

Fresh Fire Word of Life Ministries March Bible Study:

Study Leader and Introduction by Elder Lady Loretta Wilson

What is God's purpose for us for real? Through this month of study it is my pray that each of you that participate will see, understand, and release yourselves from the gray of this world and began to walk in the light of Jesus Christ. It is also my goal that at the end of this study your thoughts, reflections, and hopes have been driven to a greater understanding of your own personal journey and God's reason for you being here.

So let's talk a little about living in the GRAY area of life and what that means. The world would have us believe that the gray area of thinking is a good thing because it shows that this person is not narrow-minded or pompous. Now I have to point out that in some cases seeing things only in black or white can be a problem too however for purposes in this bible study this is not the case. Many of us who studied psychology as I did were taught that black and white thinking is primitive thinking, and even considered childlike thinking.....interesting right? Now the bible clearly tells us that we have liberty in Christ yet our walk is indeed a walk of doing right and doing wrong. And we have to be careful to not make our black and white spiritual preferences a fact; the bible clearly tells us what sin is and what sin is not, so we dare not judge unfairly. However there is a thin line between the gray and the black and white and this is where many Saints struggle.

There are five plus very good questions that make the black and white choice easy without leaving room for the gray to mess you up. So here are the first five.

1. Does the bible teach that what you do is sin?
2. Does it negatively affect a fellow believer?
3. Well it affect you testimony?
4. Does it go against your conscience sincere faith?
5. Is it unwise?

Many say that we cannot avoid the gray; well I agree and disagree, the reason I agree is because the world is indeed gray and we live in it so we have colorful temptations all around us, but the end result is what will you do with the colorful? The Bible does not address every little thing you'll face but it does give us principles to govern us in our Christian freedom. If we would only consider the colorfulness of the GRAY and compare it to Gods' principles I believe we will find great clarity and true freedom to live by giving God all the glory.

Living in a Gray World

As a Christian though you may want to stay neutral you cannot. You try to live in both worlds enjoying the pleasure of both sides of the fence and believing that if you do just enough on both sides you'll be alright. If you don't become too holy-rolly your family and friends won't reject your new found faith or if not too sinful no one will question if you are a Christian. But by straddling the fence you subject yourself to a gray area of life that will eventually lead you to destruction with nothing but, pain, loss and sorrow. Happiness and joy are all a part of the human experience and we will have mountain top experiences as well as deep valley experiences but what is not acceptable to God is that we look to Him only when we're in the valley but cross the fence to the other side when we are on the mountain top. When we live like this we live a slow unsecure life never knowing or fully understanding where our strength lies for the enduring of trials and tribulation that without doubt will come. Many Christians live in the gray yet when they are called on their life style they become offended by the question of their standing and state in God.



Lesson One Layout: 3/7/18

1. **Title:** Living In the Gray
2. **Theme:** That You Are Neither Hot Nor Cold
3. **Goal:** To get an understanding of the Laodicea Church in Revelation 3:15-16 and how it relates to us. Also to understand that living in the gray is displeasing to God.
4. **Prayer:** Seek God's face before you start this lesson and if your prayer and time are earnestly spent before Him you will be blessed.
5. **Scripture:** Revelation 3 14-22

To the Church in Laodicea

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. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹ Those who I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰ 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 that person, and they with me. ²¹ To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

6. Preparation Reading:

In Revelation 3 the Laodiceans were told that they were lukewarm and if they didn’t get themselves together what would happen to them. Many wonder how could He says to be lukewarm is worse than being cold. Is not being cold a form of being separated from God? It is said that a lukewarm Christian doesn’t seek God before making decisions. The lukewarm Christian doesn't really believe in this, they will always make their own decisions without consulting God. The lukewarm Christian makes a habit of leading their own life doing what they think is comfortable and not following God, this person what’s to test just how far they can push God. A lukewarm Christian’s friends don’t even take their walk with God seriously. But to be cold would mean that this person has no relationship with Christ, and at least if they were lukewarm they would still love God but may only be in backslidden condition.....wouldn’t it? Well not so; it is believed by many scholars that the problem with Laodicea was two-fold.

- **First** - there is a moral and religious tepidity (lukewarmness) in this church that shows an indifference to God and a life of godliness.
- **Second** - they have a prideful self-sufficiency; their spirituality is fine but their work for the kingdom is weak. There was no cold water being provided for the refreshing of the spiritually weary, nor hot water for the spiritually sick so He considers them unproductive (useless), and very distasteful. Though passionate people they were not passionate about the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and did not burn with desire to please Him. They simple did not put others first and their blasé (unconcerned) they were to His glory.

7. **Study Plan:** (be ready to give a brief explanation of verse 19 and how it related to them and us based on this lesson):

8. **Developing the Text:** (Romans 12:11, James 1:8, Matthew 6:21-24, 1King 18:21, Revelation 2:4, Philippians 1:9, Zephaniah 1:5,6, 1Peter 1:22, Proverbs 23:26, Psalms 8:11-13, 2Corinthians 12:20)

9. **Evaluation Questions:**

- How would you describe Jesus' outlook upon seeing Laodicea's condition?

- Based on the information would you say that Laodicea was unaware of their condition or that they didn't care?

- In your own words what would you say caused them to be lukewarm?

10. **Conclusion and Application:**

As we apply this lesson to ourselves can Jesus charge us with having a cold heart or a hot one? Does he look and see us living in a gray lukewarm space and satisfied by not making a stand either way? It is possible to be in neutral and not know it; because as long as we live in the gray we live a mundane Christian life. As those that represent the body of Christ we should choose what we will be either hot or cold but never ever should we be content being lukewarm. We should not have an indifference to God yet say we're his children; nor should our pride and self-sufficiency ever make us think that we are okay when we are not meeting the needs of the lost. We have been called to a work of refreshing the weary and healing the sick and never should we be found just having church in a lukewarm state of mind. There are two facts to get out of this 1). If you have a heart for God it will without doubt boil for godliness and if you are a true Christian you will possess the ability to give the needed water without ever going into the gray.

Being Average

*Have you ever been called average, has anything you've done in life been considered average? Well most of us at some time in our lives have been branded with this title. For some people being average is not a big deal yet for others it is very difficult and insulting. But let's look at the person that is okay with being average who is also living in the Gray. This is a very dangerous position for one-self to be in, as a matter of fact it is down right out of sync with God's view of us. It is sad to know that people are actually happy with an average house, career, income, and life but for those of us that know better we look at them in wonder. So what is average (it is being regular, normal, usual, typical, middling, run-of-the-mill, and mediocre) that doesn't sound too good at all? I read that being average is **(being the BEST of the WORST and the WORST of the BEST)** now that's deep. If you have ever*



said to yourself or anyone else "Oh I'm just average" how do you feel about those words now?

Have you settled, have you given up on the potential that God gave you? All of God's creation has a potential for greatness but His children even more so. If I had to take a guess

I would say that the average person has gotten comfortable and have just "STOPPED"

there're no longer growing, learning, or doing and are stagnant and content in their gray. Maybe what you considered a blessing pulled you into average. A young man told his story of how he once was very motivated about starting his own business and just knew he was headed in the right direction but was then offered a job making 10 grand more a year than he would with this business. So he took the job and slowly he did less and less work on his business. He got so comfortable in this job that he was now average in the company. He later learned that someone else became very successful with the business he wanted to get into and was now moving and shaking in the areas he could have been therefore was anything but average.

There is an old saying "Everything that glitters ain't gold" being average is being in the Gray.

Lesson Two Layout: 3/14/18

1. **Title:** Living In the Gray
2. **Theme:** Being Average
3. **Goal:** To understand that God has created us in such a manner that our potential as his children raises the bar way beyond anything average.
4. **Prayer:** Seek God's face before you start this lesson and if your prayer and time are earnestly spent before Him you will be blessed.
5. **Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

The Ministry of Reconciliation

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6. Preparation Reading:

2 Corinthians is a Pauline epistle and one of the interesting things about the beginning of this lesson in verse 16 is that the Jewish nation viewed the Messiah as a temporal (worldly) prince. A magnificent conqueror and the great successor of David and Solomon and this is what Paul expected too. In fact this is what was hoped for among the countrymen to know Him after the flesh. Now Paul hadn't seen Him in the flesh but the carnal view was wonderful; yet the correct view of His spiritual character and holy purpose for which He came into this became clear after Paul's conversion. Therefore the doctrine here is that just as Paul became a new creation and his view changed so will the view people have of us change after our conversion. But more importantly the view we have of ourselves should change as well. When we are renewed we not only must behave in a new way but see the newness, we can no longer be average as the world may see us. Just like the view Paul had of Jesus until his eyes were opened the world wants to keep us in a temporal setting. How can a changed heart be average, the renewed man is reconciled (a renewed relationship) to God through Jesus Christ and the cross. To be forgiven and have the understanding that Christ was made sin for us so we can become the righteousness of God so how can that person ever be average. It takes the spirit of God to release true knowledge of self and yet have us remain humble at the same time. There are two points to be made in these verses.

- **First** – the world would have you to believe that you are a sinner and there is nothing you can do about it.
- **Second** – not only are we to accept our newness and above average standing we are to also bring others into the knowledge of reconciliation. We must clearly understand why we were separated from God; then we must love others as Christ loved us, let go of the judgement and worldly views and improve relationships. And finally we have to seek God's face for the how so that others may also be above average.

7. Study Plan: (be ready to explain how or if you have been made to see yourself as average (not worthy) and how this lesson has given you a better understanding of why you are not).

8. Developing the Text: Romans 12:1-3, Ephesians 4:20-24, Hebrew 10:19-25, 2Timothy 3:10-17, James 1:1-27, Colossians 2:6-11

9. Evaluation Questions:

- How did God bring the new creation into existence?

- Why is being okay with an average existence an offence to God?

- Could an average person complete the assignment set before us and what is that assignment?

10. Conclusion and Application:

To be reconciled to Christ holds a great weight for us as Christians because not only have we been chosen but we have been chosen to be different. Each of us must bear fruit and carry out our purpose; there is no retirement for us our work is life long, until we take our last breath we must work the work of Him that called us. There is nothing average about any of that; moving outside the comfort zone is scary, and sometimes lonely yet we go, and we do even in the mist of rejection we still stand firm on the word of God. If we allow ourselves to think about the creation of man we see that we are masterpieces made by the hands of the great I AM. The problem is that we allow the devil to use men to cause doubt in our newness and purpose because we fall from time to time. But if we are willing to strip ourselves of those things holding us back then and only then will our newness shine. The one thing that will keep us as God sees us is to study showing ourselves approved being able to rightly divide the word of truth. Check your surroundings; who do you spend time with, how is your study and prayer life, and most of all do you give of you substance and time? Average is lukewarm and not desired or needed in the kingdom of God.

Moving in Circles

When we except Jesus Christ as our savior we are the most excited people ever. We say the right things, we read the scriptures to show we know the word; we pray earnestly, we change the way we dress, we become compassionate and giving and we are the perfect creation of God. Yet as time goes by we tend to lose our zeal and we step onto on this spiritual hamster wheel and we ride it and ride it until we lose sight of who and whose we are. We create our circles and within those circles we think we are moving in the will of God but we are completely unproductive and the progression in our spiritual lives has ceased, we become lukewarm. In researching I found that there are at least 15 different types of hamster wheels and the interesting thing is that veterinarians say that hamsters need a wheel for exercise and for the cure of boredom and loneliness. Now just like circles? We get lonely, bored and from our walk and we find our and the very wheel we prayed to get reasons we stop progressing in Christ you were hurt by a Pastor, or seen ungodly things in church or maybe you were mistreated by other members or just didn't feel like God was with you. Perhaps you lost your direction and just like Lot's wife you're continually looking back at your old life. You long for the familiar and find being progressive in Christianity difficult, lonely and yes even sometimes boring; but the bible says to grow in virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love is hard work. Yet if we keep our eyes on Christ the qualities will increase and make you an effective and fruitful Christian. And if we are honest the wheels of the world offer us nothing new, it can't. When you are governed by the natural you cannot be truly resurrected with Christ and a dead man cannot progress in anything other than decaying flesh.



Lesson Three Layout 3/21/18

1. **Title:** Living In the Gray
2. **Theme:** Moving in Circles
3. **Goal:** To understand that God is a progressive God, He is always increasing and developing mankind step-by-step into better creations.
4. **Prayer:** Seek God's face before you start this lesson and if your prayer and time are earnestly spent before Him you will be blessed.
5. **Scripture:** 2 Peter 1:5-8

Moving in Circles

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Preparation Reading:

The first thing we have to remember is that in 2 Peter 1:5-8 that FAITH is the foundation , and we are told to supplement it which means to (enhance, increase and add-on to) your faith. Our faith in Christ is what gives us the power to grow spiritually and the other virtues will rest on. These virtues are the fruit of faith, and how we progress in godliness. In desiring growth in this Christian walk we should always question our motivation. Were we once the head honcho; big stuff, the man, and we want to progress so people will think the same in the Christian world. Yet we know that PRIDE does not please God and it is not spiritual growth. Peter clearly tells that diligence and hard work will get us to our goals in Christ. Many Christians really want to grow in the Lord yet for some time can be a killer. We fall into the humdrum routine of the ordinary and as an old farmer said in the (Daily Bread Reading) "Well, I'm not making progress, but I'm established" we never want to be established (well known as a Christian) but not known for your progressive works and trust me there is a difference. So we never ever want to find ourselves desiring the old circles that we once walked in because we feel that there is more in the natural than in the spiritual to be offered.

- **First** – Never let your testimony be worn out and you are found to be stuck in the mud content with what you have done and okay with not moving.
- **Second** – Understand that you have to deliberately make an effort to grow (progress) in your godliness. Even if you have been a Christian for years you should press for progress and know there is no quick fix just like when we diet and exercise we see slow result however if we ever go back to our old way and fall into the same habits we lose all the headway that we had and it gets harder to start all over again. The old has nothing to offer us.

7. Study Plan: (be ready to explain how difficult it has been to not look back when times are hard within your spiritual walk.)

8. Developing the Text: 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:15, Job 17:9, Proverbs 4:18, Philippians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Philippians 3:12

9. Evaluation Questions:

- Where is the balance between “resting in Christ” and “applying all diligence” to grow in Him, and is our work that of the flesh or the Spirit?

- How can we make sure that our motives for spiritual are right and why are right motives essential?

- Which of the seven qualities do you most need to focus on in this New Year? Also name the 7 qualities.

10. Conclusion and Application:

As we apply this lesson to our lives we must know that God’s divine power gives us everything we need for a godly life. How exciting it is to know that true establishment is only in our progression in Christ. See the world tells us that if you have riches, and even good health then you have a firm foundation for a good life but Christ clearly tells us that the only sure standing and state of worth-while thriving is in Him. To be recognized in heaven is to be recognized for eternity, desiring the circles and the approval we got from the world is longing to live in the gray and being spiritually lukewarm. We should never look at it as a case of progression here and perfection there. Not so, we are not to be stagnant pools here and gushing fountains there. The scriptures clearly state that those who grow here will have large capabilities there and those who are faithful here shall have the larger range for faithfulness there, we can anticipate that with great joy and our rejection of once desired circles we do please God.