

Small Group Guide



"Hot, Cold, or Lukewarm?" -- Based on Revelation 3:14-18

Overview

In this message, Chuck Lauver drew from Jesus' letter to the church of Laodicea to challenge believers to examine whether their faith and daily interactions are genuinely useful to God's purposes. Using the historical context of Laodicea's lukewarm water supply and a memorable story from a restaurant, Chuck called the church to be either therapeutically warm or refreshingly cool -- never indifferent, never useless.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus told the church of Laodicea that their lukewarm condition made them useless to his purposes -- a sobering assessment that applies to individual believers as well as the gathered church.
- The city of Laodicea had wealth, industry, and medicine, yet lacked the one thing it truly needed -- living, useful water. Spiritual self-sufficiency can blind us to our actual condition.
- Being "hot" means being therapeutically present for others -- offering warmth, encouragement, grace, and compassion.
- Being "cold" means being refreshingly present -- offering clarity, truth, and renewal to those who are weary.
- Lukewarm faith is characterized by bitterness, apathy, unforgiveness, and self-focus -- none of which God can use to advance his kingdom.
- Philippians 2:1-8 gives us the model: adopt the attitude of Christ, who emptied himself and became a servant. This is what hot and cold look like in practice.

Opening Question

Start your group time with this low-pressure question to get everyone talking:

- Think of a person in your life -- a coworker, neighbor, teacher, or stranger -- who left you feeling genuinely encouraged or refreshed after an interaction. What was it about them that made you feel that way?

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. In Revelation 3:14-18, Jesus tells the Laodicean church they are "neither hot nor cold" and that he is about to spit them out of his mouth. What does this strong language communicate about how seriously Jesus takes spiritual indifference? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Jesus points out that the Laodiceans believed they were rich and lacked nothing, yet he describes them as "miserable, pathetic, poor, blind, and naked." How does material comfort or outward success sometimes make it harder to recognize spiritual poverty in our own lives?
3. Chuck explained that Laodicea's water was hot when it left Hierapolis and cold when it left Colossae, but by the time it arrived in Laodicea it was lukewarm and useless. In what ways does spiritual life sometimes lose its heat or its refreshing quality before it reaches the people around us?

Reflecting on the Sermon

4. Chuck described hot faith as therapeutic and cold faith as refreshing. In your own words, what does each of those qualities look like in everyday life? Can you think of a time when someone was one of those things for you?
5. The restaurant story illustrated two very different ways that people who claim faith in Christ can represent Jesus to someone who does not know him. What was the difference between the two responses, and what do you think the young waiter walked away believing about Christians?
6. Chuck said, "How you live your daily life really determines if this place is hot or cold." What does it mean that the church's reputation in the community is shaped by what individual members do Monday through Saturday?

Going Deeper

7. Philippians 2:3-4 instructs believers not to act out of selfish ambition but to consider others as more important than themselves and to look out for the interests of others. Where is this most difficult for you personally -- at home, at work, in traffic, online, or somewhere else?
 8. Philippians 2:5-8 describes Jesus emptying himself, taking on the form of a servant, and becoming obedient even to death. Chuck pointed out that Jesus is looking to see himself in us. What would it look like for your daily routine to reflect even one aspect of that kind of self-giving attitude this week?
 9. Lukewarm faith is described as rooted in bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, and apathy. Are there any relationships in your life right now where one of those things is keeping you from being useful to God? What would it take to begin to change that?
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Honest Reflection

Take a few quiet moments before answering these questions as a group. Encourage honesty over performance.

- On a scale from cold to hot, where would you honestly place yourself right now in terms of how you are engaging the people God has put around you?
 - Is there a specific person or situation where you know you have been lukewarm? What has kept you from being more present or intentional there?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to commit to before your group meets again:

1. Identify one person in your life -- a neighbor, coworker, family member, or someone you see regularly -- and make a deliberate effort to be therapeutically warm or refreshingly present for them this week. This could be a conversation, a note, a meal, or simply showing up.
2. Examine one relationship where bitterness, unforgiveness, or apathy has made you lukewarm. Take one concrete step toward reconciliation, grace, or re-engagement -- even if it is just a prayer for that person each day this week.

3. Practice awareness in public settings. When you are at a restaurant, a store, or any place of service this week, be intentional about how you treat the people serving you. Consider how your interaction might leave them feeling about the people of God.
 4. Read Philippians 2:1-11 slowly each morning this week. Ask God each day to show you one specific way to adopt the attitude of Christ before you leave your home.
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Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying specifically for one another. Ask each group member to share one area where they want to move from lukewarm to hot or cold. Pray over each person by name, asking the Holy Spirit to fill them and make them useful to God's purposes in the week ahead.

You may also use Chuck's closing prayer as a guide:

"Father, thank you for your love and grace for us. Thank you that when we are at times in our lives and we know we are lukewarm, thank you for reminding us what you need us to be. We pray that by your Holy Spirit dwelling and moving in and through us, that you would help us to be people that are therapeutic, people that are refreshing. When others come in contact with us, may they see you. Jesus, use us whenever, however. We love you. Amen."

Scripture for Further Study This Week

- Revelation 3:14-22 -- The full letter to the church of Laodicea, including Jesus' invitation to those who will open the door to him
- Philippians 2:1-11 -- The attitude of Christ as the model for Christian community
- Colossians 4:6 -- A description of speech that is full of grace and seasoned with salt, always ready to serve those who hear it