

# **Letters from Heaven ~ Study 6**

## **“Sleepers Awakened”**

### **Revelation 3: 1-6**

#### Introduction:

The City of Sardis had once been very famous. The upper part (Acropolis) was high on a steep hill to which access was only gained by a narrow and twisting pathway. The fortress was thought to be impregnable. Yet on at least two occasions Sardis had been laughably captured, whilst its inhabitants complacently slept at night. This gives a special pertinence to Jesus' message to the Sardians to “Wake up!”

#### Now read the passage

#### Verses 1-2

1. Share your experiences of appearing “lively” to the world but in reality being dead inside?
2. Think of a time when you woke up spiritually – not necessarily when you were converted, perhaps much more recently. How did it happen? Where were you at the time? Were other people significant or was it just “between you and God”? What difference did that event make – long term, short term, incremental... ? Share your stories.
3. “Strengthen what remains” what does this image tell you about the on-going process of the Christian life?

#### Verse 3

4. “Remember what you received.” Take a moment to think of a time when you received a message from God – it may have been through a sermon, an event or experience, a word or picture etc or some on-going Christian teaching... Share together your experiences of receiving from God. What did you do with what you received?
5. “Remembering” was a core component of Old Testament spirituality. In what ways can you see “remembering” as a core component of Christian spirituality? How significant is it for you in your Christian life? (“Remembering what?” you ask. Answer: think together from your Bible knowledge, and you will find the answer! But if you need clues see: 1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3 Deut. 6:8, 11:18; Psalm 19; Psalm 119.)

## Verses 4-5

6. “Not soiled their clothes.” Good potty training! What on earth can this mean when the Bible clearly says “all have sinned”? (Rom. 3:23) A clue to the answer is in Revelation 7:13-14. How does washing clothes in blood make them white?!
7. Share your experiences of being cleansed by Christ – to walk with him. How did/does it make you feel? Do any of these words connect with your own feelings: “Worthy” “Superior” “Relieved” “Fresh” “Privileged” “Humbled”?
8. Verses 4 & 5 draw a contrast between “you” and “them”. *They* are worthy etc... *you* – if you overcome, “will be like them.” Here are two approaches to this theme, one negative and one positive:
  - a. What aspects of others’ faith are you sometimes jealous of and how might you show that jealousy (e.g. mockery, not engaging, disbelief)?
  - b. Who are some of the people you look up to in the faith (maybe some are members of your home group!)? What do you admire in their faith and what would you like to be more like?
9. What are your experiences of being acknowledged or not acknowledged (i.e. overlooked / shut out)? Share...!
10. What feelings are evoked by the idea of being acknowledged before God by Jesus? What do you think Jesus might say about you? (Clue, if you want it... Matt. 10:32)
11. The word “erase” was used as a technical word for erasing the names of people condemned to death from the electoral roll of Greek cities (like Sardis). It was a way of making sure they were “non-people” before they were killed. What does it say about God and his relationship with humans that his will is *not* to make “non-people”. In what ways do you think people need to know they are significant? What does the promise say to you?

### Here are some ideas for your prayers:

v.1 speaks of Jesus holding the seven (or seven-fold) spirit. Spend some time asking him to renew, replenish, and wake you with his Spirit.

v.5 contains a promise that he will *never* erase your name from his book of life. Spend some time praising him and thanking him for this.

Read Isaiah 61:1-62:5 - Pray for “insignificant” people of the world and the church’s mission.

Afterwards, if you like, share any senses you had of his presence or any images, words, or pictures.

