

# DIGGING DEEPER

## A 5-Day Devotional

*dear Church Week 3 - Don't Let Self-Sufficiency Replace Your Desperation for God*

### **Revelation 3:14-21 | The Letter to Laodicea**

Dear Church Series | Week 3

Rise City Church | [risecitychurch.com](http://risecitychurch.com)

### **How to Use This Devotional**

This devotional takes Sunday's message on the letter to Laodicea and unpacks it across five days. Each day focuses on a specific piece of the text and what it means for where you actually are right now. Read it when you have a few quiet minutes. Sit with the reflection questions honestly. Use the prayer prompt to actually talk to God rather than just think about him.

The goal is simple: go deeper into what Scripture is saying, and let it reach the places in your life that need it.

## **Day 1 The Certainty You Are Building On**

*"This is the message from the one who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation."* **Revelation 3:14 / 2 Corinthians 1:20**

Before Jesus says a single word of rebuke to the church in Laodicea, he tells them who is speaking. He is the Amen. Not someone who says amen. Not the one who ends a prayer with it. He is the Amen. The word itself means firm, certain, let it be so. And Jesus says that is what he is. He is the reason the message is true, not just the messenger delivering it.

Bobby made the point that this greeting is not accidental. The way Jesus describes himself at the start of each letter is always a direct antidote to the specific problem the church faces. Laodicea's problem was self-sufficiency, building their certainty on their own wealth, resources, and ability to manage life without needing anyone else. So Jesus opens by saying: I am the Amen. Your certainty belongs here. Not in your bank account. Not in your own ingenuity. In me.

Second Corinthians 1:20 says that all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding yes, and through Christ we say our Amen to God. The Amen is not just a polite ending to a sentence. It is a declaration that what God has said is true and firm and can be trusted. And Jesus is the living embodiment of that declaration.

The question worth sitting with today is a simple one. What are you actually building your certainty on? Not in theory. In practice, when things get hard, when the unexpected happens, when life requires something of you that you did not plan for, where do you actually go first? That answer tells you where your certainty lives.

### **REFLECT**

1. Bobby asked: if you removed God from your life right now, what would actually be different? Take that question seriously today. What is your honest answer?
2. The way Jesus introduces himself is always the antidote to the church's specific problem. What does it mean for your life right now that Jesus is the Amen, the firm foundation, the place where certainty actually lives?

**3. When life gets uncertain or hard, where do you go first? What does that reveal about where you have placed your trust?**

**PRAY**

*Read 2 Corinthians 1:20 slowly. Then sit quietly and ask Jesus to show you specifically where you have been building certainty on something other than him. Ask him to be honest with you, and ask for the courage to hear it.*

## Day 2 When Self-Sufficiency Becomes a Spiritual Problem

*"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." Revelation 3:15-17*

In AD 62, an earthquake leveled Laodicea. Rome offered to fund the rebuilding. Laodicea said no thank you and rebuilt the entire city using its own resources. Roman culture celebrated this as a mark of strength and independence. The city that needed no one. The city that could handle anything on its own.

That cultural identity slowly disciplined the church. A city that did not need the Roman government became a church that did not need the God it served. Nobody announced it. Nobody voted on it. It just seeped in, the way culture always does, quietly and over time, until the posture of the city became the posture of the congregation.

The most striking thing about this letter is not the severity of Jesus' words. It is that the Laodiceans had no idea. They thought they were fine. They thought they had it together. They were going to services, running programs, maintaining the appearance. And Jesus looks at all of it and says: you do not realize what you actually are. Wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked. The comfort and prosperity had masked the need so completely that they could not see it from the inside.

Bobby put it plainly: comfort disguises need, and prosperity masks weakness. That is not just a Laodicean problem. It is a problem for anyone whose life is comfortable enough that desperation for God rarely surfaces. When you can solve most of your problems with money, skill, or effort, the temptation to treat God as a preference rather than a necessity is very real and very quiet.

### REFLECT

1. The Laodicean church did not know it was in trouble. That is the most unsettling part of this letter. Is it possible to be spiritually lukewarm without knowing it? What would the signs look like from the inside?

2. Bobby described how a city's cultural identity disciplined the church without anyone choosing it deliberately. What cultural values around you have the most potential to quietly shape your posture toward God without you noticing?

3. Where in your life is comfort or prosperity most likely to be masking a genuine need for God that you are not currently feeling?

### PRAY

*Pray the prayer Bobby suggested from the message: God, if there is anything in me that is unclean, purify and cleanse me. If there is anything I am blind to, help me see it. If there is anything I am deaf to, open my ears. Ask him to show you honestly where you have stopped being desperate for him.*

## Day 3 Hot, Cold, and What Lukewarm Actually Costs

*"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."* **Revelation 3:15-16**

The hot and cold imagery in this passage is among the most misread passages in all of Revelation. The common reading goes like this: hot means passionate, cold means apathetic or opposed, and Jesus wants you hot. The problem with that reading is that it requires Jesus to be saying he would rather you be his enemy than indifferent to him. And that is not what the rest of Scripture supports anywhere.

The actual context points somewhere else entirely. Hierapolis, six miles from Laodicea, was famous for its therapeutic hot springs. People traveled to them for healing. Colossae, also nearby, was known for pure, cold, clear drinking water. Both were genuinely useful. Hot water healed. Cold water refreshed. Laodicea's water, by contrast, was lukewarm and loaded with minerals and calcium carbonate. Archaeological evidence confirms it. It made people sick.

That is the image Jesus is reaching for. Hot faith heals the people around you. Cold faith refreshes and gives life. Lukewarm faith is good for nothing and, in fact, makes things worse. A faith that does not move you to actually live like Christ is not a neutral thing. It is actively useless. It promises something it cannot deliver.

Bobby asked a question worth sitting with all week: are there areas of your walk with God that once produced genuine passion but now simply feel like a chore? Serving. Praying. Worshiping. Giving. Loving your neighbor. Reading Scripture. When did those things stop costing you something? Because the moment they stop costing you anything is often the moment they stop doing anything.

### REFLECT

1. Think through the list Bobby named: serving, praying, worshiping, giving, preferring others, reading Scripture. Which of those has cooled down the most in your own life? When did it drift?

2. Bobby asked: when did the things you do for God stop costing you something? What is your honest answer to that question right now?

3. Hot faith heals. Cold faith refreshes. What would it look like for your faith to actually do something useful for the people around you this week?

### PRAY

*Pick one area from the list above where your faith has gone lukewarm. Bring it to God specifically, not generally. Ask him what it would take to go from going through the motions to something that actually costs you something again. Then sit with whatever he brings to mind.*

## Day 4 The Three Things You Cannot Make Yourself

*"So I advise you to buy gold from me, gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your own nakedness. And ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see."* **Revelation 3:18**

Here is where the irony of this letter becomes almost poetic. Laodicea was famous for three things: its banking and financial center, its glossy black wool and textile industry, and its eye salve, known throughout the ancient world for its healing properties. These were the things the city was most proud of, the things it had built its identity around.

And Jesus says to the church: buy gold from me, buy white garments from me, buy eye salve from me. The exact three things Laodicea produced. Jesus is not ignoring what they had. He is pointing directly at it and saying: the version you made for yourselves is not enough. The real thing has to come from me.

Bobby framed three questions from this passage that are worth examining one at a time. First: are there areas of your life where you have replaced what Jesus offers with something of your own making? Where do you find your comfort and security, and is Jesus actually the source of it? Second: have you trusted in your own resources instead of the riches of the kingdom? Bobby put it directly: money is a phenomenal tool but a wretched master. When money takes the position that God was supposed to have, it becomes a form of idolatry, even if it never felt like one. Third: are you running on your own wisdom and ingenuity while treating God's ways as optional, something you will get to once things settle down?

You can use what you have or you can buy from Jesus, but you cannot do both. That is the core of what this passage is saying. The church in Laodicea was not godless. It was self-sourced. And Jesus says that is not the same as being his.

### REFLECT

1. Of the three areas Bobby named, comfort and security, money and resources, wisdom and plans, which one are you most likely to be sourcing from yourself rather than from Jesus? What does that look like practically in your life right now?
2. Bobby said: money is a phenomenal tool but a wretched master. How do you know which one it is in your own life? What are the signs?
3. Is there an area where you have been telling yourself you will follow God's way once things get a little easier or more settled? What has that been costing you?

### PRAY

*Take the three areas one at a time. Comfort and security, money and resources, wisdom and plans. For each one, ask God honestly: am I buying this from you, or am I making my own version? Let him answer before you move on. Then ask him what it would look like to start sourcing that thing from him instead.*

## Day 5 Every Generation Must Respond

*"I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. 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."* **Revelation 3:19-20**

Bobby ended the message with a piece of history that is both encouraging and sobering. The church in Laodicea, the one Jesus rebuked this harshly, appears to have responded. Three hundred years later, in 363 AD, a church council convened in Laodicea that played a significant role in the canonization of Scripture. A church Jesus called "wretched and blind" became a gathering place for leaders shaping the church's future. God corrected them, and they responded accordingly.

And then Bobby said the other thing. If you go to that region today, you will find almost no Christians. Nearly gone. Which means at some point, across some generation, the correction came and was ignored. The response that one generation made did not automatically carry to the next. Every generation has to hear it and respond for itself.

That is true of churches and of individuals. The response your parents made to God does not transfer to you. The season of genuine faith you had ten years ago does not cover today. Every generation, and every season of a life, must respond to what Jesus is saying right now.

The image Jesus closes with is one of the most tender in all of Scripture. He is standing at the door and knocking. In the ancient world, sharing a meal together was a picture of deep intimacy, friendship, peace, and acceptance. This is not an angry God issuing an ultimatum. This is a God who has been standing outside a door that quietly closed on him, and who is still there, still knocking, still wanting back in. The door opens from the inside.

### REFLECT

1. Bobby pointed out that the Laodicean church responded to Jesus' rebuke but later generations did not carry it forward. What does it mean for you personally that each generation has to respond for itself? What does your response look like right now?
2. Jesus describes the meal they will share as something between friends. Not a transaction or a duty. Genuine intimacy. How does that image sit with where you are in your relationship with God right now?
3. Is there a door in your life that has quietly closed on Jesus? Not dramatically, not all at once, just gradually drifted shut? What would it take to open it today?

### PRAY

*Sit with the image of Jesus standing at the door and knocking. Not forcing it open. Just standing there. Ask yourself honestly: is there a door in my life I have let close? Then, if the answer is yes, open it. You do not need a formal prayer. You just need to open it and let him in.*