



**“A Word to the Weak”
— Dear Church—
Small Group Plan**

*Every Moment Of Time,
Every Square Inch Of Space,
Has Been Claimed By God,
And Counter-Claimed By Satan.*

-- C.S. Lewis

The ancient city of Philadelphia was located 28 miles southeast of Sardis at the eastern end of a valley leading to the great central plain. It was in a very strategic site. Philadelphia stood where the borders of three countries met, and as a border town, it hosted one of the greatest highways in ancient world. It ran from Europe to the east and was a gateway from one continent to another.

But there was one serious problem with the location. The district was dangerously volcanic and Philadelphia sat on a geological fault. The ancient historian Strabo called Philadelphia "a city full of earthquakes." Earth tremors were frequent and in AD 17 a severe earthquake destroyed Philadelphia, Sardis and ten other cities. Philadelphia had to be completely rebuilt. It's interesting how these two pieces of history, the power of the highway and the weakness of the geology, find their way into this letter.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Why do people today hide or even deny any personal weakness?
- Of the following three negative responses to personal weakness, which have you observed to be the most frequently used?
 - Minimize It? To pretend my failure is really not that serious?
 - Mask It? To cover my failure so no one will see?
 - Milk It? To present myself as the victim in order to control others?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

**A KEY — A DOOR
Revelation 3:7-10**

⁷ *To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.* ⁸ *I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have*

kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars — I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

- What does the “key of David” open (vs. 7-8; 4:1) (cf. Is. 22:22-24, Mt. 16:19)?
- Who opened the door and who holds the key? Why is this significant for those in Philadelphia who struggle with weakness and confidence?
- What is the open door that can’t be shut (cf. Acts 14:27, 1 Cor. 16:9, Col. 4:3-4)?

A CROWN — A PILLAR

Revelation 3:11-13

¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- What is the crown that no one can take?
- With pillars and temples collapsing all over the city with each earth-tremor, what message is Jesus giving when he compares Philadelphian Christians to pillars in God’s temple bearing God’s name?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

GOD WILL WORK THROUGH MY WEAKNESS

2 Corinthians 12:10

... for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- How does our weakness open the door to God’s strength?
- In addition to Paul who comes to your mind who allowed God’s strength to flow through their weakness?

GOD ISN’T TURNED AWAY BY WEAKNESS

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are.

- How can Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses?
- Was Jesus really tempted “just as we are?” Could He have sinned?

EVEN IN WEAKNESS I CAN RESPOND IN FAITH

Revelation 3:8

I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

- Does it give you strength to hear Jesus say, “*I know that you have little strength?*” Explain
- How can we continue to choose God even when we are spiritually exhausted?
- The letter to the Philadelphia is addressed to a group, not an individual. How do our spiritual relationships empower us to be faithful?
- Close by praising God for crossing the barrier of our weakness through the blood of Jesus. Thank Him for the spiritual family He has put us in. And recommit to Him a life of faithful, humble dependence.