

# Lukewarm in Laodicea | Warning Signs #8

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The message that Jesus had for the church in Laodicea is as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago. Apparently the church had grown “lukewarm” in their faith and zeal for Jesus. To drive the point home, Jesus used a word-picture that the citizens would have understood well:

**Revelation 3: 14-16** *Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation: “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!”*

Here’s the situation: Laodicea’s water was piped in from a hot spring 5 miles to the south. By the time it arrived in Laodicea, it was lukewarm and not very useful – something you’d want to spit out of your mouth! By contrast, the cold springs of nearby Colossae were refreshing and the hot springs of Hierapolis were healing. Jesus was making a spiritual point: a lukewarm faith is useless. The Christian life is a call to action, but followers of Jesus are susceptible to distractions. Jesus points out two of those distractions to the church in Laodicea, and they are shockingly relevant to the Christian church today.

## Distraction #1: Wealth

Laodicea was a city famous for its wealth. History tells us that when an earthquake destroyed the city in AD 60, Laodicea turned down offers for help from Rome. Laodicea felt invincible. But Jesus had a word of warning for its Christian citizens:

**Revelation 3:17-18** *You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich.”*

Money distracted the Laodicean church 2000 years ago, and it may be even more distracting for American Christians today. Consider this statistic: on average, people give a smaller percentage of their incomes today than they did during the Great Depression. That’s incredible! Even as America (and its Christians) get wealthier, we are drifting away from a heart of generosity. We are increasingly focused on our own “kingdoms” rather than the kingdom of God. Like Laodicea, we are distracted by our wealth.

## Distraction #2: Culture

Popular culture reveals our insecurities, and apparently this is not a new phenomenon. Laodicea was famous for producing rich, black wool for cloaks – and for them it was apparently a source of local pride. But Jesus turned it into a warning:

**Revelation 3:18** *Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness...*

Here’s the irony: every generation has its own sense of “cool”, but it almost always looks silly to the next generation.

Fast forward to the end of generations and you'll see it from God's perspective. The Laodiceans had it wrong. They were proud of their famed black wool, but Jesus saw past their outward appearance to their souls. In his eyes, it wasn't a matter of swapping black for white garments. He declared that they were naked!

How much more do we get distracted and deceived by our popular culture? What we perceive to be valuable in this life can so easily draw us away from what really matters in eternity. Followers of Jesus have their true worth in the "robes of righteousness" purchased by Christ himself at the cross. When we come to him and put those "white garments" on, the stuff of this world loses its appeal. This doesn't mean we are disconnected from popular culture; instead, we see beyond it to the stuff that truly defines us.

## Getting a New Focus

So what does define us? For Christians the answer is twofold: our relationship with Jesus and our purpose for Jesus. Remember, the church in Laodicea had grown lukewarm and distracted from its once-burning vision. Jesus invited them to renew their focus:

**Revelation 3:18-19** *[Buy from me...] ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.*

Laodicea was famous for "Phrygian powder", an ingredient used in a healing eye ointment. Jesus again makes a personalized reference to drive his point home. Only he could give them true vision. Only in Christ can we as Christians find our true purpose in life. The church in Laodicea had grown lukewarm and useless. Their selfish focus on wealth and culture kept them from living on purpose in this life. But Jesus offered them a second chance. He wanted a relationship with them again, and that relationship would put the church back on mission.

**Revelation 3:20-21** *Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.*

## Discussion Questions:

1. Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.
2. When did you feel most "on fire" for Jesus? What caused you to feel that way?
3. Read [Revelation 3:14-15](#). What's the problem with lukewarm water? What does Jesus say he will do with it? How would you have responded to that message if you were part of the church in Laodicea?
4. Read [Revelation 3:17-18](#). How has wealth become a distraction for your pursuit of God? What are some signs that money has moved to the center of your life?
5. What are some things in our popular culture that can distract us from a pursuit of God? Share about a time when you perceived something in this life to be more valuable than it really was. How did God open your eyes to the truth?
6. Read [Revelation 3:20-21](#). Describe this picture of Jesus. What does it teach us about him?
7. Jesus wants his followers to live on purpose instead of wasting their lives on distractions. Who can you start investing in for the kingdom of God? Learn how to become a disciple-maker at [pursueGOD.org/mentor](https://pursueGOD.org/mentor).
8. Write a personal action step based on this conversation.