

Letters and Ligaments

What a blessing it is for our churches to gather together and have great fellowship with one another! Meetings such as this require extra planning, effort and patience, but they are an important part of keeping our churches close. To inspire us towards great fellowship, I want to direct us towards two pictures in the New Testament; letters and ligaments.

The seven churches that John addresses in Revelation were located in metropolitan areas located in the Roman controlled western part of the peninsula of Asia Minor. The power of the gospel was evident in the province of Asia, as there were Christians in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

The disciples in these churches were key in spreading the gospel to the entire region, being located in strategic, cultural, economic and political regions within Asia Minor in which the Word of God could spread rapidly. The silversmith Demetrius attested to the impact of the Word of God when he complained, "And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia." (*Acts 19:26*)

While the populations in these communities were diverse and the cities were spread out across the area, you can see a regional emphasis highlighted in the Scriptures. Paul encouraged churches to share the letters he wrote to them with each other. In his letter to the Colossians, he states, "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea." (*Col. 4:16*)

In the case of John's letter to the churches in Asia Minor, an individual message was given for each church, but John was instructed to share the entire revelation with all the churches. This was done deliberately and was crucial in connecting and strengthening all seven churches.

Ministries

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How so? The church in Laodicea had a lot to change, but could take specific encouragement from Smyrna's example, and the fact that other churches were also called to repent. Smyrna would be facing a challenging time, but could be inspired by the perseverance of the disciples in Pergamum. All the churches could pray for Thyatira, but would also be encouraged that the church there was doing more than they had done at first.

From that one letter, the disciples across the region would know exactly what to pray for, be inspired by and to be on their guard about in their own relationship with God.

In the Bible, letters such as these were powerful tools used to keep churches connected. As you think about that, consider this, because in *2 Corinthians 3:2*, Paul puts forth an interesting concept. "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone." In the spirit of this verse, each of us has the power to build up our region of churches as we meet together.

Who will you build up during our time together? Who can you pray for? What will you share so that others can be inspired? How will you allow others to call you higher? Paul would go on to remark that, "the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow." As we strengthen and inspire one another, we strengthen and inspire the body of Christ in this region. We may not think a lot about our ligaments, but they were vital in keeping our body functioning properly.

Letters and ligaments; as disciples, that's what we are. Whether you ask for prayers or pass along a victory story, you will have a powerful impact on the region just because you choose to share what's going on in your life and pray for those you interact with. Someone might need to hear exactly what you are going through right now.

If you are visiting today, thanks for taking the time to worship with us; we are glad you are here and hope that you feel welcomed. How can we help you in your walk with God? Please, talk to someone today and set up a time to look at God's word; wherever you are, we are all here to help.

These gatherings are a great blessing! We are so much better together. Thank you for your work, sacrifice and perseverance wherever you are in the region. May God richly bless your work for him, and may the gospel ring out from all our churches!

**To God be the Glory,
Ruben**