

# Group Discussion Guide for Week of 3/21/2021

Riverside Home Group Discussion Guide

Scripture Text from Sunday Sermon; *Revelation 17-18 (NIV)*

**17** One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters.<sup>2</sup> With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”<sup>3</sup> Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.<sup>4</sup> The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.<sup>5</sup> The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

<sup>6</sup> I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.<sup>7</sup> Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.<sup>8</sup> The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.<sup>9</sup> “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.<sup>10</sup> They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while.<sup>11</sup> The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.<sup>12</sup> “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.<sup>13</sup> They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.<sup>14</sup> They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”<sup>15</sup> Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.<sup>16</sup> The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.<sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled.<sup>18</sup> The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

**18** After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.<sup>2</sup> With a mighty voice he shouted: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.<sup>3</sup> For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”<sup>4</sup> Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,<sup>5</sup> so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;<sup>6</sup> for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.<sup>7</sup> Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup.<sup>8</sup> Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’<sup>9</sup> Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.<sup>10</sup> “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.<sup>11</sup> Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: ‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!’<sup>12</sup> “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore—<sup>13</sup> cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;<sup>14</sup> cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and human beings sold as slaves.<sup>15</sup> “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’<sup>16</sup> The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn<sup>17</sup> and cry out: ‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!’<sup>18</sup> In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’ “Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.<sup>19</sup> When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’<sup>20</sup> They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: ‘Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’<sup>21</sup> “Rejoice over her, you heavens! Rejoice, you people of God! Rejoice, apostles and prophets! For God has judged her with the judgment she imposed on you.”<sup>22</sup> Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.<sup>23</sup> The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.<sup>24</sup> The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s important people. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.<sup>25</sup> In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”

## General Question Bank

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)  
**Know** (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)  
**Together** (What is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?)

## Discussion/Topic Starter (Ice Breaker)

- Where do we see the dark side of consumerism today? Do you feel at home in our consumer society? In what ways are your aspirations in life shaped by Babylon’s vision of what the good life is?

## Revelation 17-18

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

\*\*\*Another way to ask: "Choose one verse or phrase from the passage that stands out to you. This could be something you're intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further." Now share it with the group

- O: Look at Revelation 17:1-8. Whose judgment does the angel invite John to observe next? What reason could there be that the image of the "prostitute" used to describe Babylon and the system it represents?
- O: Look at Revelation 17:9-18. What explanation does the angel offer for the identity of the seven heads and ten horns first mentioned in v. 7? What do the ten kings do first in vs. 12-14? In what way might we describe the next action of the ten kings (vs. 15-18) as "poetic justice"?
- I: Compare the women of chapters 12 and 17: their location (12:1,14; 17:3); their clothing (12:1; 17:4); their offspring (12:5,17; 17:5); who loves them (12:6; 17:2-3); how they are sustained (12:6,14-16; 17:3,6); who hates them (12:13-17; 17:16; 18:8). What do these deliberate contrasts tell us about the formation of our own lives?
- I: Babylon has worshiped idols: the quick-fix pseudo-divinities that promise the earth, take all you have to give and then leave you with nothing. What would you say are the life-draining effects of serving false gods today?
- I: Look at Revelation 18:1-8. What message does the angel with great authority bring (vv. 2-3)? As people who live in a society that places a high value on achievement, what lessons might we learn from the fall of Babylon?
- A: Look at Revelation 18:9-24. What sort of things are the kings and merchants weeping about? As we look at our own hearts, are there ways we "grieve as those who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13)? What does this say about our allegiance?
- A: John's vision of the prostitute shows that the gravest danger for God's people is often not external persecution but the allurements of prosperity, social advancement, and ease of lifestyle. The call to "Come out of her, my people" in Revelation 18:4 is a real issue for each of us. How might you apply this call to your life moving forward?

-How WILL you respond this week? What one question do you want us to ask of you next week in regard to this?

#### **Recommended Follow-up:**

- Pray: Pray together, and really focus in on that we are meeting with God, He's in the room, and He wants us to KNOW Him. Pray together, spend some time being silent (so we can listen, aka, "*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*") Then pray in response to the content from this letter in Revelation as well as to what the H.S. reveals to us.
- Respond: Spend this week responding to God's word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week's devotional guide.
- Read: Next week's sermon (3/28/2021) will focus on Revelation 19:1-10. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through it, and meditate on it.

## An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides\*:

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **“Know, Be, Do”** person. And since Jesus told us to “make disciples” we use the “Know, Be, Do” framework in our discussion guides. We believe the process for this transformation happens in community, hence the **“Together”** part of the Riverside mission as well.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- “What do we need to **know** about God?”
- “Who do we need to **be**?”
- “What do we need to **do**?”
- **“Together**, what is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?”

Here is what we mean by “Know, Be, Do” (based on [Colossians 1:9-10](#), see below)

**Know** – *“to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives..., growing in the knowledge of God.”* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

**Be** – *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.”* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

**Do** – *“bearing fruit in every good work, ...”* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *“bearing fruit in every good work”* then yields more *“growing in the knowledge of God.”* In other words, while “Know, Be, Do” are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)*  
To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week**.

### Colossians 1:9-10, NIV

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,...*

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\* As discussed in Riverside’s HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide relies heavily upon the following resources: *Thomas, Mack. The Complete Bible Discussion Guide: Old Testament and New Testament, Serendipity Bible for Personal and Small Group Study, Zondervan, along with the following group studies on Revelation: Wright (978-0830821990), MacArthur (978-0718035198), Navigators (978-0891092735), Lucado (978-0310086666), Witmer (978-1433543203), Stott (978-0830821792), Wiersbe (978-1434702319), Hathcoat (978-1511401296), Smith (978-1645070726), Hewitt (978-1501855443), Stevens (978-0830830213), Arthur (978-0736908061).*