

FAQs about Revelation by Jen Wilkin

The book of Revelation is an intimidating book of the Bible, and we know the leadership task ahead of you may feel daunting. But it doesn't have to be! We asked Jen to address some questions you may have as you begin (or are considering) to lead a group through this Bible study. Here is her encouragement for you.

+ **What is your personal position on the End Times?**

What perspective is used to teach the study?

As I do with all secondary issues, I do not disclose my personal position. Nor do I attempt to recruit to a particular position. The four major interpretive views are presented in an appendix, and I encourage students to explore the ones with which they are not familiar.

Like my other studies, the *Revelation* study takes a Bible literacy approach to the book, using simple tools to help us attempt to hear the book the way it was heard by its original audience (more on this below!). I hope and believe this approach will help any Bible student, no matter her particular position on the End Times. We will focus attention on John's Spirit-inspired practice of recapitulation—the skillful repetition of ideas from the Old Testament, as well as the skillful repetition of ideas within the book of Revelation itself.

+ **Can I lead a group through Revelation if I've never understood the book myself?**

Yes! The study is designed to allow leaders to be co-learners and facilitators, not teachers. The teaching element is covered in the videos. If you're able to lead a guided discussion through the workbook questions highlighted in the leader guide at the end of each week's homework, you can do this! The group discussion time is intended to take place before the teachings are watched. This means your group will not always arrive at satisfying answers to their questions before they watch the videos. That's not only OK; it's intentional. Dissonance is the first sign that learning is taking place. Group discussion is an excellent place to explore and stretch our thinking versus land on the right answer. As the leader, you don't have to be an expert, just a good conversationalist. The video teachings should resolve most, if not all, of the questions that the homework raises.

+ What encouragement can I give to women who are intimidated or hesitant to study this book?

You're certainly not alone! I was intimidated and hesitant myself. Revelation felt like a book that only an expert could understand. Not only that, but its message also felt terrifying and strange. I don't feel that way about it anymore. More importantly, I don't think the churches who heard Revelation read aloud to them two thousand years ago felt scared or confused. I think they understood its message and took encouragement from it. You can, too!

+ How should I describe the Bible study method used in this book to help others understand the approach we will take?

As with all my studies, the *Revelation* study follows a Bible literacy approach. Following the genre rules for apocalyptic writing, it pursues a symbolic reading that takes us back to the Old Testament to ask what the original audience heard and understood. We consider the historical, cultural, and textual context to help put us in the seats of the seven churches who heard Revelation read aloud. One of the main goals of the study will be to give students a working knowledge of what the book says. To that end, the study traces a structure of memorable seven "sevens" found in the book. The first teaching video describes in detail the approach we will take. You might watch it before your group does to help you prepare for their questions.

+ People have often read books about Revelation. You wrote a study. What is the difference between a book and a Bible study on Revelation? How should I describe the Bible study method used in this book to help others understand the approach we will take?

A Bible study invites us to be active learners versus passive consumers of the ideas of others. It doesn't just tell, it asks. It allows learners to feel the dissonance of what they don't yet understand before helping them arrive at answers. Not only that, a good Bible study gives the learner tools that are useful for interpreting and applying. It's also ideal for use in group discussions in a way a book may not be. As with my other studies, this one focuses on movement through three stages of learning: comprehension, interpretation, and application. Because of the nature of apocalyptic literature, we spend a good amount of time on comprehension—understanding what the text says. Learners may not finish the study with complete clarity on Revelation's interpretation (that would be a tall order!), but they should have a working knowledge of the book and a good sense of where its images and stories originated, as well as a good set of tools for future reading. In terms of understanding the Big Story of the Bible, that's no small accomplishment. They'll also find great assurance in the book's message, assurance that yields real-life application for our daily lives.

+ One of my group members believes strongly in a specific interpretation of a passage in Revelation and is asking me about it/taking over group time. How should I answer her/respond?

No doubt, most of your group members will come into this study with at least a handful of strong interpretive beliefs. It's a good practice to set a clear expectation up front about how such views fit into the group discussion time. At your first meeting, give the group some discussion guidelines: *We will honor the group by not dominating the discussion. We are allowed to disagree on non-essential views, but we can do so charitably.* And so on. Encourage those with strong views to explore them further outside of group time! What countering views could they learn more about to strengthen or challenge their current view? The first video will help you set expectations like these, but it would be good to reiterate them in person to your group, as well.

+ Our group discussion is becoming focused on confusing symbolism in what we're reading. How do I best address those questions?

The earlier you are in the study, the more likely this is to be the case. As we move deeper into the book, the symbolism gets easier to interpret because we can connect it to previous passages. We don't typically view confusion as part of learning, but it absolutely is. We don't like the dissonance we feel when we don't understand something, and we are accustomed to googling an answer to make that feeling go away. This study will challenge you to take a different approach, one with a long-term yield versus a short-term one. If your group is mired in confusion, encourage them to "trust the process" across the length of the study. Reading apocalyptic writing is a skill we improve upon as we practice. I can't promise that the whole book will be crystal clear to us at the end, but I can promise we will have made good strides, and that the main point of the book will be firmly in our grasp.

+ Do you recommend a structure for groups that want to spend more than 10 weeks on this study?

The study can be used in an eleven-week format by utilizing the wrap-up questions included in the workbook. Though there is not a video teaching to accompany them, they are a good means for putting a bow on the study. If you want to move at a slower pace in general, you could alternate weeks of gathering to discuss the homework and gathering to watch and discuss the teachings. In other words, utilize one week's content across two weeks. Following this approach, you could stretch the study length to twenty weeks, or to twenty-one weeks if you include the wrap-up questions.

+ Should I or my group do any kind of pre-study or prep work before our study starts up?

There is no required pre-work, but if you want to get a head start, begin reading Revelation repetitively. Listen to it on a Bible app. Read it in various translations. Don't try to draw conclusions or arrive at interpretations—just let the words begin to sink in. Let yourself begin to inhabit the landscape of Revelation. You might use [a Scripture journal](#) as your primary tool for reading, marking anything that piques your curiosity or catches your attention. Repetitive reading will be a part of the study method, and it's the easiest first step in growing in Bible literacy.

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