
GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2019 – DEAR CHURCH,
WEEK 8 – MARCH 3, 2019 - REVELATION 3:14-22

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

- 1) In many situations, people will comment that, “they received a ‘lukewarm response.’” What do you think that means?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

This final letter is written to the church in Laodicea, which was an affluent and influential city. After another devastating earthquake in 61 AD, many cities looked to Rome for help with re-building. Laodicea was not one of those cities, because it was affluent enough that it did not need to ask for any help from Rome. It was the banking center of the entire region and had a medical school. A special salve was produced there that helped people with their eyesight.

Laodicea was also known for its production of black wool. The farmers had developed a breed of black sheep that produced a high-quality wool that was very popular. Despite all of their success as a city, though, the one thing that Laodicea lacked was quality drinking water.

Sources for fresh water were not great. To the north was the city of Hierapolis, which had a series of hot springs. This chemically laden water would spill over the cliffs. Aqueducts were built to bring the water to Laodicea. The only problem was that it was unsuitable to drink. To the south was Colosse, which also had an ample supply of fresh water flowing down from Mount Cadmus. By the time it reached Laodicea, some eleven miles away, it had become lukewarm. It is interesting to note that when Paul wrote the letter to Colosse (Colossians) he asked in chapter four that the letter be passed on to the church at Laodicea.

This issue with water forms the first part of the letter, only it is not the city’s lukewarm water that concerns Jesus. Rather, it is the church’s lukewarm nature to the faith that has him concerned. Jesus addresses the church with both disappointment and anger. He is not impressed with the “taste or temperature” of the Christian faith being exhibited in Laodicea. The affluence of the city has seemed to have negatively influenced the church. Jesus wants them to know that they are not well off, and that they need to readjust their vision.



Jesus calls them to repentance and reminds them that he is at the door knocking. The idea behind this probably lies in the earlier teaching of Jesus in the gospels. He is like the master who returns to his own home. The believers of Laodicea have been entrusted with something important. They need to stay awake so they can welcome Jesus home.

Finally, Jesus says, 'I want to share a meal with you'. Early believers would have connected this with the Lord's Supper and the promise that Jesus would offer his life for them, and be with them. It also points us to the final banquet mentioned in Revelation 19:9.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Revelation 3:14-22

¹⁴ "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. ²¹ To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

- 2) Verse 17 introduces the idea of an "inaccurate self-assessment." Looking back on your life, was there a time when you may have inaccurately assessed yourself? Share a story, if you are willing.
- 3) Has there been a time when you have inaccurately assessed your faith or your relationship with Jesus? How did you realize this? What did you do about it?
- 4) What do you think it means to be "lukewarm" as a Jesus follower? Why do you think God prefers hot or cold when it comes to your deeds?
- 5) Verse 18 describes three items that God values and counsels us to have. How would you identify and translate those 3 items into your faith? How do these characteristics help you define "rich faith?"
- 6) Where do you need to open the door in your life to God's knock? Where do you need to be reminded of God's victory in your life?
- 7) In verse 19 Jesus says that those he loves he rebukes and disciplines. What does that mean? If Jesus loves us, does it seem odd that he would rebuke or discipline us?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) In closing, think about the opening verse of "Amazing Grace." *Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see.* How does this verse of Amazing Grace connect with our passage?