

# Waking Up a Lukewarm Heart:

## *What We Can Learn from Jesus' Words for the Church in Laodicea*

Do you have your Bibles ready? Let's turn to verses 14 to 22 of Revelation chapter 3.

### The Vibrant City of Laodicea: Commerce and Faith

Laodicea stood out as a hub of wealth, bustling commerce, and a renowned medical profession. The city thrived in the textile and clothing industry. Within its confines, the Holy Spirit conveys Jesus' message to this church. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus addresses seven churches. Laodicea's fame also extended to an eye salve crafted at its local medical institution. In essence, Laodicea could be likened to a blend of modern-day Bank of America, Macy's, and the Mayo Clinic.

Understanding this background illuminates Jesus' subsequent remarks to the church in Laodicea. While they were materially affluent, Jesus highlighted their spiritual poverty. Despite their prowess in clothing, symbolizing wealth and fashion, Jesus remarked that they were spiritually exposed. Their reputation for eye salve contrasted sharply with their spiritual blindness.

### Jesus' Distinct Identity: 'The Amen' and 'Faithful Witness

Jesus aligns Himself closely with the Laodicean community, highlighting both their commendable and concerning attributes. He introduces Himself in a distinct manner. Jesus declares, "I am The Amen." While many recognize "amen" as a concluding affirmation in prayers, its profound meaning signifies agreement, truth, and certainty. In the original Greek, when Jesus began a statement with "verily, verily," he essentially said, "Amen, Amen," emphasizing the imminent importance and absolute truth of His words. "Amen" encapsulates trustworthiness, making it fitting for Jesus, the ultimate truth, to be called "The Amen."

Moreover, Jesus identifies as the "faithful and true witness." This title accentuates His unwavering commitment to truth. Jesus doesn't merely speak the truth; He embodies it, even when conveying challenging messages.

He speaks candidly, not sugarcoating the truth. God's concern for our future often outweighs our present feelings. Ever felt hurt during a conversation with Him? Sometimes those emotional jolts guide us toward healing. Occasionally, God allows pain to usher in profound healing and growth. Remember, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

The Great Physician is about to diagnose this church's spiritual state. Yet, they're hesitant to accept His assessment. The Laodicean church remained blissfully unaware of their true condition. Facing harsh realities can be daunting, but it's necessary for growth.

## Avoiding Spiritual Complacency: The Urgency of True Assessment

Switching gears, searching for a new church or community can be daunting. When newcomers visit, I always ensure they feel welcomed and pray with them. Finding the right church is akin to a compatible marriage; it requires the right fit. It's easy to misjudge a church based on its exterior. A grand building might mask a dwindling congregation, while a modest structure could house a vibrant, zealous community. True assessment goes beyond appearances.

Delving deeper, only Jesus can truly discern a church's heart and soul. He doesn't get swayed by external facades. In Chapter 2, verse 23, Jesus emphasizes His omniscience, stating He understands our deepest thoughts and intentions. Like a diligent shepherd inspecting each sheep for hidden ailments, Jesus intimately knows and understands us.

As we reflect on the church's evaluation in this message, it's imperative to introspect personally. Consider this a spiritual check-up. Remember, the Divine Physician is ever-ready for a consultation. Just as a doctor's visit is thorough, let's allow Jesus to delve deep into our hearts, guiding us towards spiritual wellness.

## Spiritual Temperature: Hot, Cold, or Lukewarm?

You're familiar with the routine: entering a doctor's office and stepping on the scale, watching the numbers, maybe jesting about that delicious dessert you had. Next, they measure your height and take your temperature. In our spiritual journey, our "heart's temperature" matters.

Imagine a heart aflame with passion for God—a fervent, burning heart. Conversely, a cold heart stands in stark contrast. Then there's the lukewarm heart, as referenced in

Luke 3:16. A lukewarm Christian might be indifferent, overlooking the needs around them, possibly more engrossed in their own affairs than others'.

Reflect on your spiritual state. Where does your heart lie today?

Consider the Laodiceans. Their water supply, sourced from a distant hot spring, traveled miles, losing its warmth by the time it reached the city. This lukewarm water became symbolic. Jesus used this imagery, likening the tepid water to the church's spiritual state—comfortable, perhaps too complacent, not stirring the waters or confronting issues.

This church, while seemingly comfortable, lacked depth. It offered a middle-ground faith, avoiding challenging teachings or rebukes. Instead of conviction, members likely received affirmation. Their lukewarm nature wasn't just unsettling; it made Jesus feel nauseated.

In our spiritual walks, we must ensure our hearts remain fervent, avoiding complacency and compromise.

Reflecting on the song "I Come to the Garden Alone," I envision walking and conversing with God in a garden. Imagine asking God, "How am I doing?" And His response? Essentially, He might say, "Your current state is disheartening." When Jesus conveys such strong sentiments about a community's spiritual state, it's a profound wake-up call. The Almighty's candidness isn't to demoralize but to inspire transformation.

Consider doctors who, seeing patients neglect treatment, express frustration. Their passion stems from a genuine desire for their patients' well-being. Similarly, we all prefer beverages either piping hot or refreshingly cold; lukewarm drinks disappoint. Ever had someone dilute a robust coffee with ice? Or witnessed extravagant coffee concoctions? Authentic coffee, like unwavering faith, remains unadulterated.

True Christianity demands more than fleeting convictions; it requires steadfast, unwavering dedication. Our faith isn't about occasional commitments but consistent, resolute beliefs. While contemporary Christianity might blur boundaries in the quest for universal acceptance, it's essential to remain anchored in core principles. Being lukewarm, straddling the line between devotion and indifference, is perilous. Jesus emphasized the value of clarity—whether hot or cold, decisive commitment is commendable. Indecision, fluctuating between extremes, is unsettling.

The Laodicean church's self-assuredness is cautionary. Their belief in self-sufficiency, despite spiritual stagnation, underscores the dangers of misplaced confidence. True spiritual richness isn't material wealth but unwavering devotion.

We often feel self-sufficient, believing we have everything under control. Yet, spiritual decline is gradual. Consider Samson's journey: spiritual power fades over time. The Laodiceans' fervor for God dwindled slowly, much like a frog unaware of rising water temperature until it's too late. Similarly, we can become complacent, overlooking spiritual stagnation, making concessions to avoid conflict.

The Laodiceans' self-perception starkly contrasted God's view. They boasted wealth while spiritually impoverished. Their pride in human achievements overshadowed genuine spiritual values. Perhaps they once fervently served God but grew complacent over time. This serves as both a reality check and a call to rekindle fervor for God. Authentic love for others starts within the church; failing here renders outreach elsewhere insincere.

Consistent compromise blurs spiritual focus, leading to 'double vision.' The Laodiceans' self-assuredness was misleading. God's perspective was clear: they were spiritually destitute. Acknowledging such hard truths is essential. Denial hinders growth. Recognizing our flaws is the first step toward transformation.

## God's Call to Revival: Embracing True Devotion

Yet, Jesus never leaves us without hope. While many highlight issues without solutions, Jesus provides remedies. He identifies our shortcomings not to condemn but to guide towards restoration. Recognizing and addressing our spiritual deficiencies is key to deepening our relationship with Him.

God disciplines us out of love, urging us to repent and return to our original fervor. His guidance for the church was clear: "Buy from me." Just as Doctor Jesus provides all we need, our true sufficiency lies solely in God. Leaders and believers alike should seek the refined gold of faith, the white garments symbolizing righteousness, and the eye salve representing spiritual clarity. As we approach a new year, may our faith, righteousness, and spiritual vision define us.

## From Self-Sufficiency to God's Infinite Provision

A genuine relationship with God is paramount. Yet, some become complacent, relying on their perceived self-sufficiency. They abandon genuine reliance on Christ, shifting

their trust to self-righteousness—a dangerous place. Our confidence should always be anchored in God, not in our abilities. As John the Baptist proclaimed, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Embracing this principle allows God to work more profoundly in us.

Many seek self-improvement, but true transformation comes from surrendering to God's will. This church's pride and arrogance required repentance and humility. They needed to reignite their passion for God, moving past their self-imposed righteousness. Just as Adam and Eve's attempt to cover their nakedness failed, our own efforts fall short. Only Christ's righteousness can truly clothe us.

## Unveiling Spiritual Blindness: God's Presence at the Door

The Laodiceans, known for their medical contributions, had an ointment that was known far and wide. Just as the fear of blindness is daunting, these people were spiritually blind. They lived in a self-made illusion, proud of a church that faced God's imminent rejection. God was ready to discipline and redirect them, but they remained oblivious, blind to His presence outside their door.

In Revelation 3, there's a poignant image: Jesus stands at the door, knocking. How many have shut Him out, unwilling to make space in their hearts? A church without Christ within isn't recognized by God. The Laodiceans needed their spiritual eyes anointed, a divine touch to revive their faith and clarity.

## Invitation to Renewal: Embracing Christ's Presence and Vision

True faith, righteousness, and vision stem from God. When He's at the center of our lives, enthroned as our Lord, everything aligns. Yet, often, we sideline Him, making room for other priorities. But God is not content with a divided heart; He desires full devotion.

God's counsel? "Buy from me." This isn't about currency but surrendering our lives, aligning with His will. As we step into a new year, it's an invitation to refocus spiritually. God wants to usher in a fresh move, especially as the anticipation of His return grows. For those attuned to Him, incredible opportunities await.

With divine clarity, we see Jesus and ourselves. Recognizing His lordship allows us to reflect on our spiritual state. As we gaze into the scriptures, they act as mirrors, revealing our true selves. So, as this new year unfolds, ask yourself: Are you fervently pursuing God as before?

Do you feel God's presence as closely as before? As we envision Him, we gain insight into ourselves, allowing God to guide our transformations. None of us aspire to remain wretched, miserable, or impoverished. Recognizing this, the divine physician understands each of us intimately, recognizing our individual needs and areas for growth.

As we embark on this new year, can we approach God with renewed zeal? Our perceptions shape our thoughts, influencing how we view ourselves and others. True vision originates within the church. To recognize the failings of others, we first acknowledge our own shortcomings. With God as our anchor and a clear understanding of our identity in Him, we become potent forces against the forces of darkness, illuminated by His light.

So, I urge you to introspect: How's your spiritual journey with Christ? Have there been moments of profound closeness followed by periods of wandering? The Holy Spirit beckons you, drawing you back to a place where you're enveloped by God's unwavering love, feeling His comforting embrace and boundless affection.