

Small Group Leader's Guide

Revelation 3:1-13 - Wake Up and Stay Faithful



Know It

1. Wake Up!

Revelation 3:1–6 — The Church at Sardis

Brief History of Sardis:

Sardis was once one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities in the ancient world. It was known for its impressive location on a steep hill that made the city seem almost impossible to conquer. Yet Sardis had been captured more than once because its defenders became overconfident and failed to stay alert.

That history makes Jesus' words especially powerful:

“Wake up!” — Revelation 3:2

The church at Sardis had a strong reputation. People thought they were alive and spiritually healthy, but Jesus saw beneath the surface and said, **“You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.”**

Jesus called them to wake up, strengthen what remained, remember what they had received, obey it, and repent.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus told Sardis, **“You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.”** What are some ways a Christian or a church can look spiritually healthy on the outside while becoming spiritually weak on the inside?
2. Jesus told them to **“wake up”** and **“strengthen what remains.”** What areas of your relationship with Jesus may need to be awakened or strengthened right now?
3. Revelation 3:5 promises that the one who overcomes will be clothed in white and acknowledged by Jesus before the Father. How should the assurance that Jesus knows you, keeps you, and claims you as His own motivate you to live faithfully?

Important Greek Words

γρηγορέω — grēgoreō — “Wake up / Be watchful” — Revelation 3:2–3

This word means **to stay awake, remain alert, or be watchful**. It is especially significant because Sardis had previously fallen to enemies when its guards failed to remain alert. Spiritually, Jesus is telling the church to recognize its dangerous condition and become spiritually vigilant again.

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στηρίζω — stērizō — “Strengthen” — Revelation 3:2

This word means **to strengthen, establish, make firm, or support something so that it does not collapse**. Jesus does not say everything in Sardis is gone. Something remains, and He commands them to strengthen it. This gives the church both a warning and hope for restoration.

νικάω — nikaō — “Overcome / Conquer” — Revelation 3:5

This means **to conquer, overcome, prevail, or be victorious**. Throughout Revelation, the overcomer is the person who continues faithfully with Christ. Jesus promises the overcomer white garments, security in the Book of Life, and acknowledgment before the Father.

1. Help the group move from appearance to reality.

Encourage members to think beyond church attendance, serving, or outward religious activity. The main issue in Sardis was that their reputation did not match their true spiritual condition. Gently lead the group to consider whether their private walk with Jesus matches what others see publicly.

2. Keep “Wake Up” focused on restoration, not condemnation.

Jesus’ words are strong, but He also says to “strengthen what remains.” Help the group see that Jesus is calling Sardis back because there is still something worth strengthening. Encourage honest self-examination while emphasizing that repentance is an invitation to renewed spiritual life.

3. Emphasize the assurance found in Revelation 3:5.

When discussing the “book of life,” avoid allowing the conversation to get lost in theological debate. Keep the focus on the promise Jesus gives to the faithful believer: He knows them, clothes them in righteousness, and openly acknowledges them before the Father. The goal is confidence in Christ that produces faithful living.

2. Stay Faithful

Revelation 3:7–13 — The Church at Philadelphia

Brief History of Philadelphia:

Philadelphia was a smaller city located in an earthquake-prone region of Asia Minor. The city experienced frequent tremors, and residents sometimes had to leave the city because of the danger.

Unlike Sardis, the church at Philadelphia receives **no rebuke from Jesus**. They apparently did not possess great power or influence, but Jesus praised them because they had **kept His Word and had not denied His name**.

Jesus told them:

“I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.” — Revelation 3:8

He also reminded them that He had placed before them **“an open door that no one can shut.”** Philadelphia reminds us that Jesus is not primarily looking for impressive strength. He is looking for **faithfulness**.

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Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus said the believers in Philadelphia had “little power,” yet He praised their faithfulness. What does this teach us about how Jesus measures spiritual success?
2. Jesus said He had placed an “open door” before them. What doors of opportunity might Jesus be opening in your life right now to serve Him, share your faith, or make a difference in someone's life?
3. Jesus praised them because they kept His Word and did not deny His name. What pressures make it difficult for Christians today to stay faithful to Jesus, and what helps us remain faithful when those pressures come?

Important Greek Words:

τηρέω — tēreō — “Keep / Guard / Obey” — Revelation 3:8, 10

This word means **to keep, guard, preserve, observe, or obey**. Jesus praises Philadelphia because they had “kept” His Word. Interestingly, in verse 10 Jesus uses the same word when He promises, **“I also will keep you.”** Their faithfulness to His Word is met by Christ's faithful care for them.

ὑπομονή — hypomonē — “Patient endurance” — Revelation 3:10

This means **steadfast endurance, perseverance, or remaining faithful under pressure**. It is not passive waiting. It describes continuing to follow Jesus even when circumstances make faithfulness difficult. Philadelphia demonstrates that staying faithful often means continuing to obey when quitting would be easier.

κρατέω — krateō — “Hold on / Keep possession” — Revelation 3:11

This word means **to grasp firmly, retain, take possession of, or refuse to let go**. Although our sermon point is **“Stay Faithful,”** this word explains what that faithfulness looks like. Jesus is telling Philadelphia to continue faithfully with what they already possess—the truth, His Word, their witness, and their allegiance to Him.

1. Redefine success around faithfulness.

Philadelphia had “little power,” but Jesus commended them. Remind the group that spiritual success is not measured primarily by influence, resources, recognition, or numbers. Jesus values obedience, endurance, and faithfulness with what He has entrusted to us.

2. Help people recognize their “open doors.”

Encourage members to think practically. An open door may be a relationship, workplace conversation, opportunity to serve, family situation, ministry need, or chance to encourage someone. Help the group move from simply recognizing opportunities to asking, **“What step of obedience can I take this week?”**

3. Prepare the group to stay faithful under pressure.

Give members room to talk about real pressures they face without turning the discussion into complaints about culture. Bring the focus back to what helped Philadelphia endure: keeping Jesus' Word, refusing to deny His name, and patiently persevering. Encourage the group to identify one specific way they can remain faithful this week.