



## Letters, Lampstands, and the Lamb

Week 1 | September 10th, 2023  
Community Group Discussion Guide

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Membership Class

*Sunday, September 17th | 2pm-5pm*

We believe the church is central to all God is doing in the world. When you read the New Testament, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, people believe, disciples are made, and then churches are formed. When you put your faith in Jesus, you don't just get God as your Father, but you are now put in relationship with other Christians who are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You are now a part of the larger global Church, lived out in small local expressions, such as Citizens Church Charlotte.

This is why membership is so important. It's you committing to play your role in the larger family of God through a particular local congregation.

Our Membership Class is the first step towards membership at Citizens Church. If you're interested in becoming a member at Citizens, or just interested in finding out more about who we are, join us Sunday, September 17th from 2pm-5pm.

#### [MORE INFO + REGISTRATION](#)

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#### The Citizens Institute

*Applications due October 1*

Discipleship happens within the local church. We believe that no one should have to go outside of the local church to receive a theological education. In fact, for most people, going back to school or seminary just simply isn't an option.

The Citizens Institute exists to train and equip members in theology, doctrine, and practice to follow Jesus and lead in the local church.

The Citizens Institute offers three Core Modules to help our people internalize their faith and connect it practically to everyday life. Our Core Modules are for everyone, and we hope all Citizens members will go through them at some point.

This Spring we are kicking off the Institute with our first Core Module - Christian Practice. Spend 11 weeks from January - April, 2024 learning the ins and outs of how to follow Jesus in your everyday life.

#### [MORE INFO + REGISTRATION](#)

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## **Family Vacation**

*November 10-12, Black Mountain, NC*

Registration for this year's Family Vacation is now open! We value the chance to get away, retreat, rest, and spend time together as a church family, and we'd love for you to join us this year! On November 10-12, we are heading to the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC. We will be staying in two cabins on the property, and will have a main meeting area for family style meals and sessions.

Family vacation is open to all Citizens Church members, members-in-progress (have taken membership class), and children of current members. The cost of the trip is \$100/adult and \$25/child. Scholarships are available if needed, but please talk to Dan about that sooner rather than later.

If you're planning to attend, please register ASAP. The earlier you register, the easier it is for us to plan for the weekend. You can register and get more details by clicking the graphic below.

[\*\*MORE INFO + REGISTRATION\*\*](#)

## **REVIEW THE MISSION**

Take some time to review who various people are building relationships with and seeking to share the gospel with.

**Pray for these individuals - that God would open their eyes to the good news of the gospel.**

## PRAYER + SCRIPTURE

**Open with a brief word of prayer:** “God, we thank you for this time together. We open our hearts to how you might want to meet with us. Allow us to hear your voice and experience your work among us. Come Holy Spirit.”

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

### **Read Revelation 1:4-20**

*4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

*9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”*

*12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*

*17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. 19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

**1-2 minutes of silent reflection.**

**Close with this short prayer:** “. Jesus, we pray that our time in this sermon series brings our attention to you, our Savior. May the Spirit help us worship Jesus more and be humbled, ready to receive correction by the words in your Holy Scripture. Amen.”

**As you reflect on Revelation 1:4-20, what is the Holy Spirit showing or teaching you?**

## SERMON DISCUSSION

### WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH?

Starting off this sermon series, the question was posed: “What makes a church successful?” And we could have a number of different responses to that question. Things like

- The number of people in worship
- Owning our own building
- The size of our budget
- The number of changed lives, healed marriages, or developed leaders
- The amount of social good we do in the city

**Coming into this sermon series, what tends to be your focus when evaluating the success of Citizens Church?**

### FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS

According to Jesus, success is not numerical growth, a building, a budget amount...it's not even the amount of people that come to faith in Him (though those are not all bad things in and of themselves).

The #1 metric for success for a church is faithfulness to Jesus.

Specifically, faithfulness in 4 things:

- In doctrine – what a church teaches and believes.
- In holiness – how a church lives out those beliefs.
- In love – an earnest desire and affection for Jesus.
- In patient suffering – how a church patiently endures the trials of this world as they wait for Christ to return.

**In which of these four areas would you like to see your faithfulness to Jesus grow during this series?**

### WHY WE ARE FAITHFUL TO JESUS

In the sermon, Tim showed us how Revelation 1 tells us to be faithful to Jesus for three reasons:

- What He has done - The Gospel, freed us from sin + made us a kingdom of priests to God
- What He will do - Conquer His enemies of Satan, Sin, and Death
- And Who He is - the Holy and Glorious Messiah, King, and Judge

**How does what Jesus has done, will do, and who He is, lead you into these steps of faithfulness in the weeks to come?**

## SERIES PRACTICE

One of our key discipleship values as a church is that of practice. Moving forward, we are going to begin emphasizing various spiritual practices during each sermon series. These practices are meant to coincide with the theme of the series, and something we invite our church to practice as a part of their spiritual formation.

### PRACTICE #1 - FASTING

In its most basic form, Biblical fasting is the intentional abstaining from food for a spiritual purpose. As Christians, we intentionally face the pain of hunger and lack to direct our hearts towards God.

For resources on fasting, check out:

- [www.rhythmsandformation.com](http://www.rhythmsandformation.com)
- <https://citychurchknox.com/sermons/formation-v-fasting-rethinking-our-relationship-with-food>

For this series, we are encouraging individuals to fast from all food and non-water beverages from dinner Wednesday through dinner Thursday, as a means of focusing our attention on God and asking Him to deepen our love for Him. Although there is freedom to adjust this to fit your various circumstances or season.

### PRACTICE #2 - WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

The second practice we are inviting our church family to participate in is that of worship through song. Singing is a great way to help connect what we believe in our minds to what we experience in our hearts.

To that end, our worship team has put together a playlist to help guide this practice for us, that you can sing along with in your car, in your home, on a run, or anywhere else that seems appropriate.

You can find the playlist here:



**Take some time now before you close discussing plans for fasting and worship during the next 8 weeks as a group.**

## CLOSING PRAYER

Pray over what was shared in the discussion, for your group to be united in the gospel, and for help from the Holy Spirit to be shaped to be more like Jesus as we put God's ways into practice.