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The Lukewarm Church

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Series: What's Wrong With the Church?  
Revelation 3:14-22

**BIG IDEA - LUKEWARM CHURCHES AND CHRISTIANS ARE COMFORTABLE, COMPLACENT, AND COMPROMISED**

All right, Two Cities Church. I hope you guys are ready for this, because today we end this series. If you're new, let me just tell you about something. Our series here serve the greater mission and vision of this church, which is to make and mobilize disciples in an environment of prayer and worship.

We're always asking two questions: How do we make more disciples, and how do we make better disciples? That's what we're doing. If you wondered, "What are we doing this morning?" we're hopefully making more and better disciples. What are we doing next door in the kids' ministry? Making more and better disciples.

But we always say that second part. We want to make and mobilize disciples, but how do we want to do it? What do we want it to feel like? We want it to be in an environment of prayer and worship, which is why we are having our first prayer and worship night of the year in this new building tomorrow night. Are you excited? Are you coming? I hope so.

I was working on the content for tomorrow night yesterday. I'm not trying to make this about me, but I was working on this content, and I thought, "What I'm about to share, if I can deliver it..." We are going to be talking about some of the most interesting, fascinating, sensitive topics, because what we're going to be doing... We're calling it *Kingdom over Culture*. I'm going to talk about nine major, massive events that happened last year. Just get ready.

We're going to then ask, "How does the church pray about this? How do we think about this together?" and we're going to pray for these things. I think I told you a

couple of weeks ago Charles Spurgeon (he's a famous Christian who has now passed) said every Christian should have a Bible under their right arm and a newspaper under their left. So, we're going to look at what's happening in the culture, and then we're going to pray, "God, your kingdom come, your will be done."

This is such an important event. We're only doing this three times this whole year. If you're in a Community Group (and I know most of you probably are), we're asking you to change or move your group to Monday night. We're asking you to do this as a Community Group. Take your first field trip as a Community Group and come tomorrow night.

There's something about getting off of work and coming to worship with your church family on a Monday night. It is a fireplace for our church, and we are trying to build a response culture in this church where we say we pray and we obey, we sing and we bring. So, let's start by praying, and then we're going to dive into the church at Laodicea. Let's pray.

Lord, we just take a moment right now, and that's what we want to do. We want to make and mobilize disciples. That's not that unique. That's what every church is called to do, but we uniquely feel called to do that in an environment, in an atmosphere, in a culture of prayer and worship. That's what we want marriages to be, a marriage that's in an environment of prayer and worship.

That's what we want families to be. That's what we want Community Groups to be. That's what we want kids' ministry to be. Would you help to do it, Lord? Lord, would Community Groups come together? Would you deepen and strengthen marriages and families? Would you do something unique as we come together tomorrow night, as a church, to seek your face? In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

All right. Can I ask you a personal question? When was the last time you threw up? Don't say it out loud, but we all know. Right? You're like, "I know when it was." I didn't ask, "When was the last time you cleaned up throw-up?" parents. You're like, "This morning!" No, no. When was the last time you threw up?

Guys, vomiting... There are so many different words for it...*puking*. I won't give them all. I think, as I was looking at it this week, vomiting is the most violent thing your body does. I think we can all agree that no one here likes to throw up. Back in October... That was the last time I threw up. I'll save you all the details, but I woke up. This was the last night of a cruise ship. I was on a cruise ship with 5,000 of my closest friends. You know how that goes.

If you've never been on a cruise, you're going to get sick. This is just what happens. I woke up the last day, the day we had to drive 10 hours home. I woke up in the middle of the night and had that thought, "I'm going to throw up." I made it to the bathroom just in time. That's enough about that story. Why do I tell you this? Turn to Revelation 3:14. Jesus says to the church at Laodicea, "You make me want to throw up." That's what he says.

What is the church at Laodicea? It's the nauseating church. There are some churches that make Jesus sick to his stomach. Now, I know if you know this passage... Not all of us do, and that's fine. If you know this letter, Jesus says to this church (we'll get there eventually), "You're lukewarm; therefore, I want to spit you out of my mouth." That's what translators put. The literal Greek is the word *vomit*.

## **00 BACKGROUND: THE CITY & CHURCH IN LAODICEA**

What I want us to see today is the last of the seven churches, which most people think is the worst church. Let's look. Chapter 3, verse 14: ***"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea..."*** So, lukewarm in Laodicea. That's where we'll be today. ***"...write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works..."***

Look at this. He says this three times. What's repeated is important. ***"...you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are..."*** Here's the key, controlling word. ***"...lukewarm..."*** What's *lukewarm*? You're too hot to be cold and too cold to be hot. Think about that. ***"...and neither hot nor cold, I will [vomit] you out of my mouth."***

If you're new, here's what we've been doing over the last seven weeks. Jesus gives every church a report card. Do you remember getting a report card? Sometimes you got a report card and thought... You get one halfway through the semester usually. You thought, "I don't think I'm doing too well in this class," and then you got the report card and were like, "Oh, praise the Lord. I'm doing better than I thought."

Some of you thought you were doing well. You were like, "I understand chemistry. I understand biology." You got your report card and were like, "I do not understand chemistry. I obviously do not understand biology." Jesus gives each church a report card. I thought it might be good to remind us of the report cards we've seen so far. Remember, we're saved by grace, but we are evaluated by works.

Jesus comes and says to each church, "I know your works." Remember Ephesus? He said, "You have a good head and a bad heart." Do you remember Smyrna? "Hey, you're being faithful, but you're also being fearful." Do you remember Pergamum? "Hey, you're doing well, but you could become worldly."

Do you remember Thyatira? "You have a good heart but a bad head. You're trying to be more progressive than God." Do you remember Sardis? "You're dead, and you need to wake up." Last week, Josh did a great job with the church at Philadelphia. "You have an open door; you need to walk through it." Now, today, it's "Lukewarm."

This is the worst of the seven churches. Why? This is the only church where there is nothing good said about it. Even Sardis, which is the second-worst church... At the end he said, "At least there are a few of you there who are doing well." The problem with a lukewarm church is nobody is doing well.

What does it mean to be lukewarm? Well, think stagnant and smelly. *Lukewarm* (and I'll get into this a little bit more) means the church has become ineffective, unattractive, and useless. This will all make more sense as I explain it in a little bit.

## **01 JESUS SAYS ABOUT HIMSELF: "I SEE THINGS RIGHTLY"**

I want you to first see how Jesus introduces himself to this church. I just read it to you. First, he says, "I am the Amen." Some of you go, "Amen!" Here's a little Bible trivia. What is the last word in the Bible? *Amen*. In Revelation 22, the Bible ends with "Amen." You know, we do a lot of things we don't understand. Why at the end of prayers do we say, "Amen"? It's a term of agreement. It's a term of affirmation.

Here's what Jesus is saying to the final church: "I am the final word." There are many different perspectives people have, many different ideas, but Jesus always gets the last word and the last laugh. Then he says, "I am the faithful and true witness." Now, if you know your Bible, you're like, "Hold on. We're supposed to be witnesses. Right?"

In fact, if you're new, and maybe you're a seeker or skeptic, checking out church or Christianity, here's something interesting to know about Christianity. Christianity is not based on what the first Christians believed. You go, "Huh?" It's based on what the first Christians witnessed and what they wrote down, what they saw, heard, and touched.

Then he says, "I'm the beginning." He's not saying, "I was created." He is the uncreated Creator of all things. *Beginning* is the idea of "I'm the source and the origin of everything."

## **02 CONFRONT: YOU ARE SELF-DECEIVED**

So, he says all that, and then he confronts the church. I want you to see there are two things he confronts the church about. Look. Let's see this. I read this to you before, but I want you to see it again. Verse 15: ***"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."***

We'll deal with that problem in a second. That's the problem of lukewarmness. There's a problem underneath it. I didn't read this verse last time. Look here. ***"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing..."*** We might say today, "Not being spiritually self-aware." ***"...not realizing that you are..."*** Whoa! They're the exact opposite of what they thought they were. ***"...wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."***

What is the first problem of the lukewarm church? They're self-deceived. Here's the problem. This is why this is a hard topic for me to talk to you about today: some of you are lukewarm. Here's the problem with a lukewarm Christian: they're the last ones to know it. Their wife knows it. Their mom knows it. Their kids know it. Their pastors know it. Their friends who are not Christians know it. They can't articulate it. They're like, "It's kind of strange. Jim says he's a Christian, but he lives just like us."

They're self-deceived. Now, this is interesting. There's a principle in Scripture: *you can't know yourself by yourself*. We all know this. Have you ever been to lunch with somebody, and they had a little bit of ketchup on their face, or someone has bad breath? You're like, "Hey, do you want a breath mint?" "No." "Are you sure? I'm going to have one. Do you want one?"

Have you ever had someone have a booger hanging out of their nose? You're like, "We're talking about vomiting and boogers?" Well, you know. We have some of the kids' ministry in here today. No. You know, you're wiping your nose. C.S. Lewis made a... I quote him a lot, because he's a really smart guy who wrote Narnia. He said everybody has conversations about X. X represents a person.

Everybody, throughout their life, will have a conversation about X. They're like, "Okay. You know Tim?" We talk about him after Community Group. "You know Tim? He's so

loud when he talks." Or "You know Suzie? Suzie is so emotional." He says what happens... This is what humans do. We talk about *X* when *X* isn't around. C.S. Lewis says here's what you need to realize: you're *X* in a different conversation.

You know that, right? There are things about you that people cannot stand (some of it's strange; some of it's sinfulness), and they talk about it when you're not there. See, here's the problem with us. We struggle with something called *illusory superiority*. That's a technical term, and I worked on pronouncing it. It has been studied by a professor at Cornell. It basically is this idea that we have an inflated view of ourselves.

Here, we'll play a game. If you could rate yourself on how you're doing compared to other people you know, what would you give yourself on a scale of 1 to 10? Do you know what most people think? Think of a number right now. Most people rate themselves 7. I don't know what number you chose. "Well, I don't want to be arrogant. I'm not 9 or 10 maybe, but I'm certainly not 1, 2, 3, or 4."

Well, he did this long study, and he found out... He did it with all of the professors at the university, and 94 percent of the professors at the university thought they were doing better than their peers. That's impossible. He showed that there are three areas where we tend to have an inflated view of ourselves. Are you ready?

First, *driving*. How many of you think your spouse is a good driver? Don't raise your hand. Some of you are like, "Every time I drive with my husband or my wife, I put my helmet on before I get in the car." It was interesting. He found three areas. That's the most interesting, maybe.

The second is *job performance*. People tend to think they're better employees, better managers, have a higher IQ, or are working better than their coworkers. The third is *generosity*. This guy is not a Christian, but he was writing about it. Just charitable giving. Most people think they're way more generous than they are. Most people are like, "I'm generous. I smile at strangers. If somebody asks for directions, I give them." We are deceived, because we cannot see ourselves by ourselves.

Now, the question is...*How do we stay deceived?* Well, there are a couple of ways. One way we stay deceived is we compare ourselves with the wrong people. So, if lukewarm Laodicea Christian at First Baptist Laodicea... If he or she is looking around, he or she is looking at all of the other lukewarm Christians, so they think they're doing well because they're comparing themselves with somebody else.

This is why a lot of people, especially golfers, love John Daly. We like to compare ourselves with someone... We're like, "At least I'm not as bad as *that* guy. I mean,

look at him." We tend to find somebody we're doing better than in a certain dimension or element of our lives, and we compare ourselves to that person. By the way, this is why new believers are so good for churches. They raise the spiritual temperature.

If you've ever met a brand-new believer (and I hope you have), all of a sudden, they're starting to confess sins to you. You're like, "You don't confess sin out loud like that." Well, actually you should. We just don't anymore. Then they say things like, "Man, I was at work, and I was telling people about Jesus, and they were getting mad." All of the other Christians who have been Christians for a while go, "No, no. You don't do that at work. You just live the life before them."

I was meeting with a new believer the other day. Unsolicited (I didn't say anything to him; I wasn't asking about this), he said, "I just got a raise. I can't wait to increase my tithe." Interesting. A new believer hasn't learned the lessons of lukewarmness yet, so they're sharing their faith, they're confessing their sin, they're giving generously, and they're serving passionately.

The second way we stay deceived is we measure how the spiritual is going by how the physical is going. If things are going well physically, we think things are going well spiritually. Notice he said, "You say, 'I am rich and I have prospered...'" By the way, Laodicea is the wealthiest of all of the churches by far. It was, you could think, the Dubai of the day.

This church had... You know, it's winter, so you've heard of influenza. This church had affluenza. They had all of their physical needs met, so they didn't know any of their spiritual needs. But here's the real reason we stay deceived: we lie to ourselves. I promise you nobody has lied to you more than you.

We tell ourselves we are big-boned and chubby when we have a problem with food. We tell ourselves we like to relax and have a good time and unwind when we have a problem with alcohol. We tell ourselves our marriage is great when it's really a 3 out of 10 and we're sexless roommates raising kids. We tell ourselves our kids are doing fine because they're well behaved, but they're spiritually dead. You tell yourself you don't have a problem when you do. You tell yourself you're okay when you're not.

So, Jesus comes to us today, and he tells us... This is one of the... I don't know how many. There are maybe 10 or 15 key themes in Jesus' teaching, and here's one of them: "Things are not as they often appear." "Sardis, you think you're alive; you're dead. Laodicea, you think you're rich; you're poor. Smyrna, you think you're dying; you're headed to life." Things are not as they appear, often.

### 03 CONFRONT: YOU ARE LUKEWARM

So, he says, "The first problem is you're self-deceived, and that is actually what's sustaining you in your lukewarmness." Let's talk about the church being lukewarm.

Verse 15: *"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."*

I've told you that Jesus always speaks to the church where it is. What's interesting about Laodicea... It was very wealthy, the wealthiest church (I just told you that), the wealthiest city. Where do very, very wealthy people like to live? As high up and on the side of a mountain as they possibly can. That's exactly what they did in Laodicea. All of these wealthy people built up really high.

That was great, because they could look down on others, metaphorically and literally. The hard part about that was they couldn't get water up there. I mean, this was 2,000 years ago. They tried. It's too much to go into detail, but there were these hot springs about six miles in one direction, and there were these cold springs six miles in the other direction.

I don't know how they did it, but they created some complex piping system to try to get that water up the hill. The problem was the pipes and everything else... It got all these chemicals, and it came to them lukewarm and full of chemicals and would often make them puke. So, now you can see Jesus is saying, "You are like the water in your city. You make me sick."

What is a lukewarm Christian? I want to help define it. Let me tell you what Jesus is not saying. When he says, "I wish you were either cold or hot," he's not saying, "I wish you were either completely foolish and rebellious and atheistic or on fire for the Lord." That's not what he's saying. He's speaking to them... And they would have recognized this from the water supplies.

He's saying, "I wish you were hot or cold, because hot water serves a purpose and cold water serves a purpose, but lukewarm water doesn't serve any purpose." We know this. There are certain things that are good hot. Coffee is very good hot. Coffee is very good cold. Lukewarm coffee is gross. Right?

So, he's saying, "You are lukewarm." Here's what it means. To be lukewarm means you are useless. And how does something get lukewarm? This is going to be important to understand how to *not* be lukewarm. How does something get lukewarm? It sits there and does nothing. I don't know. For some of you, that may define your Christianity.



By the way, Christianity is a terrible hobby. I mean, choose golf or pickleball. The average American treats going to church, being a part of a church, their Christian walk, as a hobby. "If I have time for it, if I can fit it in... It's something I do on the side. It's a piece of the pie."

There are two words I would use to describe lukewarm Christianity. The first is it's *comfortable*. That's the whole thing Jesus is saying. "You're prosperous. You're rich. You're saying, 'I have no needs.'" Part of how you become a lukewarm Christian is you stop feeling your spiritual neediness. No one likes to feed needy. Right? This is why, a lot of times, you'll have a need and won't want to tell somebody.

This happens all the time. You know, your marriage isn't going well. It's like, "Well, as soon as we tell somebody that, I'm needy." You know, you made some bad decisions financially or lost your job, and you're like, "Dude, if anybody knew how financially tight this was, like, if we told our Community Group or something, it would be embarrassing." No one likes to be needy, but if you haven't noticed, every song we sing here is celebrating our neediness and what Christ needed to do for us.

So, a lukewarm Christian forgets their neediness, but there's a more important thing that comes with this. A lukewarm Christian is *complacent*. Now, I want to talk about the difference between contentment and being complacent. In Hebrews 13, God says, "Be content, for I will never leave you or forsake you." If you want a biblical definition of contentment, I'll give it to you. You can carry this with you the rest of your life. Here's a biblical definition of contentment: "God will take care of me."

*Complacent* is the opposite. What is the definition of *complacent*? Here's what's interesting. Every once in a while, you'll find an obscure passage in your Bible (obscure to us) that gives us a definition of a word. I want to show you this. In Zephaniah, chapter 1, we get a definition of complacency. Let me show you this. This is God speaking.

Zephaniah 1:12: "***At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps...***" That's interesting. "I'm going to go seeking after something." What's he looking for? "***...and I will punish...***" Oh, I don't like the way *that* sounds. "***...the men who are complacent...***" Now we get the definition of complacency. Here's what a complacent person says. "***...those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.'***"

A lukewarm Christian is a complacent Christian. Complacency says, "God is not really at work in the world." There are two sides to it. The complacent Christian says, "You know what? I don't even know if God really disciplines us, because I'm kind of doing what I want to do and don't feel like life is going too badly for me. God says sin is a

big deal, but I don't... God says personal holiness is important. I don't really see that. I don't really feel that."

The complacent Christian says something like, "You know what? I don't even know if it matters what I do. Does God reward faith? Does God act and move in the world?" A lukewarm Christian is a complacent Christian.

#### **04 COUNSEL: CHRIST & THE GOSPEL**

Here's Jesus' word now. He basically tells them their condition, and then he gives them a word. Let me show you this. Verse 18: "*I counsel you...*" I want to talk about something. There are a couple other places Jesus says *counsel*, and I've been waiting until now to talk about this.

I want to talk for a second about the difference between *counsel* and *counseling*. We're pro-counseling here. We have a care pastor. We do a lot of counseling. We send a lot of people to counseling. If you're under 40, it's cool to be in counseling. Right? "If you're not in counseling, you're in denial." If you're older than 40 or 50, you would never tell someone you were going to counseling.

I mean, I can't think of the Baby Boomer generation ever bragging or boasting and putting on Facebook that they're going to counseling. So, in a good way, the younger generation has embraced counseling and therapy and all that. For a lot of people... Not the counselor. I'm not knocking counselors. I think counselors know what they're doing, and they're great.

A lot of people go to counseling to just tell the counselor their feelings. "This is how my marriage is, and this is what my addiction feels like, and this is what happened when I was young," and all that. That's great, but I want to talk about what counsel is. *Counsel* is the root word of *counseling*.

Counsel is "Listen to me, and your life could be different." Counsel is not just "I want to tell Jesus my feelings." Here's what counsel is: "I would like Jesus to tell me what to do." Some of you need counsel badly, and it's okay. We all start out as novices. You just go, "I have no idea what I'm doing with my money. I have no idea how to raise a kid. I have no idea how to get married, stay married, or any of that." Fine.

Here's what you do when you get counsel from someone: you find someone who is ahead of you. There's no shame in that. The person who's ahead of you says something like, "I'm not where you are." Thank God. That wouldn't be very helpful if I

was where you are. Maybe I've been where you are. Here's what counsel says: "I know the way out."

I'll tell you, if you want your life to change, you need to seek some counsel. Counsel is like, "Look. I don't know what I'm doing, and I need you to tell me what to do according to Scripture." This is what counsel is. Listen to what God has said, and your life could look very different than it is, often very better than it is.

Jesus comes, and he says, "I want to counsel you." Look at what he says. ***"I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see."***

He's telling us what salvation feels like. If you're new and you're not a Christian, it's hard to explain what it feels like to become a Christian. It's like, "Well, do I pray a prayer? People talk about being born again. What does all that mean?" Jesus gives us a couple descriptions. He says, "Here's what it's like. It's like being bankrupt." By the way, before you come to Christ, you're not just spiritually broke; you're spiritually bankrupt.

He says salvation feels like being poor and then being unbelievably rich. That's what salvation feels like. He says, "If you want to know what salvation feels like..." He talks about garments. By the way, I didn't tell you this earlier, but they made a famous type of wool in Laodicea, a black, expensive wool. He basically says, "You make all this wool." They were all about how they looked on the outside. He says, "You're naked."

Back then, by the way, they were much more modest in their dress than we are today. They would only let their hands, their feet, and their face be shown. So, to be fully naked was especially, in that culture, very embarrassing and very shameful. Jesus is saying, "Do you want to know what it's like to become a Christian? It's like being naked in the cold, being brought inside, and being given a warm set of clothes."

Then he said it's like being blind and being able to see. I don't know if you've seen this, but there's this new fad I've just seen on my Instagram of dark retreats. Have you seen these? Don't Google it right now, please. Aaron Rodgers did one of these. There are whole businesses, nonprofits, and all this kind of stuff that does this stuff.

Basically, you go away, and you go into this... It's too much to get into detail, but basically, you wear this thing on your face. You go into darkness. You don't look at anything. You don't see anything. You close your eyes or they're covered for two or

three days. It's kind of a strange thing, I know. It's all about getting in touch with yourself and all that kind of stuff.

What's interesting is they have all of these videos of people coming out of these dark retreats. You should watch them. They're very interesting. Every video, at least every one I've seen, is the exact same. They go outside, they take off the covering over their eyes, and they just start to cry. It had only been two or three days without them seeing. That's in the physical world.

What Jesus is saying is becoming a Christian is like being spiritually blind and then being able to see. In fact, the apostle Paul's definition of *faith* in Ephesians, chapter 1, is the eyes of your heart. Faith is the eyesight of the soul. It's the ability to see the invisible world according to God's written-down Word.

## **05 JESUS LOVES LUKEWARM CHURCHES & CHRISTIANS (TOUGH LOVE)**

So, he gives us this beautiful picture here, and then he tells us this. Look. I want you to see this. He says, "Okay. So, if you're lukewarm, what do I do?" He's giving counsel, and he's reminding you of the gospel. He's telling you what to do. Here it is: *"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."*

Jesus is complex, isn't he? What does he say to the church at Laodicea? "Church at Laodicea, you make me want to throw up...and I love you." Have you noticed that? Some of you are like, "That's exactly how I feel about my kids." If you're honest with yourself, in your best moments that's how you feel about yourself.

Jesus is saying, "I love you, but I'm also going to rebuke you or reprove you, and I'm going to discipline you." Jesus loves us, but his love isn't always experienced the way we think it should be. Do you know what's interesting? A couple of weeks ago... I'm guessing, since it was the most watched televised sports event in human history, that most of you probably saw parts of the Super Bowl.

Well, during the Super Bowl there was a very... You know, it was \$7 million to run an ad in the Super Bowl. There was an ad, "He Gets Us." We actually got a couple emails asking us questions about this ad. Personally, I don't know the people who sponsored this ad, but I know who they are. I know the group. What they're trying to do... They're Christians, and they're trying to do what they would call *pre-evangelism*.

That's an interesting phrase. They're trying to... "How do we get the conversation even started?" It was an interesting and confusing ad, because it said, "He gets us,"

and then there were a bunch of people washing each other's feet and strange pictures. Then at the end it says, "He gets us. Jesus didn't teach hate." End of commercial. You're like, "What just happened?"

"He gets us" is not enough. It *is* the beginning. He gets us, but he also needs to cleanse us. He also needs to forgive us. He also needs to save us. This is why verses like this are often confusing to the average American. Jesus loves us, but he rebukes us and reprovcs us and disciplines us? This is why here we say, "It takes hard words to make soft people, and it is soft words that make hard people."

Jesus is willing to give them hard words, and he's even willing to discipline them. I know some of you go, "We don't discipline our kids." We know. Okay? We know that. We've had them in the kids' ministry. We know you don't discipline your kids. Here's something you know, too. Nobody likes being around an undisciplined child, and nobody likes being around an undisciplined Christian.

Here's discipline 101. Seriously. Some of you young parents are like, "We're doing the passive, permissive parenting." We'll see how that works out, but listen for a second on this. I mean, I have three kids. I know a little bit of what I'm talking about on this. What you want to do with discipline... This is very biblical and very helpful to understand.

You want to connect disobedience and pain. That's the principle of discipline. "When you sin, I want you to feel the consequences." Timmy might go to time-out. Danny might be deprived of dessert. Sally might not get screens. Sammy might get a spanking. This is the principle of discipline: I connect disobedience with pain.

Then he says this. He gives you the opposite of lukewarmness. Wouldn't it be great if we had a church full of zealous Christians? What does it mean to be zealous? It's enthusiastic, passionate, energetic devotion. Now, it's interesting. The Bible says not all zeal is good.

Paul says about his Jewish brothers and sisters (he says this in Romans), "They have a zeal, but not according to the knowledge of God." Do you want to know a modern-day example of zeal with no knowledge? Greta Thunberg, a young teenage girl screaming about things she doesn't understand.

What is zeal? It's interesting. Maybe we should ask, "Is there ever a time that Jesus is described as being zealous?" Yes. One time. John 2:17 is interesting. I'll tell you what the disciples said, and then I'll tell you what he did. Jesus does something, and it says, "Then the disciples remembered the saying, 'Zeal for your house has consumed me.'" Okay. Let's talk about this for a second.

What did Jesus do that made the disciples remember a Bible verse that says, "Zeal for your house has consumed me"? He just cleansed the temple. This is John, chapter 2. Jesus turns over tables. So, what does all this mean? I'm trying to put this together for us. What does it mean to be zealous?

Here's what zeal is. Some of you need to do this today. Zeal says, "I need to do something about this now." That's how you know you're zealous. You're sitting here right now, and you're going, "You know what? My wife and I need to go to counseling *now*, as soon as possible." The problem with you is you'll do anything tomorrow.

It's like, "I need to confess this sin I've been struggling with secretly *now*. Before I get home, I'm calling, I'm texting...*now*." "I need to start praying with my family tonight." This is what zealousness is. Zealousness says, "There is an urgency, and there is an importance to my obedience right now in this area of my life."

## **06 THE INVITATION FROM CHRIST**

So, Jesus gives counsel. He gives a strong word, but then he gives an invitation. Here, I'll show you this. This is how he ends. This may be the most famous verse in the seven letters. Here it is: ***"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."***

What's interesting is, last week, Josh said at the church at Philadelphia there is an open door. Now we get to the church at Laodicea, and what do we have? A closed door. A lot of times, when we read this verse, if you know this verse... If you grew up in church, you read this verse, and it can give you the fuzzies inside. "Aw, Jesus is standing at the door and knocking."

Even sometimes we'll apply it, and I think it's fine... We'll apply this verse personally in doing evangelism. "Hey, Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. Are you going to let him in?" I think that's a fine application, but that's not what Jesus is saying *here*. Here's what Jesus is saying here: "I'm on the outside of the church. Let me back in."

Could you imagine? I know I talk loud and fast, but could you imagine if while I'm talking, all of a sudden we heard someone banging on the door? We're like, "Who is it? Open it up." "It's Jesus. We've kicked him out of the church." Jesus is saying, "Somehow, the church of Laodicea, the lukewarm Laodicea church, has kicked me out, and I am on the outside." He's saying, "Would you invite me in?"

It's interesting. I want to show you a picture. This is a painting that was painted. There are many paintings of this moment, but this is a picture painted by Eva Koleva Timothy. I love this image, because, first, you can't see exactly what Jesus looks like. You just see him from the back. It appears to be at night. He comes to the door.

Here's what's interesting. You can Google this. If you Google different paintings of Jesus knocking at the door, they all have one thing in common. If you look at it, what you'll notice is there is no handle on the outside of the door. The only way for that door to be opened is from the inside. The question is...*Are we going to open the door and let Jesus Christ in?*

See, here's what a lukewarm Christian does. A lukewarm Christian only lets Jesus into certain areas of their life and not others. One of the most famous sermons ever preached on this passage is called *My Heart – Christ's Home*. It was preached by a Presbyterian minister. He saw that painting, and he wrote this sermon that became a little booklet. It sold 10 million copies. You can Google it. I think you can get it as a PDF for free.

Basically, here's what happens. The little booklet starts, and Jesus knocks on this guy's house one day. He opens up and says, "Oh, it's Jesus. Come on in." He said he was glad because he had just cleaned the house. So Jesus came in, and they were sitting down. Jesus said, "Can I go upstairs?" and he said, "Uh..." He said, "Okay. Fine." So he goes upstairs.

He gets upstairs, and he looks around a little bit and says, "I smell something up here. It stinks." He starts to look around and goes, "You know where that's from? There's a closet over here." Jesus goes to open the closet, and it's locked. He says to the guy, "Can I get in there?" and the guy says, "Oh, you can't get in there. There are things in there I don't want you to see."

Jesus says, "Well, then I can't stay in this house if I can't get in that closet." So, he starts to head down the steps, and the guy says... You have to read the whole story, but the guy finally says, "Okay. Come on. Get up here." He tells the story of Jesus going into that hall closet, cleaning it out, and how free he felt afterward when he fully gave the keys of his entire house over to Jesus.

Let me ask you this as we're closing. A lukewarm Christian does not listen, does not invite Jesus into every room in their lives. If you'll bow your heads, I want to end a little differently today. I just want to pray over us different prayers, not just for the lukewarm, but wherever we might be on these seven churches. I want to give you a chance to respond at the end of the series.

I want you to think about yourself for a second with me. Are you like...? Some of you are. Come on. Just be honest. You don't need to raise your hand or anything. Some of you are like the church at Ephesus. That would define your life. You have a big head and a small heart.

I want to give you a second right now to say, "Lord, would you change my heart? God, you have me in this church and in this series for a reason. I don't want to be like that anymore. I don't want to have a small heart and a big head. I want a big head and a big heart."

Some of you feel like you're the church at Smyrna right now, because you are suffering, and you're afraid. That's what suffering does to people. It makes them afraid. Would you say, "God, I'm trying to be faithful. Would you help me not be fearful?" By the way, if you want to come up during this last song, we'll pray with you on the sides here.

Some of you are like Pergamum. You're tempted to be worldly. You make more money now, and you have more options, and you have the good job. You're tempted to value the temporary over the eternal. Ask God to help you. Some of you are like Thyatira. You just want to love people. You do. You have a good heart for that, but in loving people you often want to compromise Scripture.

Would you ask God to make you tender and tough? Would you say, "Lord, could I please be tough on sin but tender with sinners, like you are? Can I love but still rebuke?" Some of you are like Sardis. You are dead. God has to do the work, but would you come alive? Would you transfer trust to Christ? Some in Sardis were asleep, and they needed to wake up and strengthen what remained.

Some of you right now are like the church at Philadelphia. God has put a door in front of you. Would you walk through it? You can't walk through a door you can't see. Some of you need to say, "Lord, show me the door. Show me the door in my marriage. I don't see it. Show me the door with my kids. Show me the door with my finances. Show me the door out of this addiction."

Some of us need to confess that we have been lukewarm. We have been complacent. We have said, "God doesn't work anymore like he used to. That's how God used to do things. God doesn't punish sin anymore. God doesn't reward righteousness anymore. It doesn't matter whether I do good or evil."

Lord, would you help us? We want to be a useful church for your glory and our good. We want to be an effective church. We want to be an attractive church. We want to be a counterculture. Would you help us, Lord? Lord, as we sing this last song, would



you bring help? Some in here need help. Would you bring hope? Some in here need hope. Would you bring healing? Something powerful happens as we come together. Would you work mightily as we close our time together? In Christ's name, amen.