

A graphic featuring a large, gnarled tree trunk in the center, with two glowing circular openings. The word "GENESIS" is written in small, gold, all-caps letters above the tree, and "REVELATION" is written in the same style below it. The word "BOOKENDS" is written in large, white, serif, all-caps letters across the middle of the tree trunk. The background is a dark, atmospheric scene of a city street at night, with lights reflecting on the pavement.

GENESIS BOOKENDS REVELATION

LETTER TO A DYING CHURCH

REVELATION 3:1-6

SYNOPSIS

In Revelation 3:1-6, Christ rebukes the church in Sardis for having a reputation of spiritual life while being spiritually dead. Like the city that once fell through carelessness, the church had grown complacent and hypocritical, maintaining outward religious activity without a heart truly alive for God. Christ commands them to wake up, remember the Word they received, keep it, and repent. Genuine spiritual life comes through the power of both God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Those who conquer will be clothed in white, their names secure in the Book of Life, and confessed by Christ before the Father.

SERMON OUTLINE

1. **The Problem:** In the first three verses, Christ exposes the church in Sardis as spiritually dead despite a reputation for life. Their outward activity masks inward hypocrisy, so Christ commands them to wake up, strengthen what remains, and restore a heart truly alive for God.
2. **The Solution:** In Revelation 3:3-4 Christ calls the church in Sardis to restore true faith by remembering, keeping, and repenting according to God's Word, while relying on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to renew their hearts.
3. **The Promise:** Christ promises that those who overcome will be clothed in purity, securely written in the Book of Life, and personally confessed by Him before the Father and the angels.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LOOKING AT THE TEXT

These text-based questions are only guides for you, and you do not need to use them. The goal is to get your group studying the text before reflecting on the sermon. Some groups will do this quite naturally by just observing what they see in the text. Others may need a few guiding questions like the ones below.

1. In verse 1, Jesus says, “You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” What do you think it means that they have the “reputation of being alive?”
2. Look closely at verses 2 and 3. What specific commands does Jesus give to the church, and what do those commands suggest about their spiritual condition?
3. Verse 2 says, “I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.” What might it mean for works to be “incomplete,” and how does that deepen Jesus’ criticism of the church?
4. Verse 3 includes the warning that Jesus will come “like a thief.” Are there any other passages in scripture that come to mind when you think of this idea.

GROUP REFLECTION & APPLICATION

1. **Jesus says the church in Sardis had a reputation of being alive but was actually dead.** Where do you see the temptation in your own life to maintain the appearance of faith while your heart quietly drifts from God? What warning signs should we watch for in one another?
2. **The command “Wake up” implies spiritual complacency.** What are some ways modern Christians or churches slowly “fall asleep” spiritually? Share a time when you realized you had grown careless in guarding your heart.
3. **Jesus tells them to “remember what you received and heard.”** Think back to seasons when your love for Christ was stronger or more vibrant. What practices, truths, or circumstances were fueling that love then, and how might you recover them now?
4. **The sermon emphasized that both the Word and the Spirit are necessary for genuine faith.** In your daily life, what does it practically look like to depend on the Spirit while also anchoring yourself deeply in Scripture?
5. **Christ promises that he will confess the names of his people before the Father.** How should the reality of that future moment reshape the way we pursue holiness, repentance, and authentic faith together as a church today?