

(1) Although it isn't a pleasant task, take a few minutes and think back on your history and experience in the local church. Have any of you been a part of a church like the one in first-century Sardis? If so, describe it. In what ways did it have a great reputation with outsiders? In what ways was it nearly "dead" on the inside? Did the people there recognize the problem? What, if anything, was done about it? If you chose to leave, did you first do everything in your power and by God's grace to call people to repentance and to return to a whole-hearted devotion to Christ? What was the outcome?

(2) If you were in a church that was spiritually lifeless, what would be good reasons to justify your leaving it? In other words, how bad would it have to get before you felt warranted to depart to find another church home? What are some illegitimate reasons people give for leaving a local church?

(3) What is your opinion of so-called "church hopping"? Is there ever any excuse to do this?

(4) Do you know of anyone who has left the local church, never to return, simply because it was similar to the church in Sardis? People today often speak of being "spiritual" and of "following Jesus" while remaining altogether separate from and never attending a local church? What do you think of this? How would you respond to them? Is there ever an excuse for simply giving up on the local church completely? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

(4) What does it mean to you personally to hear Jesus declare that you are "worthy" and will "walk with him in white"? What are some possible ways of misunderstanding this declaration?