

## A Call to Faithfulness

When Comfort Replaces Commitment

September 6, 2026

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Week 5

Revelation 3:14-22

Bible Reading Plan

[Start the Plan](#)

Click the link above to read the Bible along with your group.

“Try not to become a man of success, but rather a man of value.” –Albert Einstein

What Albert Einstein discovered was this: you can walk through life as Inarguably one of the most successful men in the history of the world, but it is far more important to pursue utility and purpose than it is to pursue success and accolades.

Now, Albert Einstein was not a believer in Christ, but his discovery simplifies a universal truth that God has written into the fabric of what it means to have lived: a person's life is to be of value, not outwardly successful. If a person possesses the image of God, which is every person who has ever lived, life is not meant to be a game of Monopoly where you try your hardest to accumulate as much as you can. No, we are to be of use, spreading His image to the ends of the earth.

### 1. When you think about living a successful life versus living a useful life, what is the difference?

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21.)

And to the church in Ephesus, Paul writes, “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The pursuit of our hearts is to be useful, and in Christ, that usefulness is revealed to be the works that God has preordained for us to live in. Keep in mind, Christ modeled this for us. From a worldly perspective, His life did not appear successful. Nomadic, betrayed by everyone, crucified. But even

though His life did not appear successful, it was of the greatest value. Living sinlessly. Receiving the punishment of sinners. Atoning for sin. Defeating the grave.

## **2. Who is someone in your life that does not look especially successful by the world's standards, but whose life has been incredibly useful or meaningful? What made that matter?**

So, what does this have to do with our series in Revelation? Well as we close our series, A Call to Faithfulness, we will be looking at the seventh and final church Jesus addresses directly in Revelation: The Church of Laodicea. Even though there has been application for us found in each of the other churches we've addressed, there is no more resonate parallel to our specific geography, demographic, and socioeconomic context than that of Laodicea. You can be the judge of if this is true or not, but if it is true, we would be unwise to let this rebuke pass us by.

Context to the city of Laodicea:

Laodicea was a very wealthy city, known for its medical, textile, and banking industries. The medical school in Laodicea was known for developing an eye salve made of ground Phrygian stone, some other minerals, and oil that would help to treat eye disease. Laodicea was the only city to produce luxury designer tunics called Trimata made with silky black wool. They were so famous for this as a status symbol that they were known throughout the Mediterranean as Trimateria. Lastly, Laodicea acted as the center of gold exchange in Asia Minor for the Roman empire. If you've heard of Cicero, he kept his money in Laodicea because of their reputation.

In the year 60 AD, Laodicea suffered a devastating earthquake, yet because of their immense wealth, Tacitus says that they were able to rebuild the city without any aid from Rome, which had never happened before and would never happen again throughout the empire. In summary, Laodicea is the image of success. They needed nothing in day-to-day life. And when the truth of the gospel came to them, most likely through the Epaphras, who also brought the gospel to his neighboring hometown, Colossae, the Laodiceans experienced little persecution or social pressure because of it. Though they received the truth, there was very little culturally that forced Christians to pay the price for their faith. Since the city was so affluent, people didn't really care as much that there were people worship another god. Evidently, they weren't making any pagan gods mad and there was no threat of governmental instability from them, so why bother?

So, here is the text: "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. 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.” (Revelation 3:14-16, ESV)

From what we read about the other churches that Jesus addresses, we would expect some sort of commendation before the rebuke, but there is none. Jesus has nothing of note to commend them for up front. Instead, He chastises them about their “lukewarm” faith.

### **3. What comes to mind when you hear “lukewarm” faith?**

You don’t want to be a lukewarm Christian! This is an incredibly common saying in Christianity. But what does that actually mean? Could Jesus be saying that we should either be completely sold out for God or have nothing to do with Him, but the person who toes the line in the middle gets spit out of His mouth? Or is there something else that might be going on in the context to whom the letter was addressed?

Laodicea formed a triangle with two other cities: Hierapolis and Colossae. Colossae was known for their incredibly clean and cold water. With no fridges back in the day, can you imagine how scarce cold water is and how refreshing it would be in the middle eastern desert? Hierapolis on the other hand was famous for steaming, medicinal hot springs. They didn’t have hot tubs back then either, so a natural hot spring worked wonders. Laodicea had no local water source. They relied fully on aqueducts to pipe in water from the south about 5-6 miles away from the city. By the time the water got to the city, it was warmed to whatever the temperature was that day, and it collected heavy mineral deposits from the ductwork. The result was a tepid and irony version of water that appealed to nobody and if the mineral content was too high, it would induce vomiting.

Why does this context matter? Because Jesus isn’t telling them, “I wish you would go all in or leave me alone altogether!” No. He’s saying, “You guys are just like your water. You are neither medicinal or refreshing and your lack of use for kingdom purposes makes me want to spit you out!”

The Laodicean church is detestable because their indifference toward God has produced indifference toward the works He has called them to. God despises indifference. The two most important commandments are to love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. What is the opposite of that? Most of us would say hate, but hate is not the opposite of love, both of those require strong emotion and care. The opposite of love is indifference.

### **4. Have you experienced times when you felt indifferent toward God and the work He has called you to do? What does that look like in your life?**

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Jesus sees the people of Laodicea and says that they are completely indifferent. He continues the thought by describing where their indifference comes from. For you say, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,” not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17).

While Jesus rebukes other churches for their immorality and idolatry, he doesn’t to Laodicea. Instead, He calls them out for their spiritual bankruptcy amidst their perceived self-sufficiency. They don’t care anymore about the things of God because their circumstances lead them to believe they don’t have to. They have money, they have health, they have luxury and their neighbors do too, but Jesus says that even though you think you have everything you need, you are naked and blind and wretched.

In His parable about the Sower, where Jesus talks about the seed that took root but is later choked out by thorns, “is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.” (Matthew 13:22, ESV)

The Laodiceans have received the gospel. They very well may be going to church and studying the Scriptures and sitting in prayer, but they are unfruitful. They’re lukewarm. And it’s because their riches have led them to deceive themselves into thinking they’re doing just fine. Do we not see this mentality in Christians all around us? Do we not see this in ourselves?

## **5. What are some things of this world that might be keeping you from producing fruit for the kingdom?**

“I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” This is why we are so self-isolated in the middle of neighborhoods full of hundreds of people. We see prosperity and excess and think that everyone around us is doing just fine and there is no work to be done for the kingdom.

You see the family across the street – married, two kids, beautiful house, brand new car, and you don’t see any reason to even invite them over for dinner because they have it all made. When in reality they don’t know God. What if the good work that God prepared beforehand that you might walk in is to be a cool drink for people who are desperately thirsty? Or a hot spring for those who are aching from the struggles of life that aren’t alleviated by material things? What if the purpose in life is not to be successful, but to be of value?

The Laodiceans know a lot about success, but they have abandoned the pursuit of value. So, what are they to do if they are poor, blind, and naked? How can they be clothed? How can they see? How can they have wealth? Jesus tells them how!

“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. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”  
(Revelation 3:18-19, ESV)

Instead of buying gold at their gold exchange, they need to buy refined gold from God. What is this gold? 1 Peter 1:7—it is faith in the work of Christ. It is an inheritance that has been proved through suffering. It is pure. It lasts beyond this world. It will never fade. Stop putting your trust in metal. Instead, put your trust on the one at whose will it was created, and who entered His own creation to die for sinners.

Instead of clothing themselves in their black designer wool and earning approval from their neighbors, put on the white garment of Christ’s righteousness and gain approval from God. Or as Paul says to their neighbors in Colossae, “Put on the new self” (Colossians 3:10). Forget what you wear on the outside if you are spiritually naked on the inside!

Instead of worrying about medicine for your eyes, anoint them with salve so that you can see the things of the Lord. What good is it if your eyes work perfectly but you can’t see anything spiritually. Earthly medicine helps you see the riches of the world, but God’s salve allows you to see where you can be useful.

**6. Are you spiritually poor, blind, or naked? What step is God calling you to see the things the Lord will do through you? Are you ready to be “useful” for the sake of others and the sake of the gospel?**

All of this seems to have order to it. Have faith in Christ, which allows you to put on the new self and walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, which then opens your eyes to the purposes God has planned for you to walk in. This is true wealth. But notice that after the rebuke, Jesus doesn’t say that they need to do all of this so that He will love them again. Instead, Jesus says that he disciplines those He loves and then He ends His message to Laodicea with an invitation.

“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. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 3:20-22, ESV)

Jesus isn't standing at the door of an unbeliever's heart asking permission to save him. He's standing outside the door of His own church. This isn't an altar call verse; this is Jesus knocking on the hearts of His people with the gift of conviction. If they listen to this rebuke. If they welcome conviction and repent of their sin, Jesus will dine with them. In other words, they have been out of communion with one another, but entrance back into communion is as simple as repentance.