

FALSE REPUTATION

Sardis looked alive but was spiritually dead. Jesus calls them to wake up and strengthen what remains.



The city of Sardis was built around B.C. 500 and was once the capital city of Persia. It was positioned near mountains that housed many gold mines, making the city the monetary capital of the region. It's literally where currency as we know it was developed. And with all this gold flowing through, it made Sardis a very affluent city. They were known for easy money, luxury, and of course lavish immorality. Sardis was also well known for the massive graveyard in the city, and therefore engaged heavily in the worship of Cybele, a goddess said to be able to restore the dead to life. Geographically, the city was built on a narrow plateau 1500 feet above sea level, with cliffs on three sides and high walls extended up around the city, leaving only one major access point to protect. Armies never pulled off a frontal attack in the history of the city. However, twice in their history Sardis had been attacked, not by mighty armies, but of this luxurious city who had let their guards down living comfortable and overly confident. One attack came from intentional onlookers who simply spotted an unprotected gap, the other by a thief in the night who saw the easy opening, climbed the walls, and invaded.

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Pastor Jenna Luoto



LEADER GUIDE

Big Idea

True life in Christ is not about “doing church” but about being empowered and inspired by the work of the Spirit within us.

Key Themes

1. **Reputation vs. Reality** – A church (or believer) can appear alive outwardly while being spiritually dead inwardly. Jesus cares about what's real, not what looks impressive.
2. **The Danger of “Doing Church”** – Religious activity and ministry programs mean nothing if they are not fueled by the life of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Call to Wake Up and Return** – Jesus invites His people to repent, remember their first love, and rekindle the Spirit's fire within them.
4. **Hope of Renewal and Promise of Life** – Even the spiritually dead can be revived through Christ; those who overcome will walk with Him in purity and be secure in the Book of Life.

Scripture Reading

- Revelation 3:1-6 (read aloud as a group).

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Leader Tips:

- Help participants be honest about their own tendencies to go through the motions—share from your own life when you have fallen into this wrestle.
- Encourage testimony: have people share stories of when God reignited His Spirit in them.
- Draw out application: What practices in their lives and in your church bring true spiritual life vs. just activity?