



Vigilant Against Complacency

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WHEN
HAVE YOU
NEEDED
EXTRA
REMINDERS?

The
POINT >

Stay alert and focused on the things of God.

> REVELATION 3:1-6

¹“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

“I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. ⁴Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

⁵The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’



FOR LEADERS (15 minutes)

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

All people have sinned, and have been separated from God, but we can be restored to a relationship with Him when we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin.

Message to Leaders

Jesus said to the church at Thyatira that even though they appeared to be alive, they were in fact dead. Because of sin, we are all spiritually dead apart from our receiving new life in Christ. This new life is a gift from God given to those who repent of sin, and in turn, wholeheartedly pursue Jesus in faith and obedience.

› Engage Option 1

Select a student volunteer to come up front. Give the student a task to solve, such as a math problem or riddle, in front of the group in 20 seconds or less. Give all of the other students noise makers and allow them to try to distract the student solving the problem. Say, **“Staying alert and focused on the things of God will allow us to tune out the distractions of the world while serving God with purpose.”**

› Engage Option 2

Decorate the room with objects representing distractions in the world, such as relationships, sports, careers, and technology. Say, **“If we focus our attention on the wrong things, we will become complacent in our faith. Keeping our focus on the things of God will allow us to grow in our walk with Him.”**

› Engage Option 3

Search the Internet for “What Does The Bible Say? Complacency - Bible Studies for Life.” Play the video as you begin the session. Say, **“Avoiding laziness and pride while striving to honor God will allow us to remain focused on God’s will for our lives.”**

NOTE: Always make sure you preview any video clip you show students and ensure it is appropriate for your church and ministry.

LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider the following:

ITEM 5: Engage students in the session and introduce the main idea by displaying the **Be Alert** poster.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.



Children need a lot of reminders. Okay, let's be honest—we all need a lot of reminders. It's often easy to be distracted by talking with friends, scrolling through social media, or binging TV series, and we have to be reminded to do our homework, feed the cat, or take out the trash. We get distracted from what we should be doing, and then another distraction comes along and distracts us further. In order to focus, we need constant reminders.

A lot of things deserve our focus: family and friends, school work and extracurriculars, our jobs, health, and church activities. But even when we're focusing on these good things, we still need continual reminders for what is most important.

The church in Sardis had a good reputation, but they had become distracted from what was most important and had grown complacent. Jesus reminded them to focus on what matters.

THE SETTING

Most major cities in the ancient Mediterranean world had an acropolis. A fortified citadel high on a hill or plateau, the city's citizens took refuge there in the event of an enemy attack. It's also where sacred buildings were built for safety from destruction. One of the most impressive acropolises was located above the city of Sardis, the next city in Asia Minor with a church Jesus addressed.

FACT:

The human brain has about one billion neurons, and each neuron has the potential to create 1000 connections to other neurons.¹ So the next time you can't remember an answer on your literature exam, there's really no excuse!



IMPART (30 minutes)

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.

REVELATION 3:1-2

*“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. **REVELATION 3:1-2**”*

Sardis was one of the oldest, wealthiest, and most important cities in Asia Minor. The city was set on a 1,500-foot-high plateau with the Pactolus River flowing at its base, like a moat, and the citizens mistakenly saw their location as impregnable. This misplaced confidence led them into complacency. However, the city wasn’t impenetrable at all, and they were conquered multiple times—first by the Persians, then by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans. In 17 A.D., Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake, and although the Romans rebuilt the city, it never recaptured its former glory.

This was the environment of the church in Sardis. When Jesus addressed the church, He identified Himself as the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The apostle John had previously identified the seven stars as the seven messengers, or angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20). The seven spirits likely refers to the Holy Spirit (1:4). In his prophecy about the Messiah, Isaiah mentioned the Holy Spirit seven ways (Isa. 11:2-3):

- The Spirit of the Lord
- The Spirit of wisdom
- The Spirit of understanding
- The Spirit of counsel
- The Spirit of strength
- The Spirit of knowledge
- The Spirit of the fear of the Lord

This captures the Holy Spirit in His fullness—and the church in Sardis was in great need of the Spirit of God.

Jesus gave no indication that false doctrine was being taught in the church or that there were people causing trouble. The church looked problem-free, but they weren’t. Jesus spoke directly to say that although they gave the appearance of “being alive,” they were dead! The church had adopted the same attitude as the rest of the city and was relying on its past successes. The church of Sardis was known for being alive and active, and people would have known of their good works. But Jesus could see below the surface, and He knew their works were empty. They were dead.

Jesus issued a stern command: Wake up and strengthen what remains! Just like the city had become distracted and complacent, so had the church. They were Christian in name and their works may have looked good to an observer, but they weren’t alive in the Spirit.

Today, it can be easy for churches to rest in the past. Satisfied with past successes, the church can become complacent and fail to complete the works God has given them to do. Our work is not complete until the day Christ calls His church home, and we must make sure to live by the Spirit every day, devoting ourselves to obeying God from a heart that loves Him above all else.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 38)

1 What does spiritual complacency look like?

2 List some ways the church may be suffering from complacency today.



IMPART

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.

REVELATION 3:3

Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. **REVELATION 3:3**

Jesus called the church to remember what they had received from Him—specifically the things they had learned about Him. From a biblical perspective, remembering is a valuable exercise—the Jews were called to remember God’s delivering them from slavery through celebrating the passover, and the church today is called to remember Jesus’ sacrifice through receiving the Lord’s Supper. The church in Sardis needed to remember the impact Jesus had on their lives when they came to believe in Him.

When people come to faith, salvation is often accompanied by a sense of excitement. Because of the hope Jesus offers and His forgiveness from sin, people can’t help but share the goodness of God with others. However, over time, the enthusiasm has a way of wearing off, and many become complacent or even apathetic. They simply quit living in obedience. Taking time to remember the ways Jesus has impacted our lives in the past can help to return our hearts to the place where we experience joy in Christ.

Jesus wanted the church in Sardis to do more than just remember—He wanted them to repent. Repentance means simply turning away from living the world’s ways and returning to Jesus. It’s a 180-degree change in direction. Without repentance, no one can experience the joy and fulfillment that comes only through a healthy and growing relationship with Christ. If the church failed to repent from sin and turn back to Him, Jesus said that He would come like a thief in the night. When a thief breaks into a house, he has one purpose in mind—to take any valuable items that may be in our houses. A thief never sends a message ahead of time. Instead, he looks for the moment when we are most vulnerable, when our guard is down, and when we have failed to take precautions making sure our valuables are secure.

Jesus told His disciples that His second coming would be like a thief in the night (Luke 12:39- 40). Jesus’ return is something believers can joyfully anticipate, but Jesus was not referring to His second coming in verse 3. Jesus’ words carried a threat. Unless they repented, Jesus would visit their church for the purpose of discipline and chastening.

We must choose to live in ways that clearly demonstrate whole-hearted commitment to Jesus. #BSFLtheChurch



DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 39)

- 3** What are some consequences of not being spiritually alert?
- 4** How does Jesus’ promised return motivate us to stay alert?
- 5** How can we keep our focus on Jesus every day?



REVELATION 3:4-6

Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ **REVELATION 3:4-6**

The church in Sardis was not without hope—they could still repent! There were a few in the church who had remained faithfully devoted to Jesus. They had not given in to merely living on past hopes and successes. Further, they had refused to make compromises, falling into sin. Instead, they continued to seek Christ, living in obedience to Him. Jesus promised three specific things to those who remained faithful.

- **Dressed in white:** During the reign of King Croesus in Sardis, no temple worshiper was allowed to approach the temple of the gods with soiled or unclean garments. Worshipers were required to wear clean, white robes to approach their gods. Their clothes may have been white, but their lives were stained with sin. Unfortunately, that was true in the church, as well, with the exception of the faithful few. But Jesus said the faithful would walk with Him in white. White is the symbol of purity, and we are made pure only through the blood of Jesus. These white garments are gifts given to believers who remain faithful and true.
- **Permanently listed in the book of life:** Jesus promised the faithful in Sardis that their names would appear in the Lamb’s book of life. This doesn’t mean that once our names are recorded in the book of life, they can be erased. Rather, it is a promise that the believers whose names are entered in this book will spend all of eternity with Christ. When a person’s name is entered into this book, it cannot be erased, and we never have to worry about their loving salvation.
- **Acknowledged before the Father:** Jesus openly acknowledges us as His children! When we faithfully stand with Him, He does the same for us. “Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven” (Matt. 10:32). Even now, He stands at the Father’s side, interceding for us as our advocate (1 John 2:1).

The church at Sardis had the opportunity to respond in repentance, and in areas of our own lives that may not be aligned with God’s commands, we have that same opportunity. We must choose to live in ways that clearly demonstrate whole-hearted commitment to Jesus. We must not grow complacent, allowing our work for the Lord to remain incomplete. Our garments must not be stained with sin. Let’s live every day to reflect the goodness of Jesus!

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 39)

- 6** How can our churches be like the church at Sardis?
- 7** What things can distract us from focusing on God?
- 8** What makes Jesus’ message to the church at Sardis especially relevant to Christians today?



LIVE IT OUT (10 minutes)

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // PEOPLE

All people have sinned, and have been separated from God, but we can be restored to a relationship with Him when we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin.

Jesus said to the church at Thyatira that even though they appeared to be alive, they were in fact dead. Because of sin, we are all spiritually dead apart from our receiving new life in Christ. This new life is a gift from God given to those who repent of sin, and in turn, wholeheartedly pursue Jesus in faith and obedience.

>CHRIST

Jesus told the church to remember and repent. They were to remember the things they had heard, specifically, the gospel. And they were to repent, which means specifically to turn around—to turn from sin and turn to Jesus.

9 How do you sometimes “forget” to live out the things God has called you to?

10 What in your life is God calling you to turn away from?

Commit to turning to Jesus. Choose every day to follow Him.



LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT // STAY ALERT AND FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD.



› COMMUNITY

God never meant for the Christian life to be lived alone. Partner with a Christian friend to help each other stay faithful and focused on Christ.

11 Connect every day in person, with a phone call, or through a text or social media message to continually remind your friend of his or her commitment to following Jesus.

› CULTURE

Our culture claims to know what it means to be alive, but the world's values actually lead to death.

12 What does the world claim leads to a meaningful and happy life?

13 What does the Bible have to say about these?

This week, share with a non-believing friend about the true life that is found only in Jesus.