

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

July 27, 2025 Letters from Revelation. How to move forward when you're stuck in a routine. Revelation 3:14-22.

I Intro.

It's the end of July and basically the end of summer break. Many of our ministries have started back up. So, stay connected to our social media to keep up with everything that's happening. We're glad you've chosen to join us as we move through 2025. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

I spent a lot of time setting up this series the first week. We talked about making sure our good works are born out of that "*first love*" for God and others. The second week we talked about how to deal with fear. Last week George talked about how to hold on. Today we'll finish the series with moving forward when we're stuck in a routine. Every letter in Revelation was written to be passed around to all the churches. These are timeless truths for all churches...everywhere all through history, including us. Issues mentioned connect us with the early church that struggled with some of the same things we do. I don't want this to just be a study about scripture. This is about digging into scripture to find teachings, and truths, that we can specifically learn from and apply to today's world.

III Sunday.

Normally I do some sort of intro. Usually involving questions. A story. A hook. Slog through the scripture passage. Then list several ways to put that scripture into practice, and apply it to your lives. Today, I'll give you the practical stuff first. These will be the specifics of how to move forward when you're stuck in a routine. However...and you knew there would be a catch, none of these will work, have any effect, unless you have the one true truth. Like putting together a really cool toy...but not having any batteries. These won't work until you get the batteries.

How to get unstuck and move forward.

-Requires recognition you're stuck, inner reflection, then intentional action.

1. Practice regular honest self-examination. What is holding me back, or am I afraid of?

2. Embrace and implement small, consistent changes. Incorporate small doable changes that don't take more than a few minutes to do.

3. Recenter yourself with regular spiritual practices. Find one or two things that effectively realign your spirit with the spirit of God.

4. Write yourself a 'permission slip'. Give yourself specific statements of grace to allow you to not be perfect with these changes.

5. Identify and name what needs to die so it can be replaced with something new. You have habits and routines that need to be gone. They're the reason you're stuck.

6. Gather around you support and accountability. COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY, COMMUNITY.

There you go. All the steps. The process of getting unstuck, and moving forward. Next we'll get to the batteries that power the ability to do the above.

About the letter to Laodicea. This is one of the harshest letters. It doesn't mince words. AND...it's one of the most hopeful and tender of the letters. Remember- these letters were written to prepare the churches for tough times. Purpose was to help the church move out of a watered down faith that would not hold up under difficult times into authentic, into a deeply grounded faith.

Revelation 3:14-22 ***"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation: "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! 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. 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 nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 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. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."***

An open door. Start with the end of this letter. Moving out of stuckness, stagnation, routine, and into a vibrant, authentic, renewed life. There is a harsh calling out of where many of us let our life get to. A place where our faith, and the practice of it just feels... "Meh". At the end of this letter is the famous; *"Behold I stand at the door and knock"* passage. In the NLT it's read as a loving 'friend' who is patiently waiting for us to acknowledge where we've let our life and faith get to. And when we're ready to open that door, God is ready to sit with us, share a meal AS A FRIEND, and give us this promise. I want you to hear the breakdown of this passage, not as a harsh judgment. Condemnation. But as an invitation that calls out issues we need to address. An invitation, an open door, someone who will meet you as a friend is always a message of hope.

Walk through the letter.

1. Strengths. No real strengths mentioned here. Which is really tough. The church was doing things. But no one was benefitting from those things. The church at Laodicea is just struggling. That's such a hard place to be.

2. Correction or weakness. This is not a; *"be on fire or don't do anything at all"* judgment. This is where we need historical context. Laodicea had no natural water supply of its own. It had to aqueduct water in from nearby cities. Cold water from snow melt on Mount Cadmus which ran through Colossae, on the way to Laodicea. Hot water from the hot springs of Hierapolis. Since the water was diverted above ground to Laodicea, by the time the cold fresh stream water, and the hot springs water

got to Laodicea, the water became...lukewarm. Not useful anymore. Nothing is good lukewarm. Drinks, food, showers, sports play, someone's affection, etc. Lukewarm is neither refreshing nor satisfying. In fact, lukewarm is actually revolting and unappetizing. Laodicea is told its indifference is off putting, actually offensive. It makes them unremarkable, unappetizing, not desirable. Difficult to stomach or tolerate. This is a harsh rebuke. Without Jesus even the good you do feels off.

3. A warning. Turn away from your lukewarmness, by addressing your selfishness. Which is an interesting take on the cause of lukewarmness. Find your purpose and needs met in me. Not in the things the world offers. We live in a world that highlights our desires, and sells us distraction. Recognize you're trying to compensate for your unhappiness, and turn all that attention from the things around you back to me. This letter says lukewarmness is rooted in distraction not apathy.

4. A promise. Jesus wanted to give the church, the people, a second chance. Yes, you've let your desires pursue wealth and stuff, distract you. You've become something that brings me, and others, no pleasure. If you're inwardly honest, you'll realize you're actually miserable also. But I am coming to you...again, standing here, waiting for you to welcome me in. This needs to be a truth we hold onto, and an important way to end this series. No matter how lukewarm we may become, God is ALWAYS pulling for us to turn things around. **And how do we do that?**

How to 'unlukewarm' yourself. New real word. By doing the things the writer did in this letter.

1. Acknowledge where you are. The always first step.

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! 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.

Laodicea believed they were doing fine. But they're stuck. Like the stagnation of losing your "first love". Stuckness is usually rooted in not knowing we're stuck. We either can't see it. Or we can, and we're ignoring it. Filling that void, emptiness of lukewarmness with stuff. This is why they were to "*put ointment in their eyes so they could see*".

Talk about the word 'rebuke'. We've heard the word 'rebuke' used to beat others up. It's like the word 'repent'. The Greek for 'rebuke' (epitimao) means; "*to highlight the value of*". When Jesus rebuked others, it wasn't to make them feel less valued. It was to make them feel more valued.

How many of you heard this growing up? "You're better than that!"

It wasn't meant to shame. But its purpose was to reveal to you that you have incredible value, and need to live into that worth. "*Don't you know who made you? How you were made. Infused with the divine image of God! And you've allowed yourself to accept less than who you really are!*"

Reestablishing the value of the object. Like the woman caught in adultery. This is about identity. Know who you are! And who you belong to.

2. Hear the invitation to real change. Now that you know who you are, there is the invitation to move towards change. We need to know the situation we were in, what inaction will do, and then we asked; "*If this was you, what would you do?*"

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 nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

This is what we are often bad at. We can be good at seeing problems, pointing out issues, shortcomings, but we often miss the fix. The writer offers a solution. An invitation to a path forward, out of the stuckness. Let go of your false security, fix your blindness, return to what really matters.

3. Let conviction lead to intimacy. I'm telling you the hard things, because I genuinely care about you. When someone whom you have a relationship with, cares enough about you to say the hard things, then we ought to lean into that relationship.

I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.

Pointing out weaknesses, corrections are not prophetic voices we're drawn to. We like calling out others, but not so much ourselves. This is an expression of deep love, the work of reconciliation and restoration, not just condemnation. It isn't about guilt and shame. It's doing the things to restore our relationship with God, FOR THE PURPOSE, being a people and church, that leads people to God.

4. Open the door welcoming Christ's presence. And then the most loving, and tender opportunity, once you actually internalize, and embrace who and whose you actually are.

"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."

This is such a tender, and loving invitation. This isn't about obligation, responsibilities, or duty. This is about friendship, love, and the intimacy of a God who is waiting for us. This is not about performance. This isn't about getting everything just right. This writer is saying we don't have to settle for "Meh". There is a richer and more fulfilling life being offered to us.

IV Challenge.

Where does all of this lead?

This is about the presence of God, rather than the covering our shortcomings. It's victory and life with Jesus. We have nothing to fear, not even death. Because we have already been declared victorious. Not free FROM difficult, struggling, hurt, suffering, and loss. But there is another side to all that.

Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

This is the restoration and reestablishment of dignity, and personhood. And even cooler, an intimate close partnership with God. The God who created you, is standing at the door "waiting for you". Let me repeat this final point. You're NEVER too far gone. You're NEVER so lost, stuck, passionless, that God isn't deeply desiring to want to meet you where you are, wherever that is, and draw you back into relationship. God wants to help us remove the stuff we use to hide our feelings of not enough. You have value and worth.

So, I REBUKE all of you. Not to shame or humiliate you. But to know that the hard stuff you are being asked, advised, to do is because you are worth all of that effort and care.

How would you live differently if you knew your worth was found in how God sees you rather than what you can do?