

# Small Group Discussion Guide

Revelation 3:14-22

“Healthy Desperation”

Based on Sunday's  
Sermon 3/15/2026

## Background

Devastated by an earthquake in ad 60, the city of Laodicea chose to pull itself up by its bootstraps rather than seek imperial assistance like its neighbor Philadelphia. Because of its location on important Asian trade routes, Laodicea quickly became one of the wealthiest cities in the region, a condition reflected in the membership of its Christian church (Rev. 3:17).

Not unlike Wall Street, Laodicea was a major banking center of Asia Minor. This meant that it attracted people of means. Money flowed freely through its streets, reflected in its buildings, its businesses, and, yes, in its church. It boasted a thriving textile trade, with coveted garments woven from a special wool found only in Laodicea. Besides these things, which pumped money into Laodicea's economy, the city was also famous for its medicine. In fact, some of their coins were minted with the faces of famous physicians from their city. They were especially known for Phrygian powder, a substance mixed with water and used as a salve to treat ailments of the eye. It's no surprise that Christ's message to Laodicea refers to their wealth, their clothing, and their healing ointment (3:17–18).

In spite of everything it had going for it, Laodicea had one major problem. It lacked a supply of good water, which eventually led to an abandonment of the city. One scholar writes, “For all its wealth, it could produce neither the healing power of hot water, like its neighbor Hierapolis, nor the refreshing power of cold water to be found at Colossae, but merely lukewarm water, useful only as an emetic.” Jesus rebuked the church at Laodicea because they were neither cold nor hot. He intended to spit them out of His mouth—unless they repented (3:15–16).<sup>1</sup>

## Discussion Questions

### Getting Started

1. Think about your everyday life — what's something you really prefer, either hot or cold, but never lukewarm? Why?

### Observation

2. Read Revelation 3:14-22. What specific problems does Jesus identify in the Laodicean church?

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<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Revelation*, vol. 15, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2014), 81.

3. What contrasts do you notice between how the Laodiceans see themselves and how Jesus sees them?
4. What three things does Jesus counsel them to “buy” from Him, and what might those items represent?

### Interpretation

5. Why would Jesus prefer the church to be “hot or cold” rather than lukewarm? What does that metaphor communicate? How does that connect to the title, “Healthy Desperation?”
6. How might Laodicea’s wealth, textile industry, and medical school shape the meaning of Jesus’ words?
7. Read Acts 4:23-31. What is the connection between being lukewarm and lacking boldness?
8. Why does Jesus describe Himself as standing at the door and knocking instead of forcing His way in?

### Application

9. In what ways might believers today fall into the same trap of lukewarmness?
10. What practices or habits might help your church community avoid becoming lukewarm?

### *Prayer List:*