

It is personally exciting for me to speak on these principles, leading up to our Easter Celebration on April 4th. These principles have not only helped me, but literally thousands and thousands of people have experienced healing and spiritual growth by applying these biblical truths to their lives. So far we have looked at two of the steps and today we will, obviously, look at number three. Let me summarize these first three steps in this way:

Admit your need; Believe in Christ; Commit your way to him. Our main scriptural study will focus on **Revelation 3:14-20**. I think you will be familiar with these words. There are several statements that Jesus gives to the church in Laodicea that get our attention. I think that the two words that are unforgettable would be lukewarm and spit. The first is associated with a water problem in Laodicea, as there was a hot spring from the north that would travel six miles and arrive in their city tepid. Drinking it would make one vomit. That’s really the word for “spit you out of my mouth.” The phrase I use is “to throw up.” Their lukewarm approach to a relationship with Christ was nauseating to the Lord. Obviously this is very challenging, but it is also meant to give us direction and hope. Applying this truth to your life will make an incredible difference . . .

* **The Amen** — “These are the words of the Amens, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.” (verse 14) This is the introduction pointing to the source and life of God. The words are red letter in my Bible because they come from Jesus. In Revelation 1:17& 18 we read, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!” This is about Jesus and it’s from Jesus. When this title is used of Jesus, it either means “so be it,” or “it is true.” The message is about true meaning and final authority found in Christ. He is the ruler. In him is the fullness of God. This means that the people are absolutely accountable to him.

Is it true that Jesus is the centerpiece of your life? That’s what’s being said here. If you say “Amen”, that means you want him to be in control, or as the drama presents, sitting on the stool. That is his rightful place, and anything else will lead to decline . . .

* **The Barriers** — “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 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.” (vv. 15-17) According to these verses, what are the barriers that get in the way: half-hearted, self-satisfied, and double-minded. What are other barriers that get in the way of closeness with Christ and our commitment to him? Busyness, pride, self-sufficient, ego, comfort, fear, pretending, sin, indifferent, etc.

Laodicea was the wealthiest city in that area. They were known for their banking institutions, clothing industry and medical care. It was money, fame and health care. But Jesus says that they are actually “poor, blind and naked.” He declares their true spiritual condition. They were trusting in these sources to bring satisfaction and strength. These had crowded out the Lord. They might have been “hot” at one time, but not any more. The word hot is the word “zestos” in Greek. You hear the word “zest.” They had become indifferent to God, apathetic about the eternal destiny of others, and more concerned about things than people. They had shut God out of their lives.

* **The Commitment** — “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 him, and he with me.” (verse 20) This is the picture of Christ’s leadership in one’s life that happens through close connection. It is introduced by verse 19: “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.” The Scriptures tell us that God discipline those he loves. His love is true even when we drift. The promise is that he will respond because of love, even though it will be tough love.

The invitation is to repent. It is the word that refers to this moment in time. The challenge is to commit right now. The idea is to allow him to sit on the stool at this moment. The other word is earnest and it is more of a continuous word. It is about being hot for Christ through closeness with him that is ongoing.

Wrap-up: This is one of the most challenging passages in the Bible for the drifting Christian. When we let other things get in the way of our connection to God, it grieves his heart. It is so upsetting to the Lord that it is nauseating to him. There is really only one solution that works and that is surrendering to him. The only hope you have for lasting fulfillment and genuine life is a wholehearted commitment to Christ. This message will never change. You will never be all that God intended you to be without him fully in charge of your life. Why not settle it today?!

Reflective Questions:

1. This may be a morbid question, but, what makes you throw up? What are the things in your life that push you into a tailspin?
2. How would you say you are spiritually these days, with 1 being cold and 10 being hot? Why? What do you learn about moving in the direction of hot through this teaching?
3. What stands out to you from Revelation 3:14-20? Why is this such a challenging paragraph in the Bible? What barriers affect your closeness with Christ?
4. How do you understand commitment to Christ? Why is the Bible so strong about this kind of wholehearted allegiance? Why do you want to commit yourself to Christ?
5. How would you summarize these first three messages that highlight admit, believe and commit? What have you learned?

Reading Schedule for February 22-28, 2010

We will conclude our second month of reading through the Bible as we transition from Moses' leadership to a man named Joshua. Forty years in the wilderness will conclude and a man named Joshua will be used by God to lead people into the Promised Land. I've been thinking about the Promised Land these days. The promises of God are many and I believe he has some specific promises for us as his church. God already knows the plans he has for us. What do you think they are? What will it take to embrace those promises? How do you view the future of New Harvest Church?

February 22: **Numbers 22:5-38** – You have heard about this story because it is about Balaam's donkey. "Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?'" (verse 28) The donkey saved Balaam's life but made him look foolish in the process so Balaam lashed out at the donkey. We sometimes strike out at blameless people who get in our way because we are embarrassed when our pride is hurt. Lashing out at others can be a sign that something is wrong in us. Don't let your own hurt pride lead you to hurt others. I once heard "hurt people, hurt people." How well are you? Is your conscience clear? Do you treat others like you would want to be treated?

February 23: **Deuteronomy 29:1-29** – We are obviously skipping much of Deuteronomy to come to the place of transition for the people to enter the Promised Land. These chapters would remind them of the covenant that they have with God. "Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison." (verse 18) Moses is reviewing the covenant. This is a very important transition from the wilderness wanderings to the hope of the Promised Land. This past Sunday I spoke on the importance of wholehearted surrender to the ways of God. Living close to the Lord is the answer; obeying him is the response of a covenant relationship to God. How are you obeying him? Are you one that God is using to draw others to himself? Is there anything in you that would be used by the enemy to bring others down? Your life is important to God. How does that affect your response to the Lord?

February 24: **Deuteronomy 30:1-20** – "He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers." (verse 5) Even though the Jews deliberately walked away from him and ruined their lives, God would take them back. Our God is one of forgiveness and second chances. God promises a fresh beginning if only you and I will turn to him. His heart is still the same as it was with the Israelites. After a season of discipline in the wilderness, he would open a season of prosperity and blessing that would reflect his grace and kindness to the world. What does this chapter mean to you? What verse stands out to you? What encourages you about God's grace and mercy?

February 25: **Deuteronomy 31:1-8** – "Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'" (vv. 7 & 8) The Lord not only had a plan for God's people, but he had a leader that would be used by God to direct them. Joshua had been prepared by the Lord to be the successor to Moses. Moses gives him important words of affirmation and commission. Moses affirms the next generation by handing over leadership to a younger man named Joshua. What does that say to us as a church? How are we to bless those that are in the upcoming generation? How important is that?

February 26: **Deuteronomy 34:1-12** – This is the wrap-up to the book of Deuteronomy. "Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses." (verse 9) There was no one like Moses. Joshua could not match the prowess of Moses. Even as the Bible says, there was no one that knew God face to face like Moses. Joshua could have been intimidated by how Moses led and who he was and what he did. But Joshua was willing to be the person that God asked him to be. Joshua is a great example of obedience and courage. Joshua was content to be the person that God wanted him to be, not to try to outdo Moses. You have a specific purpose and you need to be filled with the Spirit of wisdom. But your purpose is unique to you. Who is God calling you to be? What is God calling you to do?

February 27: **Joshua 1:1-18** – There is no question the verse that I would want to focus on in this chapter. The paragraph that includes verses 6-9 is a marvelous summary of how to be in step with God. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (verse 8) God's Word has always been connected to God's blessing. To know God's truth is to be set free. To meditate on his Word is to know God's truth more deeply as it is absorbed into your very soul. Success is promised to Joshua if he would follow God's Word. How committed are you to God's Word? How much is it a part of your life and thinking? Why is God's Word essential to spiritual success?

February 28: **Joshua 2:1-24** – This is the famous story of Rahab. The main question that has been asked by people over the years is, "Was Rahab right in lying?" Rahab had a godly purpose in leading ungodly people astray and not telling the truth to ungodly people. Rahab would be in the lineage of Jesus. "When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you." (vv. 11 & 12) Rahab feared the Lord. She responded in faith. That is why she is mentioned in the faith chapter of Hebrews 11. What inspired you about Rahab? How do you see her turning from her immoral way of life to a life of allegiance and courage for God? How would you want to be more like Rahab?