

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A *Lukewarm Christian?*

by Charlie Marq

If someone at church mentions a "lukewarm Christian," most people nod like they know exactly what it means. Half-hearted. Not really committed. But most of us—including people who have been in church their whole lives—have actually been working from the wrong definition.

WHAT DID JESUS ACTUALLY MEAN BY LUKEWARM?

In Revelation chapter three, Jesus is sending letters to seven real churches in the real world. Laodicea gets something striking:

Jesus says: "Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am going to spit you out of my mouth." ([Revelation 3:16](#), ESV)

The explanation most of us have heard about this verse and what it means to be a lukewarm Christian goes something like this: Jesus wants you fired up, totally hot, or He'd rather you be completely lost. But that middle ground—saved, showing up on Sunday, not really doing much—that's lukewarm; that's what makes Him sick.

THE HISTORY BEHIND LAODICEA—AND WHY IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Laodicea was sandwiched between two neighboring cities. One had hot mineral springs. The other city had cold, clean, fresh water. Both cities had something valuable. Both were useful.

Laodicea had neither. They had to pipe water in through long stone channels—aqueducts—from those other cities. And by the time the water got there? The hot water wasn't hot anymore. It had gone lukewarm. Useless for healing. You can't drink it. You can't soak in it.

Hot equals useful. Cold equals useful. Lukewarm equals useless. That's what He's saying about being a lukewarm Christian.

5 SIGNS YOU MIGHT BE LIVING LIKE LAODICEA

1. You Think You've Got It Handled

Three times in this passage Jesus accuses the church of saying: I'm rich, I've got everything I need, I'm good. That's the language of self-sufficiency. And here's the wild part: Laodicea actually was one of the wealthiest cities in the ancient world. When an earthquake leveled the place, Rome offered to help rebuild. They turned it down. And Jesus is saying—I see that same spirit in your church ([Revelation 3:17](#)).

2. You Don't Know How Empty You Actually Are

Jesus looks at them and says they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. And the part that should scare us? They don't know it. When pride and comfort combine, they create this fog where everything feels fine. You stop sensing your need for God.

3. You Became a Bucket When You Were Supposed to Be a Pipe

God's grace was always meant to move through you. That's the image—a life that receives from God and channels it outward into people around you. The Laodiceans stopped the flow: they were collecting, storing, keeping. When water stops flowing, it goes stagnant.

4. You Became the Obstacle

There's a quote often credited to Gandhi: "I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians." Jesus gave His life for people who are far from Him. The lukewarm life—comfortable and self-focused—ends up being the thing standing between those people and God.

5. Jesus Is Standing Outside Your Door

"I stand at the door and knock" ([Revelation 3:20](#), NIV)—most people use that verse talking to non-believers. But look at the context. He's talking to the church. He is standing outside of His own people. Locked out by their comfort and their pride. Waiting. Knocking.

THE INVITATION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

Jesus says if you'll repent—genuinely change your mind, turn around—and open that door, He will come in ([Revelation 3:19](#)). He will eat with you. In that world, sharing a meal meant sharing a life. That's intimacy. That's belonging.

I'll be straight with you—I know what the Laodicean side feels like. Fifteen, sixteen years ago, I was probably one of the most arrogant people you could have met. I didn't need much from anyone, including God. And Jesus humbled me, thoroughly. He showed me that what I thought was a full life was actually hollow, and what He was offering was the thing I'd been chasing the whole time.

When I stopped protecting my own agenda and opened the door, something shifted. Lives started being changed through mine. Not because I was great, but because I finally got out of the way.

THE DAY I JUMPED ON A TRUCK IN GHANA

Recently some friends and I were in Ghana for a large-scale evangelistic outreach event. We were just driving through the street. This wasn't the planned event, but people were all around, I could feel God wanted to do something. I asked the driver to stop, jumped up into the back of the truck, and started preaching.

One man in the crowd appeared slightly drunk. Yet he responded by giving his life to Jesus—and something shifted in him immediately. He was suddenly in his right mind. His eyes cleared and his whole demeanor changed. Afterward, he looked at me and said, "I have not really gone to church before, but the way you preached pricked my heart."

That's what can happen when you let God use you.

BEING A LUKEWARM CHRISTIAN IS ABOUT WHETHER
YOUR LIFE IS ACTUALLY USEFUL TO HIS PURPOSES.
AND THE ANSWER ISN'T TO TRY HARDER.
THE ANSWER IS TO OPEN THE DOOR TO JESUS.