Alertness

Keeping your eyes and ears open can help you be alert to what is happening around you. As you observe and listen, you may find opportunities to serve and prevent problems. For example, if you notice that some lights were accidentally left on, turn them off to avoid wasting electricity. If you hear water dripping, alert your dad before significant water damage occurs. When you see that the paper towel roll is almost empty, set out a new roll. You may see someone crying and offer them a hug or a tissue. As you are alert, you may foresee danger or overhear important information. Take appropriate action or notify the right person, but don’t eavesdrop, gossip, or spy on people. Rather, use your eyes and ears to serve and protect others.

ALERTNESS

Being aware of that which is taking place around me so that I can have the right response to it
Alertness Overview

What Is Alertness?

Read aloud, study, and discuss what alertness means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of alertness is “being aware of that which is taking place around me so that I can have the right response to it.” God tells us to be watchful and to look out for relationships, property, or resources that the enemy may try to kill, steal, or destroy. Alertness involves intentionally observing what is happening around me. For example, an alert person will notice the sadness or excitement of others, will sense the right time to speak, and will recognize potential dangers such as poison ivy, a stray dog, or an approaching storm. When a potential problem has been perceived, alertness becomes effective when we follow up with an appropriate response, such as offering a glass of water, removing a harmful object, or reporting what was seen. Alertness leads to opportunities to express other qualities, such as kindness, hospitality, and initiative.

The opposite of alertness is unawareness. A person who is not aware is oblivious to his surroundings and to the people around him. His lack of awareness could be due to being absorbed in an activity or preoccupied with his own needs and desires. Distractions and daydreaming diminish his focus and rob him of opportunities. In other situations, a person may notice concerns or signs of potential danger, yet choose to dismiss the warnings with the thought, “It’s fine.” His unresponsiveness may be a result of irresponsibility, selfishness, or laziness. Beware of the consequences of unawareness! The unwary and unresponsive person may suffer loss or unknowingly put himself or others in harm’s way.

Alertness involves the use of all five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Through these senses, God provides for your enjoyment and protection. For example, God designed food to develop a bad taste and texture to warn you when it is spoiled. For your protection, the gas company has added an odor to natural gas. This smell will warn you if there is a leak that could cause illness or an explosion! When asleep, people are not as alert. To compensate, devices such as smoke detectors are installed to sound an alarm to awaken people in the event of a fire. Just as God has given us physical senses to detect danger, He also gives discernment to help Christians detect and avoid the enemy’s traps. This spiritual awareness enables believers to guard their hearts and stay in fellowship with God. When we put our trust in the Lord, He will give us grace to remain vigilant and give us strength to resist the devil.

(See Psalm 91:1–4, 1 Peter 5:8–9.)
Alertness in Scripture

As you read and study God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will become a radiant expression of Him. God will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

The Character of God

We see examples of alertness in God’s character in the following ways:

- God searches the earth for those who fully rely on Him, and He is ready to be strong on their behalf. (See II Chronicles 16:9.)
- God is aware of every hair on your head and every word you speak. (See Luke 12:7, Psalm 139:3–4.)
- God saw and heard of the Israelites’ affliction in Egypt and intervened to save them. (See Exodus 3:7–8.)
- Jesus was alert to Satan’s attacks, even in His physically weakened condition. (See Matthew 4:1–11.)
- Jesus asked His disciples to be watchful with Him during His time of deep distress. (See Matthew 26:38.)
- Jesus was alert to others’ motives and answered carefully when enemies tried to ensnare Him. (See Mark 12:13–17.)
- The Holy Spirit knows the present and the future, and warns believers of coming deceptions. (See I Timothy 4:1–2.)

Alertness in My Life

Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out alertness daily.

- What should I do if I become aware of potential danger in my path? (See Proverbs 22:3.)
- What is the enemy of my soul seeking to do, and how can I counteract that? (See I Peter 5:8–9, Ephesians 6:10–18.)
- Why should I beware of philosophies that are not supported in the Bible? (See Colossians 2:8.)
- What is one protection against Satan’s schemes? (See II Corinthians 2:10–11.)
- What is my responsibility if I see danger approaching someone else? (See Ezekiel 33:3–6.)
- What event did Jesus say that I should be watching for, and how can I prepare? (See Matthew 24:42, Luke 12:37.)
- What danger do I avoid if I am alert in prayer? (See Matthew 26:41.)

Alertness Key Verse

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.” MARK 14:38
Bible Story
A YOUNG MAN OVERHEARS A DEADLY PLOT

The Apostle Paul had determined to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. Upon his arrival, he reported to the church, who rejoiced in the spread of the Gospel. However, not everyone appreciated Paul’s message of salvation through Jesus Christ for both Jews and Gentiles. Some Jews in the Temple recognized Paul and wrongly assumed he was violating a Jewish custom and tried to kill him! Roman soldiers rushed to the scene and took Paul into custody. As he was being led into the Roman fortress, Paul asked to speak to the angry mob. Everyone listened attentively—until he mentioned God’s call to the Gentiles. Upon hearing that, the crowd erupted in anger, casting off their cloaks and throwing dust into the air. Guards ushered Paul inside. The next day, the Roman captain held a hearing before the Jewish council to understand Paul’s offense. However, the Jewish council became upset, and once again the soldiers had to rescue Paul and secure him within the fortress. That night, what would God say to Paul? Would the angry Jews relent now that Paul was in Roman custody? What would they do the next day? What vital message would God send through a young person who was keeping his eyes and ears open?

Let’s read the Bible story in Acts 23:11–33 and then discuss the following questions.

1. Who plotted to harm Paul? What vow did they make? (See Acts 23:12–13.)
   How can you respond when others conspire against you, even though you are in God’s will? (See I Peter 4:19.)

   Is danger always obvious? What senses has God given you to help you detect both overt and subtle dangers? (See Proverbs 20:12.) What distractions may hinder your alertness?

3. Who heard of the plot, and whom did he tell first? (See Acts 23:16.)
   Would your parents consider you to be observant? How can you grow in your awareness of what is happening around you?

4. What did Paul do when he heard the report? (See Acts 23:17–18.)
   When you become aware of danger, what actions might you take? Why is it important to tell an authority about the danger instead of ignoring it or remaining silent?

5. Did Paul’s nephew give the chief captain all of the important details? (See Acts 23:19–21.)
   Why is it important to relay details accurately? If you ever need to call 911, what details should you give the dispatcher?

6. What instructions did the chief captain give to the boy? (See Acts 23:22.)
   Why is it important to not give confidential details to those who are not part of a problem or solution? (See Proverbs 11:13.) When might it be best to keep silent? (See Ecclesiastes 3:7.)

   Do you thank God for His protection and care for you? (See Lamentations 3:22–23.)
Memory Verse
MARK 14:38

Play the game together to help the children commit Mark 14:38 to memory. In the section “Doers of the Word,” have the children record how they will apply the verse to their lives.

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”

MARK 14:38

MEMORY VERSE GAME

Hand Motions
Work with the children to think of hand motions that could illustrate the meaning of the words and use them as you quote the verse together several times. A suggestion for Mark 14:38 is as follows:

“Watch ye”—Raise right hand to shield eyes and look outward.

“and pray”—Bring hands together as if praying.

“lest ye enter into temptation”—Raise a hand and beckon toward yourself, as if taking in something enticing.

“The spirit truly is ready”—Brace your body and arms as if ready to race.

“but the flesh is weak”—Drop arms to your side and slouch as if exhausted.

DOERS OF THE WORD

In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “be spiritually discerning,” “pray when I encounter temptation,” or “draw on Your strength to stand firm.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to ________________
______________________________
______________________________
I ask that You would develop alertness in my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.
Instructions

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the alertness key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and *underlined* words fit vertically. One word is already done for you. *(Answers can be found on page 13.)*

Mark 14:38

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The *spirit* truly is *ready*, but the *flesh* is *weak*.”

Alertness

Being *aware* of that which is *taking place around* me so that I can have the *right response* to it.
Activity

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Instructions

Distribute to each child a copy of this page. Alertness is noticing what is going on around you, being aware of your surroundings, and sensing what is changing. Today we are going to practice alertness to Paul’s environment by observing changes in the pictures below. Can you find the seven differences between the two pictures? Keep your eyes open! As you find each difference, circle it or write a brief description of it on the blanks beneath the picture. (Answers can be found on page 13.)

I kept my eyes open and found the following differences!

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________
6. ____________________________________________
7. ____________________________________________
Christ Our Righteousness

You will need the following items: sticky notes, pen, and a white bed sheet.

The Bible tells us about God. He is the Creator of the universe and He is holy. God loves us and created us to have fellowship with Him. (See Revelation 4:11.) Select a volunteer who would not mind standing to represent the sin of all people. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Sin is anything we think, say, or do that breaks God’s Law. Can you name some examples of sin? As the children answer, write their examples on sticky notes and place them onto the volunteer’s clothing (e.g., speaking unkind words, stealing, disobeying, doing good with wrong motives).

Because we have all sinned, and God is holy, we are eternally separated from Him. However, because God loves us so much, He sent His Son, Jesus, Who died on the cross to pay for our sin and Who rose again to conquer death! Now we can have fellowship with God forever through Christ. (See John 17:3.) If we accept God’s gift of salvation, Christ’s blood cleanses us from sin, and His righteousness is put upon us! (See II Corinthians 5:21.)

Remove the sticky notes and wrap the white sheet around the volunteer to represent Jesus’ robe of righteousness. Isaiah 31:10 describes what has happened this way: “My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness….” In Romans 10:9–10, we are told how we can accept this gift: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Are you trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation? If so, your sins are forgiven and Christ is living in you! Your new, inward identity is one of righteousness in God’s eyes. The more you realize that you are a new creature in Christ and walk in the Spirit, the more your outward actions will demonstrate Christ living in you. Just as the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, you can also say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” God gives us eternal life—sweet constant fellowship in the Spirit with our Savior—and then His righteousness is seen in us for His glory. (See John 15:4–10.)
Hymn History

“Sound the Battle Cry”
Sing “Sound the Battle Cry” and read about the alertness proclaimed by the hymn writer, William F. Sherwin.

BOOM! Some of the soldiers froze, staring skyward as another shrapnel-filled cannonball shot across the battlefield and exploded midair! The noise was deafening. Metal shards flew through the air! Amidst the confusion, the alert commander simultaneously tracked the enemy’s movement while strategically positioning his own army. Suddenly, he shouted, “Forward, men!” Lifting high his silver sword gleaming in the sunlight, he sounded the battle cry!

Surprised, the enemy began retreating! With renewed vigor, the attacking army advanced. The men were fully convinced that victory was theirs!

Several years after the American Civil War ended, a new hymn was written that reminded Christians of a different war still being waged. The hymn’s writer, William F. Sherwin, was born in 1826 in Massachusetts. As a young man, he had studied under the famous composer Lowell Mason. Later, Mr. Sherwin taught at the New England Conservatory of Music. He was also a voice instructor and congregational music director who had become known for his hymn-writing abilities. The rallying new hymn, “Sound the Battle Cry,” was one of his many works.

In this particular hymn, Mr. Sherwin focused on the spiritual warfare Christians face. The words urge believers to give up comfortable, passive living to instead be alert and ready to engage in spiritual battle for Christ’s Kingdom. The lyrics parallel the Apostle Paul’s description of the Christian’s spiritual combat. Mr. Sherwin’s hymn exhorts believers, “Gird your armor on, Stand firm . . . upon His holy Word.” His words echo Paul’s in Ephesians chapter six, declaring the importance of alertness, which is “being aware of that which is taking place around me so that I can have the right response to it.”

Mr. Sherwin lived in obedience to God’s leading, willing to be a soldier for Christ and to fight the good fight. His musical training equipped him for a vibrant out-reach movement that met yearly at the beautiful Lake Chautauqua (shuh-TAW-kwuh) in upper New York. Due to his extraordinary talent in organizing and leading amateur chorus groups, Mr. Sherwin was selected to serve as the first music director at the Chautauqua Assembly camp meetings. His adept conducting yielded melodious music from enthusiastic but untrained thousands who attended. Many people were drawn to hear the speakers and musicians at the meetings, which offered religious education and cultural enrichment. At its peak, this influential movement sponsored concerts and lectures throughout the nation. President Theodore Roosevelt called it “the most American thing in America.” Using his talents for Christ in the Chautauqua movement was one way Mr. Sherwin encouraged believers in the spiritual battle for Christ.

Are you alert to the spiritual battle going on? Is your armor on? Stand firm on God’s Word and sing whole-heartedly, “Sound the Battle Cry”!

William F. Sherwin (1826–1888)

Photo courtesy of www.hymntime.com/tch
Hymn Sheet Music

Sound the Battle Cry


1. Sound the battle cry! See, the foe is nigh;
2. Strong to meet the foe, Marching on we go,
3. O Thou God of all, Hear us when we call,

Raise the standard high for the Lord;
While our cause we know must prevail;
Help us one and all by Thy grace;

Gird your armor on, Stand firm everyone;
Shield and banner bright, Gleaming in the light;
When the battle's done, And the victory's won,

Rest your cause upon His holy Word.
Battling for the right we ne'er can fail.
May we wear the crown before Thy face.

Sound the Battle Cry

Rouse, then, soldiers, rally round the banner, Ready, steady,

pass the word along; Onward, forward, shout aloud Hosanna!

Christ is Captain of the mighty throng.

Sound the Battle Cry
A Young Man Overhears a Deadly Plot

“And when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul” (Acts 23:16).
Recommended Resources

- 2020 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar
- Hymns for the Family CDs
  (“Sound the Battle Cry” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 1.)
- The Power for True Success
- Understanding Spiritual Gifts
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- Character Sketches, Volumes I–III
- Achieving True Success
- Be Alert to Spiritual Danger
- The Eagle Story
- Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement by Dan Lucarini
- “The Spiritual Battle”
  (Message by Jamie Lash, available at embassymedia.com)
- “Overcoming the Lies of the Enemy”
  (Message by Paul & Jenny Speed, available at embassymedia.com)

To view these resources and many more, visit us at:

store.iblp.org

Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

B

T

A L E R T N E S S

W I M P R A Y E

R I G H T T A R O U N D

S T A T Y

P I N K

T I O A N E A

W I L N T

L A C H

A C R

K

Spot the Differences Answer Key

1. PAUL’S BENCH  2. PAUL’S SANDALS
3. CRACKS IN THE FLOOR  4. PAUL’S NEPHEW’S HAT
5. MOUSE  6. GUARD’S CLOAK  7. SPEARHEAD

Hymn History Bibliography
