows the relation between the time as a Christian and the person’s spiritual health. People who have been saved more than 40 years were relatively high in regards to a holy life. However, they were relatively low in regards to love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and spiritual aliveness. Therefore, this church should emphasize love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and a holy life to people who have been saved for 40 or more years.
5. Attending Period and Spiritual Health Condition

Figure 16: Attending Period and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)

Figure 16 shows the relation of attending church and the spiritual health condition of a believer. Generally, points of people that have a long attending period are higher. Especially, the people who attended church for a long time; they tend to listen and obey what the Holy Spirit says more than people with a short attending period. Therefore, this church should emphasize listening and obeying what the Holy Spirit says to people who attending period are short.

6. Family and Spiritual Health Condition

Figure 17: Family and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)
In general, points of people who were born into Christian families are high. However, points of people who were born into non-Christian families are higher in the area of keeping God’s truth, perseverance, and listening and obeying what the Holy Spirit says. The average of people who were born into non-Christian families is lower in suffering for Christ’s sake. Therefore, this church should emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake to people who were born into non-Christian families.

7. Marriage and Spiritual Health Condition

![Figure 18: Marriage and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)](image)

In every characteristic, points of the married are high. This church should emphasize every characteristic to the unmarried.
8. Baptism Place and Spiritual Health Condition

Figure 19: Baptism Place and Spiritual Health Condition (Korean)

Approximately, the averages of people who receive baptism at other churches are higher.

9. Spiritual Health Condition by Each Characteristic

The figures below analyze the objects which received the best high points according to each characteristic.

Figure 20: Love
Figure 21: Suffering

Figure 22: Truth

Figure 23: A Holy Life
Figure 24: Spiritual Aliveness

Figure 25: Perseverance

Figure 26: Passion
Figure 27: The Holy Spirit
Analysis of General Questions (Japanese)

Survey Result

1. What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 28: Gender (Japanese)

37 women and 18 men answered the above question. 67.3% of the 55 people were women and 32.7% were men.

2. What is your age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Average Age</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 29: The Average Age (Japanese)

As the figure shows, the people age 21-30 as 92.7%, or 51 people. The people age 31-40 as 7.3%, or 4 people.

3. How long have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of being a Christian</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 30: Time of Being a Christian (Japanese)

As the figure shows, people who have believed less than 10 years was 96.4%, 53 people; 11-20 years was 3.6%, 2 people.
4. How long have you been attending this church?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Average Attending Period</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 31: The Average Attending Period (Japanese)

As the figure shows, 2-3 years was 27.3% or 15 people. 4-5 years was 36.4% or 20 people. 6-7 years was 8.2% or 10 people. 8-9 years was 14.5% or 8 people. 10-11 years was 3.6% or 2 people.

5. Were you born into a Christian family?
   There were 4 people who were born into a Christian family, which was 7.2%. 51 people were born into a non-Christian family, which was 92.8%.

6. Are you married?
   3.6%, or 2 people, were married, and 96.4%, 53 people, were unmarried.

7. Did you receive baptism?
   Like the Koreans, all the people received baptism.

8. If you have received baptism, where did you receive it?
   People who received baptism in YTCC were 96.4%, 53 people. People who received baptism at other churches were 3.6% as 2 people.

9. Do you have an assurance of your salvation?
   Like the Koreans, all the people have an assurance of their salvation.

10. Do you think that your church is biblically healthy?
    All the people thought their church is biblically healthy.

11. Do you think that your church is interested in being a healthy church?
    All the people thought their church is interested in being a healthy church.
The Diagnosis Result

1. The church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love:
   A. Do you keep Jesus Christ as your first love? Average: 7.24 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(1)  4(2)  5(11)  6(7)  7(6)  8(12)  9(8)  10(8)
   B. Do you serve others with the love of Christ? Average: 6.84 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(2)  4(4)  5(3)  6(12)  7(8)  8(15)  9(8)  10(1)
   C. Are you served by them with Christ’s love? Average: 7.55 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(0)  4(2)  5(4)  6(7)  7(11)  8(14)  9(6)  10(10)

2. The church that suffers for Christ’s sake:
   A. Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ? Average: 6.36 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(6)  4(5)  5(8)  6(8)  7(10)  8(12)  9(2)  10(4)
   B. Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ? Average: 6.91 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(2)  4(3)  5(7)  6(7)  7(11)  8(14)  9(6)  10(4)

3. The church that keeps God’s truth:
   A. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim and not deny that Jesus is Christ the Lord and the Son of God, and that He died for your sins? Average: 8.65 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(0)  5(0)  6(2)  7(10)  8(13)  9(10)  10(20)
   B. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Word is fully truth? Average: 8.71 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(0)  5(1)  6(2)  7(7)  8(15)  9(7)  10(23)

4. The church that lives a holy life:
   A. Do you try to live a holy life? Average: 8.05 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(2)  5(4)  6(3)  7(10)  8(12)  9(8)  10(16)
   B. Do you try to get others to turn back from sinning? Average: 6.4 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(2)  4(2)  5(13)  6(10)  7(13)  8(7)  9(6)  10(1)

5. The church that is spiritually alive:
   A. Are you spiritually alive? Average: 8.0 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(2)  5(2)  6(3)  7(12)  8(14)  9(12)  10(10)
   B. Do you serve the Lord whole-heartedly and without reservation? Average: 7.27 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(2)  4(2)  5(4)  6(3)  7(14)  8(13)  9(9)  10(3)

6. The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments:
   A. Do you persevere, not giving up when you are serving God in difficult situations and environments? Average: 7.49 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(2)  5(5)  6(6)  7(15)  8(10)  9(12)  10(5)
   B. Have you had many experiences of winning spiritual warfare in difficult situations and environments? Average: 6.76 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(3)  4(4)  5(9)  6(7)  7(10)  8(11)  9(8)  10(3)
7. The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ:
   A. Do you have a spiritual passion for Christ? Average: 7.71 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(2)  4(2)  5(5)  6(1)  7(12)  8(13)  9(9)  10(11)
   B. In the church, do you participate actively with a spiritual passion?
      Average: 7.45 Points.
      1(0)  2(1)  3(3)  4(2)  5(2)  6(7)  7(9)  8(13)  9(8)  10(10)

8. The church that listens and obeys the Holy Spirit:
   A. Do you have an earnest desire to hear the voice of Holy Spirit?
      Average: 8.87 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(0)  4(0)  5(1)  6(2)  7(4)  8(13)  9(11)  10(24)
   B. When you are convinced of the Holy Spirit’s voice, do you obey absolutely?
      Average: 8.11 Points.
      1(0)  2(0)  3(1)  4(1)  5(5)  6(2)  7(7)  8(15)  9(7)  10(17)

Concrete Diagnosis and the Prescription

1. Spiritual Health Condition

   Figure 32: Spiritual Health Condition (Japanese)

   As the figure shows, love came out at 7.21 points. Suffering for Christ’s sake is 6.64 points. God’s truth is 8.68 points, and a holy life is 7.23 points. Spiritual aliveness came out at 7.63 points. Perseverance in difficult situations and environments came out
at 7.13 points. A spiritual passion for Christ is 7.58 points and to listen and obey what the Holy Spirit says is 8.49 points.

We can discover some characteristics through Figure 32. First, like the Koreans, their spiritual health condition, according to each of the characteristics of a healthy church, is generally high. They have a good balance about spiritual health condition, which means that their spiritual health’s condition is very good.

Second, although the averages are different, Korean’s spiritual health condition and spiritual health condition of Japanese are similar. The Japanese’s spiritual strong point is to keep God’s truth. This church, including Japanese, studies the Bible hard and is a discipleship training church. Like the Koreans, Japanese who trained in this church recognize absolute authority in God word, and they have absolute faith.

Third, like the Koreans, their spiritual weak point is suffering for Christ’s sake. In this second characteristic, like the Koreans, they were answered two questions. First question was that “Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ?” Their average point was 6.36 points. This point is higher than Korean’s response. However, in second question are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ, their average was 6.91 points. This point is lower than Koreans. Therefore, this church should emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake better to the Japanese.

Fourth, like the Korean church, the second highest characteristic is to hear and obey what the Holy Spirit says. As already stated, God’s truth and the Holy Spirit are inseparable. They were balanced in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Finally, the standard of their spiritual health is the third characteristic like Korean. They should try so that other characteristics may receive the same high points as much as the third characteristic. Through such effort, they can become healthier
church. Especially, this church must not forget to emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake to Japanese.

2. Gender and Spiritual Health Condition

![Figure 33: Gender and Spiritual Health Condition (Japanese)](image)

Figure 33 shows the relation of gender and spiritual health condition. This church revealed that the female’s spiritual health condition is high in love, a holy life, spiritual aliveness, and passion. However, the female’s spiritual health condition is lower in suffering for Christ’s sake. Therefore, this church should emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake to females.

3. Spiritual Health Condition of Korean and Japanese Comparison

Figure 34 compares spiritual health condition of Japanese with Korean church members. Generally, Korean’s average point is high. However, “spiritual aliveness” is higher average point of Japanese more than Korean. According to the figure 34, Japanese are more spiritually alive than Korean church member. This shows that the future of Japanese missionary work is bright.
Continuous Interest for a Healthy Church

Most pastors and church leaders, including Christians, have a deep interest in church growth. They want to grow their churches. God wants it too. However, God wants more for the church to grow healthily continually. Preferably, if a church is healthy, God grows the church. Therefore, church leaders should try to keep constantly the health of church.

In his book *The Second Coming of the Church*, George Barna writes about the four life cycles that are recognizable within Christian ministries. The four cycles are the infancy or birthing phase, the development or growth phase, the mature phase, and the declining phase.¹ He states that during the declining phase, the church has clearly lost its energy because it has fulfilled its purpose or has become too complacent in its past

---

achievements or present comfort.\(^2\) A goal of such churches is growth only. As mentioned earlier, church growth is a result, not a goal. Whatever its size, a church must become healthy. When a church is healthy continuously, the fourth phase that George Barna speaks will be delayed.

As already stated, if the YTCC includes sixteen other churches, the YTCC is a mega church with 4,500 Korean church members, 1,600 Japanese church members, and 200 Chinese church members. The YTCC is writing a new history of Japanese missionary work everyday. It is clear that the YTCC has not come to the fourth phase which George Barna speaks about. The YTCC must grow healthy continually. Therefore, the YTCC must have continuous interest about church health with growth. And, the YTCC must keep high spiritual health condition continually. The YTCC must teach church members the characteristics of a healthy church from Revelation 2-3.

**Regular Diagnosis and the Prescription of Spiritual Health Condition**

In their book *Why Churches Die*, Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner state, “A spiritual disease or pathology is often undetectable, except for the telling symptoms. As in physical diseases, symptoms are the telltale signs that indicate a spiritual disease is present.”\(^3\) George Barna admonishes that the church must recognize crisis.\(^4\) Therefore, church leaders must check their church’s spiritual health regularly, as regular medical examination is important in physical health. If symptoms that indicate a spiritual disease is present appear in the Christians or in the churches, church leaders must cure the

\(^2\)Ibid., 47.


\(^4\)George Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 58.
symptoms. However, the most difficult task is to perform self-examination.\(^5\) A church, and individual Christians, must keep up their spiritual health. So, a church must diagnose their spiritual health even if the self-examination is difficult. If spiritual disease appears in the church, the church must cure it.

If people want keep to healthy, then a regular a medical examination is important. Likewise, if a church wants keep to healthy; regular diagnosis and the prescription of spiritual health condition are important. If a church does not keep its spiritual health, the church can have serious problems.

In his book Turnaround Churches, George Barna points out that once a church loses its momentum, the most probable outcome is either death or stabilization at a much smaller size.\(^6\) Church members are affected by the health of the church they attend. Such churches and Christians are infected with a spiritual disease, and they must not go untreated for too long. In fact, spiritual diseases are far more noxious than physical diseases. Therefore, a church needs to check regularly the diagnosis and the prescription of spiritual health condition. Such efforts can help each of church members who are involved with a local church be better prepared and skilled to address the potential demise of their own churches.

The YTCC is a young-centered church. The young are prone for heavy change of emotion. The young are changeable in their faith because of their emotional change. Therefore, it is important that YTCC regularly diagnose and prescribe their spiritual condition.

\(^5\)Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner, Why Churches Die, 14.

\(^6\)George Barna, Turnaround Churches, 17.
Concrete Christian Education for a Healthy Church

Through the diagnosis by the eight characteristics of a healthy church, the YTCC could know their spiritual strong points and weak points. According to the diagnosis result, the YTCC needs to develop concrete Christian education for a healthy church. Their spiritual strong point is to keep God’s truth. And, their spiritual weak point is suffering for Christ’s sake. This church should emphasize:

1) suffering for Christ’s sake to females, especially the Japanese,
2) love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and a holy life to those less than 20 years old and people who have been Christians more than 40 years,
3) listening and obeying what the Holy Spirit says to people who have been attending a short time,
4) persevering in difficult situations and environments to people who were born into non-Christian families,
5) every characteristics to people who are not married and people who received baptism at other church.

Maintain Balance of Spiritual Health Condition

Deuteronomy 5:23 (NIV) says, “So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.” Also, Proverbs 4:27 says that do not swerve to the right or the left. According to the Bible, to maintain balance in the Christian life is very important. However, very few people maintain balance in their Christian life because to maintain balance is not easy. Jesus Christ is model of every Christian life. Jesus Christ lived a balanced life in the world. Luke 2:52 (NLT) says that Jesus grew both in height and in wisdom, and he was loved by God and
by all who knew him. Like the Lord Jesus Christ Christians must grow in wisdom; but at same time, they must become persons that are loved by God and by every person who knows them. It is possible to maintain balance in Christian life.

As already stated, the YTCC has a good balance in the Christian life. The eight characteristics of a healthy church that Jesus wants are very high in the YTCC. The YTCC needs to maintain balance in the eight characteristics of what Jesus desires. The methods that maintain balance about the eight characteristics of what Jesus wants are continuous interest for a healthy church, regular diagnosis and the prescription of spiritual health condition, and concrete Christian education for a healthy church.

**Ultimate Glory to God**

God created His people for His own glory. Isaiah 43:7 (NIV) says that everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. God created the entire creation to show His glory. Psalms 19:1 (NIV) says that the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Also, Revelation 4:11 (NLT) says, “You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created everything, and it is for Your pleasure that they exist and were created.” Therefore, God created everything of the world to receive glory.

Likewise, God built His churches to receive glory from His people. Therefore, an ultimate goal of a church is to declare the glory of God. His people must glorify God. The ultimate purpose of Christians to make a healthy church is for God’s glory. If a church is not healthy spiritually, the church does not bring glory to God.

The ultimate purpose for the YTCC to make a healthier church is because of God’s glory. The YTCC is writing a new history of Japan missionary work everyday.
God built the YTCC to show God’s glory in Japan. The YTCC must declare the glory of God in Japan. Through the YTCC, Japanese non-Christians must turn to God. They must bring glory to God. The YTCC is a healthy church spiritually at present. However, if the YTCC loses spiritual health, they will not bring glory to God. The YTCC should be healthier to bring glory to God.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter is basically an application of what has been discussed in this project. It attempts to apply the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia to the YTCC. The results of a survey questionnaire were interpreted. According to the results of a survey questionnaire, the spiritual health condition of the YTCC was presented. The diagnosis and the prescription of spiritual health condition of the YTCC are also presented. Finally, practical suggestions were made for spiritual health of the YTCC.

The diagnosis result shows their spiritual health condition is generally high, and has a good balance. However, this church had the weak point relative. Their spiritual weak point is suffering for Christ’s sake. This church should emphasize: 1) suffering for Christ’s sake to females, especially Japanese, 2) love, suffering for Christ’s sake, and a holy life to those 20 years old or less and people who have been Christians more than 40 years, 3) listening and obeying what the Holy Spirit says to people who have not attended church very long, 4) persevering in difficult situations and environments to the people who were born into non-Christian families, 5) last, every characteristics to people who were not married and people who receive baptism at other church. If this church emphasizes these points, this church will become a healthier church.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Today, more than ever, many churches need to become healthier. The reason for this is that while all churches need to be healthy, if the truth be told, there are many churches today that are very unhealthy. Today, every Christian should attend a healthy church. No one wants to continually attend an unhealthy church. If an unhealthy church doesn’t recover its health soon, then the people will leave that church eventually. Such churches will become declining churches. Many churches have deep interests in becoming healthy churches. It is very important to know the characteristics of a healthy church so that a church can become healthy. Many scholars and pastors studied about the characteristics of a healthy church.

This writer has attempted to demonstrate the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 as the most important factors that make a healthy church. First, in chapter two and three, the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 were proved as the important factors that make a healthy church which many scholars and pastors speak. Second, in Revelation 2-3, these eight characteristics of a healthy church were proved as the important factor that Jesus Christ wants for His churches. Third, the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 were proved as the important factors that make YTCC a healthy church. YTCC is the largest church in Japan. This church is a model church which revives and grows. This
church is writing a new history of Japanese missionary work everyday. The points of
the eight characteristics of a healthy church came out very high in the YTCC. Therefore,
the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in
Revelation 2-3 are the very important factors that decide a healthy church.

According to Revelation 2-3, the eight characteristics of a healthy church are:

1) The church that keep Jesus Christ as first love,
2) The church that suffers for Christ’s sake,
3) The church that keeps God’s truth,
4) The church that lives a holy life,
5) The church that is spiritually alive,
6) The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments,
7) The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ, and
8) The church that hears and obeys what the Holy Spirit says.

Also, this writer has attempted to demonstrate the important of a church
consultation for spiritual health. In chapter five, this writer has diagnosed and
prescribed spiritual health’s condition of the YTCC based on surveys. The major strong
point of this church was to keep God’s truth. The major weak point was to suffer for
Christ’s sake. This church should emphasize suffering for Christ’s sake to church
members so that they could become a healthier church.

Finally, this writer has presented practical suggestions for spiritual health
development of the YTCC, including other churches. The practical suggestions for
spiritual health development are:

1) continuous interest for a healthy church,
2) regular diagnosis and the prescription of spiritual health’s condition,
3) concrete Christian education for a healthy church,

4) maintain balance of spiritual health’s condition, and

5) ultimate glory to God

This writer will be glad to use the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 as the most important factors that make a healthy church to the YTCC and other churches as well. This writer trusts that God will use the eight characteristics of a healthy church from the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3 as the most important instrument of a church consultation that make a church healthfully.
APPENDIX
YTCC SPIRITUAL HEALTH CONDITION SURVEY

I. Answer the following general questions.

1. What is your gender?
   _____ Female
   _____ Male

2. What is your age?
   _____ Under 20
   _____ 21-30
   _____ 31-40
   _____ 41-50
   _____ 51-60
   _____ 61-70
   _____ 71-80
   _____ 81-

3. How long have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
   _____ Years

4. How long have you been attending this church?
   _____ Less than a year
   _____ 2-3 years
   _____ 4-5 years
   _____ 6-7 years
   _____ 8-9 years
   _____ 10-11 years
   _____ 12-13 years
   _____ 14-15 years
   _____ 16-17 years
   _____ More than eighteen years

5. Were you born into a Christian family?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

6. Are you married?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No
   _____ I was. But, I am alone now.

7. Did you receive baptism?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No
8. If you have received baptism, where did you receive it?
   _____ Yohan Tokyo Christ Church
   _____ Another Church

9. Do you have an assurance of your salvation?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

10. Do you think that your church is biblically healthy?
    _____ Yes
    _____ No

11. Do you think that your church is interested in being a healthy church?
    _____ Yes
    _____ No

II. Evaluate your Spiritual Health Condition. (Circle the appropriate number on a ten
    point scale with #1 strongly disagree and #10 strongly agree)

1. The church that keeps Jesus Christ as it first love:
   A. Do you keep Jesus Christ as your first love?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   B. Do you serve others with the love of Christ?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   C. Are you served by them with Christ’s love?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

2. The church that suffers for Christ’s sake:
   A. Have you ever suffered for the sake of Christ?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   B. Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

3. The church that keeps God’s truth:
   A. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim and not deny that Jesus is Christ the
      Lord and the Son of God, and that He died for your sins?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   B. In any and all circumstances, can you proclaim that the Bible is the Word of God,
      and that the Word is fully truth?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

4. The church that lives a holy life:
   A. Do you try to live a holy life?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
   B. Do you try to get others to turn back from sinning?
      1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
5. The church that is spiritually alive:
   A. Are you spiritually alive?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   B. Do you serve the Lord whole-heartedly and without reservation?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. The church that perseveres in difficult situations and environments:
   A. Do you persevere, not giving up when you are serving God in difficult situations
      and environments?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   B. Have you had many experiences of winning spiritual warfare in difficult situations
      and environments?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The church that has a spiritual passion for Christ:
   A. Do you have a spiritual passion for Christ?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   B. In the church, do you participate actively with a spiritual passion?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. The church that listens and obeys the Holy Spirit:
   A. Do you have an earnest desire to hear the voice of Holy Spirit?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   B. When you are convinced of the Holy Spirit’s voice, do you obey absolutely?
      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10


VITA

Jong Yoon Kim

PERSONAL
  Born in South Korea: April 15, 1969.

EDUCATIONAL
  B.A., Dong-A University, 1993.
  B.E., Japan Electronic College, Tokyo, 1996.

MINISTERIAL
  The Layman’s Missionary, Yohan Tokyo Christ Church, 1993-1996.
  Associate Pastor, Daeshindong Church, South Korea, 1997-present.

PROFESSIONAL
  Professor, Busan Arts College, 1996.

MILITARIAL
  Enlisted and discharged from the service (Korean Army), 1990-1992.