

Sermon Study Guide - Battle for the Mind - Revelation 2:12–17 – July 19th

Purpose

To help us recognize that following Jesus involves a battle for the mind. Jesus commends the church in Pergamum for remaining faithful under outside pressure, but He corrects them for tolerating false teaching inside the church. This study invites us to bring our thoughts, assumptions, loyalties, and practices under the Lordship of Christ.

Icebreaker

What is one cultural message people often accept without questioning?

Scripture

Read **Revelation 2:12–17** aloud. Additional **Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5**

Observations from the Text

Jesus introduces Himself as the One “who has the sharp, double-edged sword.” This is a battle image. Jesus speaks with authority, and His Word cuts through deception.

Pergamum was a spiritually difficult city. Jesus says they lived “where Satan has his throne.” The city was filled with temples, emperor worship, and false claims about salvation. Yet Jesus commends the church: “You remain true to my name.” They did not deny Him, even when Antipas was killed.

But Jesus also says, “Nevertheless, I have a few things against you.” They were resisting pressure outside the church while tolerating false teaching inside the church. Some held to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, which led to compromise around idolatry and sexual immorality.

Jesus calls them to repent. Repentance is not just feeling bad. It is a change of mind — a new way of seeing and living under Jesus.

Core Teaching

Pergamum reminds us that the Christian life includes a battle of ideas. John Stott said, “Here a pitched battle was being fought, in which the soldiers were not men but ideas.” Ideas are not neutral. What we believe, tolerate, repeat, and normalize begins to shape who we become.

The church must be radically welcoming to people, but not radically welcoming to every idea. Jesus welcomes all kinds of people into His community, but everyone who comes is called to change. All are welcome, but all are called to submit their thinking to Jesus.

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The danger in Pergamum was subtle compromise. The church could recognize the pressure outside, but they were less discerning about what they tolerated inside. That is a warning for every church. We may resist obvious cultural pressure while quietly absorbing ideas about identity, sexuality, politics, consumerism, fear, distrust, or being right.

Jesus is not anti-pleasure or anti-body. He created the body, meals, fellowship, and sexual intimacy as good gifts. But He is against deception and slavery. False ideas can twist good gifts into compromise.

Jesus ends with encouragement. To the one who overcomes, He promises hidden manna and a white stone with a new name. The world says, “Feed on approval, pleasure, ideology, control, or being right.” Jesus says, “Feed on Me.” He also gives us our truest identity. We are not finally named by culture, wounds, success, or failure. We are named by Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you from Jesus’ words to Pergamum?
2. Why can churches sometimes discern false ideas “out there” more easily than false ideas “in here”?
3. What does it mean to welcome every person while submitting every idea to Jesus?
4. Where do you see the world trying to “squeeze us into its mold”?
5. What ideas or assumptions might CBC need to bring under the Lordship of Christ?
6. How does feeding on Jesus renew the mind?

Digging Deeper

Read **Romans 12:1–2**.

How does Paul connect worship, nonconformity, and the renewal of the mind?

Read **2 Corinthians 10:3–5**.

What does it mean to take every thought captive to Christ?

Reflection and Prayer

Where might Jesus be calling you to repent — to change your mind and bring your thinking under His Lordship?

Pray that Jesus would renew our minds, expose false ideas, free us from lies, and help CBC welcome every person with love while submitting every thought to Christ.