

Small Group Discussion Questions

RENEWING OUR CHURCH'S MISSION – NO. 6

“Renewing Our Commitment to Reality” – Revelation 3:1-6

Theme: *Jesus Christ calls us to address areas of falsehood and hypocrisy in order to demonstrate an authentic commitment.*

An autopsy is a special surgical operation, performed by specially trained physicians, on a dead body. Autopsies can be ordered when there is suspicion of foul play or when there is some public health concern. In one sense, the first person to perform an autopsy was Jesus Christ. He didn't perform it on the dead, but on the living dead in a city called Sardis.

Unfortunately, this condition of being among the living dead is not confined to just this one church in the first century. Any church or professing Christian may be among the living dead. Or, if not dead, asleep, and in need of being awakened. Therefore, Jesus' diagnosis of the condition and His description for a cure apply just as much to churches and individuals today.

Gathering Together (Icebreaker)

What is your favorite reality TV show? Why?

Growing Together (Truth/Equipping)

Read Revelation 3:1-6:

1. Verse 1 refers to *“the seven spirits of God.”* More than likely, it refers to the Holy Spirit, with the number seven signifying the completeness of His work. Evidently, this “dead church” was attempting to operate without the Holy Spirit. Who or what is the Holy Spirit? Is the Spirit a Person or a force? See John 14:26 and 16:12-14.
2. The sermon mentioned 6 major factors that might cause a church to die. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 meaning not much of a factor and 10 a very strong factor), rate the strength of each both in your life and in our church. Discuss your answers and why you gave each rating. If you need to recall what is meant by any of the 6 factors, consult the expanded sermon outline, which is available at our website.

Causes of “Death”	Rate Yourself	Rate the Church
1. Reputation before character		

2. Religion before relationship		
3. Conformity before Christ		
4. The past before the present		
5. Fear before faith		
6. Comfort before outreach		

3. Churches can die when *reputation* (looking good, saying it right, performing it well) matters more than *character*. How does God's evaluation of a person or a church often differ from that of our own? See 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 15:8; Matthew 23:28.

4. As is true in all the letters in chapters 2 and 3, Jesus once again offers certain promises to "the one who conquers" or "overcomes" (vs.5). Is this referring to a class of super Christians? See 1 John 5:4-5.

5. One of the promises extended by Jesus is that He will never blot out the name of the one who conquers "from the book of life." What is this book of life? See Rev.20:12, 15. Is it possible that God would remove the name of a true Christian from the book of life? See John 10:28-29.

Getting Real Together (Accessibility)

1. Look back to your answers to #2 above. Select one "cause of death" that you think is a greater influence in your life than it should be. What one action step will you seek to take to get "healthy" in that area?

2. Jesus gives 5 commands which, if followed, would burn new life into this comatose church in Sardis. What are the 5 commands (see vs.2-3)? Which would be the most challenging for you to implement right now? Why?

3. The Lord promises to discipline the congregation in Sardis (vs.3) if it doesn't wake up and get real. What are some of the ways in which He disciplines us? What is the purpose of His discipline? See Hebrews 12:7-11.

Praying Together (Supplication)

Pray that each person in your life group will be willing to address "causes of death" by taking appropriate action steps to become healthier.