

**Practical Atheist  
Lukewarm Christian  
August 22, 2009  
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The night that Jesus was betrayed, someone close to him, Judas, we all know the name. Someone close to him who had spent three years walking with Jesus, he spent three years being at his side. He saw Jesus do incredible things. He saw Jesus heal the blind man. He saw Jesus make the lame to walk. He saw Jesus stand outside of a tomb of a man who had been dead for three days and say Lazarus come forth and the man walked out. This was Judas. Every day he walked with the Lord. He was there on the night that the disciples gathered together and Jesus said who do men say that I am? He was there when Peter said you're the son of the living Christ and Jesus acknowledged that yes, he was the messiah. It was him who on that night brought the Roman soldiers to the garden, walked up to Jesus and kissed him on the cheek. Jesus looked at him and said, friend will you betray the son of man with a kiss? While we judge Judas and look at him, I have to look into my own life and I realize there are many times I betray Jesus with a kiss. There is many times that the words of my mouth talk about how much I love Jesus. The words of my mouth talk about how God meets all our needs. The words of my mouth proclaim the creation of God and all of his glory, but then my actions tell a different story. My actions say that I don't trust God to meet my needs; I have to meet my own. My actions say that I don't believe that God has my best interest and I have to look out for myself. My actions do anything but bring glory to God and so in effect haven't we all betrayed God with a kiss? If we're living our life where we sing with our mouth that we love God, we say with our mouth when we come into church, we sing praises to God but then we live our lives totally independent of him?

Practical atheist, Judas was the first New Testament practical atheist. He said he believed in God, he walked with God, he experienced God but yet in the end he didn't live like it. As we look at that in our life, we need to examine our lives and we need to see in our own lives. The bible tells us that we have to do more than just live our lives with the words that we say. We must live them with the actions in our life. Our actions must match the words. Now, once again, let me clarify who I am talking to. I am not talking to those of us who struggle with sin and fall on our face and get back up and struggle again and fall on our face. That's not a practical atheist, that's just a Christian person, because Lord knows; none of us in here are perfect yet are we? I am talking about the person who stumbles and doesn't care. I'm talking about the person the bible says continues in sin, puts his head toward it and never looks back and knows that he's going to do it and doesn't really care that he's living in sin; he's just going to do what he wants to do. He's going to take care of himself. In fact there's a scripture in the

bible that says in Isaiah 29, The Lord says, ***The Lord says “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.***

***Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”*** I think that we have a whole generation of people that fall into this area. While we say the right things and we even talk the right game and we talk about God and we would claim that we were Christian people, I wonder if our hearts are far from God and last week we talked about people who say they believe in God but they don't know him. This week were going to talk about people who say they believe in God but they don't want to take it too serious. In other words, I believe in God but I don't want to be fanatical about it. I believe in God but I don't want to be considered a Jesus freak. I believe in God but hey, let's not go overboard. There's a whole crowd of people that flood our churches who say yes I believe in God, but I'm not going to go over to that side and look like a fanatic. I'm going to stay where it's safe. I'm going to talk about God, but I'm not really going to talk about Jesus all that much because it's okay to believe in God. You can believe in God and kind of blend in but you start talking about Jesus and your relationship with him and you're going to offend somebody. The bible talks in the book of Revelation about these practical atheist and talks about what happens to us and where we find ourselves and I think we find ourselves in the same position today that the church in Laodicea found themselves. I want you to read with me in Revelations chapter 3. ***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. 15I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*** Now the English bible wrote it nicely because the word in Greek means you make me vomit. Now listen to this because I think we miss it. I wish that you were hot or cold. He's actually saying he wishes that you were even outside the church. He wishes that you were a pagan instead of being in church and being lukewarm. See, today if I had given you a survey and asked you to rate your spiritual life between 1 and 10, the majority of you would have been 4, 5 and 6 and you would have thought you were doing okay. This text says that if you're a 4, 5, or 6 you make me sick. That's powerful isn't it? This isn't a fun sermon for me. I want you to understand something, I've been the pastor here for almost twenty years and I am going to be held accountable if we have a church full of lukewarm Christians. We're going to be held accountable if we don't get on fire and we don't let the spirit of God move in such a way that people see and come to know him and bring him glory because of what this church is about. We can't be satisfied with mediocre. We can't be satisfied with lukewarm. We can't say today that I believe in God and act anyway you want. Your life has to change. Now, I want you to understand a little bit about the Laodicea. The Laodicea is a rich community. In fact it was destroyed and in thirty five years they built it completely back because of all the wealth in the town and I'm telling you when they built it back, they built it first rate. They built theaters, stadiums, bath houses. This was Frisco. This was a nice place. You had to be a little uppity, I'm

sorry if you're from there, but you have to be a little uppity to live there. You have to have a certain class, a certain style to live up there. Laodicea was that kind of place. It was full blown, state of the art at that time and everyone there was very wealthy and very happy and the church was full of people. God said, you know what, I wish you were hot or cold because being lukewarm makes me sick. We understand that don't we? Hot coffee is good; iced coffee is good; coffee that sat in the pot for about three hours is what...nasty. What do you do when you put it in your mouth? Spit it out. Hot pizza is good; cold pizza out of the refrigerator is good. You put some salt on that stuff right out of the refrigerator that's better than an omelet. But if you let pizza sit in a box for four or five hours and then you eat it; you want to spit it out of your mouth because it's nasty. Well, the people in Laodicea understood this being lukewarm because where their town is situated it was hard to bring water into the town. It had to go through a whole lot of piping to get there so when they were trying to bring the cold water down so they could have cold water as it traveled down through these pipe systems, by the time it reached Laodicea it tasted worse than Rockett water, it was bad. When they tried to get the hot water from the hot springs that were in the areas piped down to the city, by the time that the water that was supposed to be hot got there, it was lukewarm. So, Laodicea was known for lukewarm water. So God is using that example and he's saying the way the water tastes is the way your life tastes in my mouth and I wonder what he would say to the church in Ellis County Texas. I wonder what he would say to The Avenue Church if he stood before us today. Would the way we live our lives bring him glory and honor or would we make him sick to his stomach because we're lukewarm? Francis Chan wrote a book called *Crazy Love* and in it he gives some definitions of a lukewarm Christian so today as we go through these different pictures I want you to ask yourself, am I lukewarm. That's the question we're going to ask all morning. Am I lukewarm? I can't answer that question for you, your spouse can't answer that question for you. You have to answer it. I will give you ten qualities of a lukewarm Christian.

The first quality of a lukewarm Christian is this, they crave acceptance from people more than acceptance from God. They want people to like them. They want people to respect them. They want people to look up to them. They want to be included and have a lot of friends. They want people to look at them and acknowledge them and give them attention. In fact, they're more concerned about that than they are about God. These people will become whatever they have to be to fit in. At school, at work, at the club and wherever they find themselves they will be like the people around them because it's more important what people think than it is what God thinks.

A lukewarm Christian rarely shares their faith in Christ. Rarely is there a spiritual conversation where you talk about your faith. You say things to yourself like, my relationship to God is private, and it's just between me and God. Let me tell you something, if your faith is private, it's not a faith. It may be religion but it's not faith. You can't keep that private, you

can't keep that quiet. It's like secretly being married, you can't do it. The bible tells us very clearly if you won't proclaim me before men, then I won't proclaim you before my father. Lukewarm Christians rarely will share their faith.

They do whatever it takes to alleviate their guilt. The guilt in their life builds up so they will do whatever it takes to alleviate it. They will make excuses, they'll rationalize, and they'll take the word of God and twist it. They will do whatever they have to do to get rid of their guilt except go to the Savior and change their behavior. That's how we're supposed to get rid of it but they won't do that. They have to rationalize it and they have to look around them and compare themselves to other people and say I'm not that bad, it's just my vice, it's just who I am. God understands, we all have weaknesses...wow, had you heard any of those; have you said any of them? A lukewarm person will do anything to alleviate their guilt.

Four, they think about life on earth more than they think about eternity in heaven. This is it; this is what it's about. They're entire life revolves around right now, who they are; what they have; what they own. They very rarely think about storing treasures up in heaven. They're busy accumulating treasures here on earth. They gauge their morality by comparing to others. Well, I'm not what I need to be but thank God I'm better than him. That's just a perfect characteristic of a lukewarm Christian. If you can look around and find people that are worse than you and find people that are better than you guess where you are...in the middle. Do I need to remind you that being lukewarm makes God sick to his stomach? He actually says I wish you were a pagan outside the church than being half dead inside the church.

Number six; they want to be saved from the penalty of sin without changing their lives. We want what Jesus has to offer but we don't want to pay a price. We want Jesus to cover our sins but we don't want to make him the lord. We want him to be Savior but we don't want him to be master. In other words, God you take care of my eternity and I'll live for myself right now. God, you cover my sins and I'll live for me and I'll take care of me and I'll meet my needs and I'll do what I have to do to be happy because I know better than you do God but I want you to cover my sin.

Number seven; a lukewarm Christian only turns to God when they're in a bind. They don't even think about God until something happens. This church was packed after September 11<sup>th</sup>. When the economy fell people flooded the churches, when people lose their jobs they want God. When there is a sickness they turn to God but when everything's okay God is an afterthought. They only turn to God when they are in a bind.

A lukewarm Christian will give whenever it doesn't hind their standard of living. You know you'll give fifty dollars here in the plate, put a backpack together or shoebox, it's Christmas. But you won't give if it hinders your standard of living. If it keeps you from being

able to buy the newest clothes, if it keeps you from being able to buy the newest car, if it keeps you from getting the bigger house, who are we kidding, if it keeps you from going out to eat, you'll sacrifice, I'll give enough as long as it doesn't hind the way I want to live.

A lukewarm Christian is not much different from the rest of the world. You blend in pretty good. Kind of like a chameleon. Whatever group you're around you dress like them, you watch the same things they watch, you think like them, talk like them. Lukewarm Christians sure don't stand out from the crowd.

Ten; you want the benefits of what Christ did without conforming to what he is. You want the benefit but none of the sacrifice. When I read about the people of Laodicea I think about us. I think about the stadiums, I think about the theaters, I think about the malls and I think to myself in our world it is just easy to believe in God. It's easy here; in fact it's almost easier to serve him here because we have everything. We lack for nothing. You want to see where the church is exploding; it's in the places where Christians are persecuted. It's in the places where if you say I believe in Jesus, they shoot you. It's in the places where the church is thriving where they say you can't meet together, you can't live this Christian life, and you can't do it. Those places the churches are on fire and making all kinds of advances against the kingdom of Satan, but not here. We're at best, lukewarm. Just right in the middle, everybody's Christian. Ellis County, of course I'm a Christian, I've been going to church since I was little. It's easier here. I know some of you are thinking, well I'm not rich. You're not talking about me, I don't have everything I'm poor, I barely make it. Really? How many of you drove a car today? How many of you own one car in your family? Raise your hand, just one car. If you have one car that means 97% of the world's population is less wealthy than you. If you own one car you're in the top 3% of the world's wealth. You think you're not rich? 97% of the world will trade with you. We're rich and because of that we're lukewarm. Listen to what Jesus said, ***"You say I am rich. I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing but you do not realize that you're wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."*** We don't even realize how much we need our savior, how much we need to bow our knee to him and live for him daily. How much we need to get on fire and to spread the word of God. There's a whole world around us that is dying and going to hell and we simply walk through our lives acquiring more and more and more and taking care of ourselves without even thinking about who God is. Here's the good news... ***"He said, 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."*** Isn't it incredible, Jesus is always standing there and he's looking at you and he's honestly saying, you make me sick to my stomach because you're lukewarm, but if you'll just open your heart, I will come in. Is that incredible? Is that love or what? You're making me sick with the way you're living your life. You're making me sick with your choices but I love you so much that we can wipe this all clean and you can be on fire, I can put a fire in your heart, just open the door. So we're back to the

question, are you a lukewarm Christian? If the answer is yes, aren't you tired of it? We're going to sing a song in a minute and I really want you to listen to the words. C.S. Lewis wrote them and they have so much meaning for striving and wanting all of God and not just a part of him. I want you to understand something about our God, when he looks at you he doesn't want part of you, he wants the whole thing and I he can't have the whole thing he doesn't want any of you. Today are you tired of being lukewarm? Are you ready to cross that line? I want you to bow with me. Some of you are cold and you know it. You know that you don't know God, you stumbled in here. Someone brought you in and today you need to receive Jesus as your savior. Let me tell you how you do that, you just pray this prayer...Father God, come into my life and forgive me for my sins. Come into my life and cleanse me God. I'm going to conform to you. I'm going to be what you want me to be. You're going to be my master and my lord. Thank you God for salvation. That's all it takes right there. If you prayed that prayer, Jesus came into your life and we want to know it as a church. We want to know you did that. We want you to confess that before men. That could be coming to me or talking to one of our staff or filling out that form in your worship guide. Many of you today will say and be honest with yourself and say I'm a lukewarm Christian. If you can be honest with that and you want me to pray for you and you say you know what, I am. I'm a lukewarm Christian, just raise your hand wherever you are. Father God I pray and I thank you for the honesty that was just shown in this place. God my prayer is that they didn't raise their hand and walk out of here and try to figure out lunch and forget what you want to do in their life. God that they're just not going to let this moment pass without opening their heart and letting you build that fire; God that they will be different because they've been in here today. God and my heart hurts for those that know they're lukewarm and don't even care. God, break their heart and work in their life. Let this church bring you glory and honor. Let the people that make this church be on fire for you spreading your love and mercy. We're about to have an offering and during this offering I want you to pay close attention to the words of this song. As that plate passes, and you give your financial blessings I want you also to pray this prayer, God light a fire in my life. I surrender to you God everything. Come into my heart, make me alive in you. Father God as we stand in this place bringing you an offering, we pray Lord that you'll bless this offering beyond our ability God that you will take it and as you give thanks you'll multiply it and we'll do incredible things for your kingdom. God as that plate passes, help each one of us say in our heart and mean in our heart that we are tired of being lukewarm and God we're tired of being a four, five or six. We want to be at a ten. We want to burn out God and be totally aflame for you. Father make that our prayer and passion.