

## AFFLUENZA

On June 2013, in Burleson, Texas, Breanna Mitchell got a flat tire and pulled over in front of the home of the Boyles family. Being nice, Holly Boyles, her daughter Shelby, and a youth pastor who just happened to be driving by, Brian Jennings, came to Breanna's aid. They were standing in the driveway when an intoxicated, 16-year-old, Ethan Couch plowed into the crowd of four in his pickup truck killing all four instantly and injuring his passengers.

Instead of prison, Couch was sentenced to rehab at a swanky \$20,000 per month facility, and 10 years of probation. Why so easy? The defense rested on a clinical diagnosis of "affluenza." It was determined that Couch's wealth and privilege was such that he could not comprehend the consequences of his actions.

As infuriating as this case is, an argument could be made that all of us suffer from affluenza to one degree or another. All of us are surrounded by materialism and greed. We are so deep in it we don't even notice it. Even if we aren't wealthy, our desire and pursuit of money and things blinds us.

The saddest part, for Couch and for us, rests in the wasted potential. No matter your socio-economic status, you have resources at your disposal. Failing to leverage those resources for the ultimate good of others is a waste. And, as we'll see with the church at Laodicea, that waste infuriates the One who gave it.

### REVELATION 3:14-22

<sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

<sup>15</sup> "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

<sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Laodicea had well-built fortifications. However, it had one major weakness. It had no water source and fully relied on an underground aqueduct system. Without this aqueduct, the city was helpless.

In addition to serving as a military outpost, it was also a manufacturing center. They produced prized wool, establishing a thriving garment industry. Beyond clothing, the city served as a medical and banking center. All these factors made Laodicea exceptionally wealthy.

## DISCUSSION

How can something as simple as access to the Internet be a resource for the ultimate good of others?

1. Describe the one who wrote the letter. (14)
2. How did Christ describe this church's works and what was his response? (15)
3. How did this church view themselves versus how Christ viewed them? (17)
4. What offer does Christ make? (20)

5. How does correction and discipline show true love? (19)

6. What areas of your life might reflect so much self-sufficiency that Christ is knocking at your door asking to come in?

Sometimes it's hard for us to see our own opportunities and obstacles. We need others, but it often takes inviting them to speak into our lives. Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

## STUDY NOTES DID YOU SEE THAT?

CBS Sports director, Tony Verna, introduced a new technology to the Television world on December 7, 1963. At the annual Army-Navy football game, Verna enabled a video machine to instantly replay the most recent footage. Due to technical problems, they used it only once, when Army quarterback, Rollie Stichweh scored a 1-yard touchdown. Once aired, however, it confused viewers who inundated CBS phone lines, thinking Rollie had scored again.

Instant replays have come a long way and various sports use replays differently to inform rulings. Although I am constantly amazed at how many calls the officiating crew gets correct, particularly in the NFL, we've all seen some horrible calls. With countless angles and the ability to slow the replay down to fractions of a second, the viewing audience can almost always see exactly what happened on any given play...almost. Even with all this technology, as you see in the QR code, it's not perfect. Every witness human or video is fallible.



People aren't perfect, and things people create aren't perfect. Only One is perfect. When eternity is on the line, his is the only call that matters.

## OUR PASSION BRINGS CHRIST'S ATTENTION

Jesus introduced himself to the church at Laodicea saying, "***The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.***" Unlike fallible officials, or even the almost but not quite perfect video replay, Christ is 100% perfect. When he says, "***I know your works,***" as he has in every letter we've studied, it's completely true.

Unfortunately for the Laodiceans, Christ knows their works, or should I say, lack thereof. Jesus told them, ***you are neither cold nor hot... so, because you are lukewarm... I will spit*** [literally "vomit"] ***you out of my mouth.*** The Laodiceans received all their water via aqueducts or carried in from buckets. Water that arrived from the north started boiling-hot at a natural hot spring. Water coming from a mountain to the south started ice cold. By the time either source reached Laodicea, the water became lukewarm—neither soothing, nor refreshing. The apathetic state of the church made Christ vomit.

The Laodiceans suffered from affluenza, ***"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you***

***are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."***

Based on this biblical passage and secular history, the church in Laodicea performed *no* exemplary works, experienced *no* suffering, and felt *no* external pressure to sin or deny their faith. Indeed, this church lived so comfortably—physically, financially, and culturally—they felt no need for God at all.

## CHRIST'S GLORY IS REVEALED BY OUR PASSION

What we pursue reveals our passion. Although the Laodiceans probably had gold, Christ told them, ***I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire.*** The refining process super-heats the metal so that impurities can be skimmed from the surface. Christ adds, ***"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."***

I know a lot of you reading this feel like coaches and teachers are picking on you all the time. They push and prod you to do what *they* want, making you do what *they* want you to do. By nature, we bristle because it feels like *they* are self-serving jerks who have it out for you. (Honestly, some might have it out for you for one reason or another—especially if you're living for Jesus. You should expect that.) However, usually coaches and teachers push so hard because they see more in you than you're achieving.

"Act however you want," isn't loving. A person who really cares for you will not just go along with what you think. They're going to challenge you. At 18 or younger, you can do a lot. I believe you can rock the world (starting with your school and community) for Jesus. But what you can't do is see the future. All of us need people who've walked further along the path who can share with us their steps and missteps. When someone is riding you, chances are they love you enough to make you mad so that you can be better. This is Proverbs 27:6, "***Faithful are the wounds of a friend.***"

Jesus wanted to push the Laodiceans out of apathy. They had everything they needed to transform their city, but they were wasting it. They were Christian in name only and not true followers of Jesus. In his grace, Jesus said ***"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*** Jesus wanted a relationship with them, not a passing acquaintance.

Hopefully, through this study, you've been challenged and pushed. Maybe, you've resisted Jesus patiently waiting for you to receive him. Have your passions taken you further from your relationship with Christ, or is Christ's glory being revealed through your passion?