

7

Sufficient in Christ Alone

?

WHAT DO
YOU HATE
TO EAT
OR DRINK
AT ROOM
TEMP?

The
POINT ➤

God provides all we need as we pursue
Christ daily.

➤ REVELATION 3:14-22

¹⁴ “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.

¹⁵ “‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”



FOR LEADERS (15 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD PROVIDES ALL WE NEED AS WE PURSUE CHRIST DAILY.

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has come to convict, teach, comfort, lead, strengthen, and seal us, as well as to produce fruit within and through us.

Message to Leaders

Jesus accused the church in Laodicea of being lukewarm, poor, and blind. When we fail to recognize our own weaknesses, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts us and opens our eyes to the truth. Even though it can sometimes be painful to receive, recognizing the truth about ourselves is an essential step in our receiving God's blessings.

› Engage Option 1

Hide objects around the room representing what we need to live in devotion to Christ (e.g., Bible, church, joy, faith, etc.). Provide students with clues and give them three minutes to find all of the items. Say, **“Life is full of challenges and difficulties, but God has given us everything we need to pursue Christ.”**

› Engage Option 2

Place two large posters up front that say “Necessities” and “Luxuries.” As students enter the room, give them each a card labeled with something that fits into one of those categories (e.g., Church = Necessity; Car = Luxury). Ask students to select a category to label their card as and place it on the correct poster. Say, **“Sometimes we may want more than we actually need, but God has already given all that we need to follow Him.”**

› Engage Option 3

Search the Internet for “God Will Supply All Your Needs - Desiring God.” Play the video as you begin the session. Say, **“Only God can provide what we need to satisfy our souls and enable us to live righteous lives.”**

NOTE: Always make sure you preview any video clip you show students and ensure it is appropriate for your church and ministry.

LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider the following:

ITEM 7: Engage students in the session by displaying the **Lukewarm** poster.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT // GOD PROVIDES ALL WE NEED AS WE PURSUE CHRIST DAILY.



THE SETTING

The last remaining city on the risen Lord's letter writing circuit was Laodicea. An important commercial center, it was located at a major crossroads in Asia Minor. The Lord sent the church in that prosperous city a warning to stop trusting in their material possessions and get back to serving Him with the intensity they once demonstrated. Their lukewarm spiritual condition was unacceptable and time was quickly running out.

FACT:

In the 1960s, Dr. Pepper created this advertising campaign: "Heat Dr. Pepper in a saucepan until it steams. Then pour over thin slices of lemon. Hot Dr. Pepper. That's a hot idea!"¹ Uhhh...Nope.

One of my good friends absolutely loves Dr. Pepper. It is the only soft drink he will drink. Recently, we were at a restaurant for lunch, and he ordered a Dr. Pepper. The waitress quickly informed him that they didn't have Dr. Pepper, but she assured him they did have Mr. Pibb, which is basically the same thing. Clearly, she saw things very differently from my friend. His response— "No thanks. I'll just have a water." From his perspective, Mr. Pibb is just not the same as Dr. Pepper. He didn't want a poor substitute; he wanted the real thing.

It can be an odd sensation to take a sip of a drink only to discover that inside your cup is something different than what you expected. Perhaps you ordered a Coke and were surprised to find it was Diet. Or maybe you were excited about a piping hot cup of coffee only to find that it was cold. Whatever the case, what first appeared as delicious turned out to be pretty gross.

Sadly, this applies not only to beverages, but also to churches. Some churches can look good on the outside, but when you get a real taste for who they are, you find it was all for show. This was the case of the church in Laodicea. Jesus' admonition to them speaks to us today.



IMPART (30 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD PROVIDES ALL WE NEED AS WE PURSUE CHRIST DAILY.

REVELATION 3:14-17

“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. 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 3:14-17**

Jesus’ last message was to the church located in Laodicea. Unlike the other letters, Jesus gave them no words of encouragement or commendation. In fact, it was quite the opposite. He spoke sternly, telling the church that they were neither hot nor cold. This was a phrase the people would have understood well because Laodicea did not have a good water supply to the city itself. Just ten miles east, there were cold, pure waters in Colossae. And six miles north, there were hot therapeutic springs in Hierapolis. Laodicea was a wealthy city, and they had the resources to create a system to pipe in the water they needed. However, by the time it arrived, the water was lukewarm. It wasn’t refreshing like the water in Colossae. It wasn’t therapeutic like the water in Hierapolis. It was tepid and gross!

All the money and time they had used to build the water system was useless. Jesus desired that the church either be a cold, invigorating drink of water or a hot, healing mineral bath. Those are useful, but the church in Laodicea was doing nothing life-giving or helpful.

The heart of the problem was their self-sufficiency. Laodicea was the financial and banking center of the whole region, and it was known for its wealth. In fact, the city was so rich that after an earthquake devastated the city in 17 A.D., they refused any financial help from Rome. They didn’t need it!

Apparently, this same self-sufficient attitude was in the church—they relied on themselves rather than on God. Self-sufficiency is the opposite of faith. Jesus set the record straight. Though they saw themselves as rich and in need of nothing, He said, “You don’t realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.” They may have been wealthy and proud of the products they manufactured that made them rich, but they were destitute and in need of the true riches that come only through trusting Jesus.

Jesus’ words carry a warning for His people today, as well. We have all kinds of resources available to us, and when we use them in ways that honor God, they are blessings. However, if we are not careful, we can rely on material things or love our possessions too much. If this happens, it can cause us to become lukewarm in our relationship with Christ, and we become useless concerning God’s purposes for our lives. We would do well to frequently perform a self-check to make sure we are depending on Jesus and not ourselves.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 54)

1 What did Jesus mean when He told the church they were neither hot nor cold?

2 What does it look like for a Christian to be lukewarm in today’s world?



REVELATION 3:18-19

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**

Even though Jesus had given them a stern warning, He also gave them a plan so they would again be useful for God's purposes if they followed it. Even when we mess up—and sometimes we mess up in big ways—Jesus has invited us to return to Him. This is exactly what Jesus wanted for the church at Laodicea, so He called them to “buy” three things from Him:

- **Gold:** The Laodiceans knew about money and gold because they were the financial center for the region. However, they needed Jesus' “gold refined in the fire.” In the refining process, gold is heated to an extreme temperature until the impurities rise to the top, which are then scraped off and discarded. This process leaves the gold pure. When we go through God's refining process, our impurities are brought to the surface so that He can remove them from our lives. Of course, this requires that we are willing to go through the process in the first place. The church in Laodicea had wealth and possessions, but they needed for their lives to be purified that they would be rich in Christ.
- **White clothes:** Laodicea was known for its production of very soft, fine quality black wool. Much of the city's wealth came from producing this fabric, which was known to be some of the finest clothes available at that time. However, God saw them as shamefully naked because they hadn't clothed themselves with what mattered. They needed the white clothing of righteous, pure, and holy lives.
- **Ointment:** Laodicea was also known for its school of medicine, and they had developed a special eye ointment, called Phrygian powder, which helped with a number of eye problems. Here was a church in a city known for helping people see, yet they themselves were blind to spiritual things—the very things that were most important for them to see.

Jesus rebuked the church for their lack of faith and obedience. However, He also reminded them of His love for them. In fact, this is the very reason He disciplined them. God's correction is always for the purpose of bringing His children back to Him and into a deeper relationship. It may not be pleasant at the time, but the Father's discipline always leads to fruit in our lives (Heb. 12:10b-11).

If we wander from God, the answer is always the same as it was for the Laodiceans: “Be zealous and repent.” This means turning away from our sin and, instead, pursuing God. If we find that we're rich in the world but spiritually poor, filthy, and blind, we must turn to Jesus, the only one who can provide the things we truly need.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 55)

- 3** What's the answer Jesus gives for the problem of lukewarm faith?
- 4** What are some ways God disciplines those He loves?
- 5** Do you find it difficult or easy to rely on Jesus in today's world? Explain.



REVELATION 3:20-22

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**

The church at Laodicea had failed to live with Jesus as the center of their lives. Perhaps it wasn't intentional, but by their complacency and self-reliance, they had become satisfied with the things of the world. Even though Jesus had spoken harsh words to this church, He had not forsaken them. Jesus said, "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." Even though the Laodicean church had turned its back on Jesus, He was ready and willing to come in and dine with them.

We usually approach dining and eating with others casually, but it was different in that culture. People didn't invite just anyone to share a meal. Such an invitation implied close friendship. Jesus' words present a picture of an intimate relationship, the very thing Christ desires with those He loves. This is something no other religion offers—God desires a relationship with us and has taken the steps necessary to make this a reality.

Jesus' desire for the Laodicean believers—and for us—was for them to be victorious. Experiencing victory depended on their returning to Jesus and living according to God's purpose for their lives. Today, Jesus makes the same offer to us: "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne." If we will turn to Jesus, living by faith in obedience, He allows us to share in His victory, even sitting alongside Jesus as He rules over all creation. We are victorious because Jesus was victorious over sin and death.

Jesus' desire is to be at the center of our lives. No matter how far we may have fallen and no matter how messed up our priorities may have become, Jesus still stands at the door and knocks. He is waiting for us to let Him in so that we can be restored to a place of intimate fellowship. Whether you are inviting Christ into your life for the first time or you are restoring your walk with Him after a season of disobedience, open the door and let Jesus change your life.

God's correction is always for the purpose of bringing His children back to Him and into a deeper relationship. #BSFLtheChurch



DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 55)

- 6** Is Jesus knocking on the door of your life asking to be let in? In what areas?
- 7** When have you experienced intimate fellowship with Christ?
- 8** What does it look like to trust and pursue Jesus for your needs?



LIVE IT OUT (10 minutes)

THE POINT // GOD PROVIDES ALL WE NEED AS WE PURSUE CHRIST DAILY.



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has come to convict, teach, comfort, lead, strengthen, and seal us, as well as to produce fruit within and through us.

Jesus accused the church in Laodicea of being lukewarm, poor, and blind. When we fail to recognize our own weaknesses, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts us and opens our eyes to the truth. Even though it can sometimes be painful to receive, recognizing the truth about ourselves is an essential step in our receiving God's blessings.

>CHRIST

To be a Christian requires that we love Jesus with all that we are. Many who would claim to follow Jesus want to accept the parts of Christianity that they like, and hold on to the things of the world which they appreciate. However, this simply can't happen. We're either all-in, or we're out. We're either hot or cold, but there is no middle ground.

9 How are you tempted to live out a lukewarm faith?

10 Write a brief prayer of commitment expressing your desire to follow Jesus with an all-in commitment.



LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT // GOD PROVIDES ALL WE NEED AS WE PURSUE CHRIST DAILY.

› COMMUNITY

Jesus accused the church of being blind—they couldn't see the truth about their struggles. We all have “blind spots” in our lives, specifically weaknesses that we're not aware of. Growth in Christlikeness involves our becoming aware of these weaknesses and improving in those areas.

11 This week, ask a trusted friend or leader to help you identify the blind spots in your life. Make it a point not to be defensive. And it's okay for you to remind them to be kind and gentle in sharing their honest perspectives with you.



› CULTURE

In our culture, most people would view those who live out an all-in kind of faith as radical, or even as weird or strange.

12 What is your reaction to knowing that others at school may see you as weird if you live out a bold commitment to Jesus?

13 How does your life stand out in these ways?

This week, share with a non-believing friend the reasons your life looks so different.