SEVEN WORDS TO THE CHURCH TODAY

Life Curoup

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Enacken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH



The world around us poses tough competition for our affections and attention. We can be easily distracted by the meaningless things. We may compromise our faith to fit in. And we can even hide who we are in Christ to avoid persecution. Sometimes we are just not sure where God fits in our lives.

How do we refocus our lives to put Jesus first?

In this 7-part series, pastor William Subash takes us through the seven letters written to seven churches in the book of Revelation. Each letter had a specific message and instruction to first century churches which still speak truth to us today. The caution and encouragement in each letter calls us to persevere in following Christ.

Accessing The Material

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the 7 Words Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, simply go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidge BaptistChurch. After creating an account simply search "Revelation: Learning From The 7 Churches" to access the 7 weeks or click HERE if viewing on your computer.

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If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.

Erncken Lidge
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Regain Your First Love	
BIG IDEA	
	
Unless carefully guarded, the position of Jesus as First Love in our lives will be displaced. Awareness of this	
change, leading to repentance, can make Him our First Love again.	
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OPEN Think about the excitement you have with a new marriage, a new house, new job or school, or even celebrating the start of a new year. Why do you like new beginnings? And why does the "newness" fade away after some time? Often, the "newness" fades away because with time, it's not "new" anymore. However that does not mean we should stop caring for it any less or not devote as much time and effort as before. An attitude like that at work can get us fired and a spouse with a similar attitude can make the marriage crash and burn. How about our relationship with God? If it fades away with time, will He continue to see us the same way? Listen to William Subash's talk on Regain Your First Love about The Church at Ephesus as he walks through the highs and lows of the church, what course correction they needed to make, and what that means for us today. As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions. How was the start for the church at Ephesus? What were the notable changes in the way they lived? What were some of the extraordinary 'deeds' the church at Ephesus exhibited? What are some reasons for the church to have lost their enthusiasm? **WATCH** SESSION 1: Regain Your First Love: The Church at Ephesus (8 minutes)

REVIEW William Subash mentioned that Christians begin their walk with Christ with enthusiasm. It can be seen in the extraordinary deeds of their prayer life, study of the Word etc. What are the major changes that you noticed in your life after deciding to follow Christ? Compared to then, what is the level of intensity in these changes now? What would be the top 5 "loves" for you in your life currently? How can you ensure that Jesus remains at the top spot? **BIBLE EXPLORATION** Read Revelation 2:1–7. There was definite change in the way the church at Ephesus interacted with world when Jesus was their first love and when He was not. If the church today showed the enthusiasm that comes along with having Jesus first, what would be some signs of it? Read Luke 14:26. What do you think Jesus meant when He said you should hate your father, mother, etc. to be His disciple? Have you ever been in a situation where you had to choose between Jesus and any other person who is important to you? How did you resolve this situation? Matthew 6:21. To what is Jesus comparing Himself to in this verse? As Subash asked in the video, What does this message to the church at Ephesus mean for you today? Where is your treasure? The church at Ephesus had an electric start that their works were noticed by the entire city and the gospel spread rapidly. However, everything stopped when they stopped having Jesus as their First Love and God sends this message as a warning to them. Today, how will we keep Jesus as our first love? rightnow MEDIA

LIVE IT OUT	
Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.	
WRITE: Write down five changes you want to make to reposition Jesus as the First Love of your life. Even small changes and small victories spurs on keep our focus on Him.	
SHARE: Talk about where you struggle in keeping Jesus first with an accountability partner or study leader. Share with them your victories and struggles and pray for each other.	
MEMORISE: Memorise Rev 2:7 and reflect on the promise God gives to everyone who is victorious in this area.	

Stand for your Faith	
BIG IDEA	
Being a follower of Christ we are bound to be mistreated, harassed, slandered, falsely accused and	
persecuted. But Jesus knows our struggles and calls us to press on till the end.	
rightnow MEDIA	

OPEN Think about a time when you were snubbed or treated indifferently by a family member, friend, colleague or neighbor. How do we feel when we are the receiving end of this treatment? Think about a time in your life when you stood up for something that you believed in or stood up for a person whom you felt was being treated unjustly? And because of this stand that you took, did you have to face serious repercussions that it brought considerable distress to you? How did you feel during that time? To be harassed because of doing what you believed was right can be a difficult place to be in. It can make us want to give up after a while. History is dotted with events of the church being persecuted for standing up for their faith. The church at Smyrna went through intense persecution because they chose to follow Jesus. What was Jesus's message to them? Listen to William Subash's talk on Stand for your Faith about The Church at Smyrna. As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions. How did Jesus introduce Himself to the Church at Smyrna? Because of their decision to follow Jesus, what did the Church at Smyrna have to endure? Which is the "most popular expression of comfort in the Old Testament" that Jesus uses to address the Church at Smyrna? **WATCH** SESSION 2: Stand for your Faith: The Church at Smyrna (8 minutes) rightnow MEDIA

REVIEW William Subash notes that the church at Smyrna would have easily understood the titles of Jesus "first and the last" and "died but came back to life." What does this title of Jesus mean to you? Subash also points out that the church at Smyrna chose to be missional and so ended up being slandered, isolated, falsely accused and persecuted. Have you ever been through a situation like this in your life? How did you deal with it? If you are going through such an experience, what are the emotions that you feel? And how is Jesus' Words of comfort, "Do not Fear" an encouragement to you? When people treat us differently because of our belief system, we face loneliness. Subash shared that Jesus Himself was "arrested, disowned and crucified." Jesus says "He knows" when we go through these struggles. What does this tell you about Jesus? And how is this truth of comfort to you? Subash encourages us to ask ourselves why we struggle to take a stand for the Lord in the midst of unfavourable situations? Why do you feel this can be a challenge?

BIBLE EXPLORATION	
Read Revelation 2: 8–11 . Verse 10 tells us that this pain and suffering will continue but only up to a certain time. Why do you think Jesus allows us to go through	
suffering? And how is the knowledge that it is time bound a reassurance to you?	
Read James 1: 2–5 . How does James say we should see our trial and suffering? How does this help us in our Christian walk?	
Read: I Peter 5: 8–10, I Peter 4:12–13. What does Peter	
encourage us to do to resist Satan? He also mentions that believers around the world are undergoing the	
same struggle. What should be our response to this struggle?	
While Jesus can make the persecution and the maltreatment go away, He uses it test our convictions	
and our faith. However, He understands everything that we go through and we are never alone during this time	
of trial. He encourages us to persevere till the end, even to the death because the reward He gives is	
exceedingly better than anything on this earth.	
LIVE IT OUT	
Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.	
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MEMORISE : Memorise Revelation 2:10, which are the words Jesus used to encourage the church to know that this pain and suffering will end.	
PRAY: Thank God for what He taught you through this session. In case if you are going through a difficult	
circumstance now because of being a follower of Christ, ask for strength and endurance to go the whole	
distance. If you still haven't faced a situation like this, ask God to prepare you until a time such as this comes.	
ENCOURAGE: Call a friend or missionary who you know	
is facing hostilities from people because of their faith. Encourage them and pray with them.	

Don't Compromise	
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BIG IDEA	
The Christian walk cannot have only some areas where we are consistent with the gospel while we compromise	
and tolerate inconsistencies in other aspects of our life. Only true repentance from a compromised lifestyle	
helps us to enjoy a full life in Jesus.	
rightnow MEDIA	

OPEN Think about a friend or family relationship where you feel the other person's actions put the relationship in jeopardy. It could be a broken promise, a loose word, an action that betrayed all the good that they have done to keep the relationship healthy. How do you feel when you are treated this way? A one-sided relationship can make us feel stuck and sometimes we may want to end it completely. We ask ourselves, does this person even care? Why does he/she seem good in some areas but completely lets me down in the other? How often do we treat God the same way? Maybe during the initial days of our salvation we were conscious to be right before Him in all areas of our life. But with time and circumstances, we may have compromised on our choices—sometimes even unintentionally. Listen to William Subash's talk on Don't Compromise about The Church at Pergamum where Jesus calls out the church for their inconsistencies in their walk with Him. As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions. Why did Jesus appreciate the church at Pergamum in spite of its negative power centres? Which were the two areas in which the church at Pergamum compromised because of false teachers? What are the five parts of repentance? What are the three things we can learn from Jesus' message to the church at Pergamum? **WATCH** SESSION 3: Don't Compromise: The Church at Pergamum (8 minutes)

REVIEW William Subash noted how Jesus appreciates the Church for not renouncing the faith in spite of the difficult environment. What does this tell you about the nature of Jesus? **Read Revelation 2:12–17.** One of the areas the church compromised because of the false teachers, was for monetary benefits. How do you see this struggle today in the church or in your own life? Subash also noted that the second way believers were influenced by false teachers was that "the lifestyle of the Pergamum church was consistent with the local culture but inconsistent with the gospel." In our times, what are some areas do you feel there is a direct conflict with the teachings of the Bible to our culture? How does this affect you personally? Subash talks about the five parts of repentance which Jesus requires. Why do you think there should be so much effort in our repentance? What is the promise and assurance that Jesus is giving to those who repent and turn back to Him? What does this mean to you?

BIBLE EXPLORATION Read Luke 6:24. In His teachings, Jesus spoke the most about money. Why do you think Jesus did so? With reference to the message to the Church at Pergamum what does this mean for us? Read I Kings 11:1–8. Solomon was a great King under whose reign the nation of Israel enjoyed the greatest prosperity. But this passage talks about the compromises he made which led to his and the nation's downfall. How do we make sure we don't slip the way Solomon did? **Read Romans 12:1–2**. Just as the church at Pergamum was influenced by the lifestyle of the culture, the world today is pulling us to fit in its mold. How do you think Paul's instructions in this passage can be applied in our life? Many times, the reason we compromise and not look at Jesus is because we unconsciously believe that He is not able to satisfy us. This is a dangerous lie which tells Jesus that He is not good enough for us. To those who repented from this sin, Jesus promises 'manna', the heavenly food to satisfy them, something that the world can never provide us. When we only look to Him for our needs and not compromise with the world, He gives us what the world can never give us. **LIVE IT OUT REFLECT:** Look deeply into every aspect of your life to check if there are areas in which you have compromised as an individual, family or church. Ask God to reveal areas which might be hidden and ask Him for help to overcome the areas of our struggle. **MEMORISE:** Memorise Rev 2: 17 to remind and encourage you that God is the one who can satisfy your innermost needs. **SHARE:** Share with another follower of Christ the lessons you are learning from this study to encourage him/her.

Flee False Teaching	
BIG IDEA	
The grand redemptive work of Christ on the cross	
cannot be watered down to say that it was for a better, prosperous and wealthy life for us. He calls to become	
more like Him and share about His work with those who don't know Him yet.	
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OPEN Have you ever met salesmen who market a product such as a new detergent powder intensely? They claim and promise that your life will change drastically with the amount of time you will be saving because of the new powder! After using the product for some time you realise it takes the same amount of time and effort to scrub every garment and this whole marketing was a scam. How do you feel about that salesman during that time? You would have learnt quite early in your life that any route which promises easy fixes, quick returns, a short cut to a better life, etc. will most probably be a scam. However, within our churches also exist teachers who promise a better life using the Name of Jesus but without giving any importance to His work and His teachings. The Church at Thyatira was divided by the false teaching that was prevailing at that time. Listen to **Subash's talk on** Flee False Teaching about The Church at Thyatira. As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions. Jesus uses a long phrase with several titles to introduce Himself. How does He introduce Himself to the Church at Thyatira? What were some qualities that were seen in the group that did not compromise with the false teachers? How do you 'identify' false teachers? **WATCH** SESSION 4: Flee False Teaching: The Church at Thyatira (8 mins)

REVIEW	
What does Jesus's introduction of Himself mean to you?	
William Subash points out that Jesus cautioned the church at Thyatira that He is responsible for their "economic welfare and political protection" and not Apollo Tyrimnaeus. Today, what does this mean for your life? How do I see Jesus as your provider and protector?	
Subash also points out that Jesus was greatly appreciative of the group which did not compromise with the false teaching but showed fruit in their life. What is required of us to show this fruit of love, faith, service, endurance in our lives?	
What is the danger of going after the prosperity gospel? How do you deal with that struggle?	
As Subash points out, Jesus gave a chance for Jezebel to repent but she was unwilling. What does this tell you about the nature of Jesus and the nature of man? Subash gave some guidelines that we can use to	
identify false teachers. What other signs can you think of to check if a teacher is preaching about the cross or the prosperity gospel?	
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BIBLE EXPLORATION	
Read Revelation 2:18–29. In verses 24–25, what does Jesus encourage those who haven't fallen to continue doing?	
Read Mathew 6:25–34. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to trust in Him for all our needs while we focus on His Kingdom. How does this truth free you from worrying about the necessities of our life? What does that look like?	
Read II Corinthians 2:17 . Paul mentions how he speaks before God with sincerity without any wrong motive. How can someone peddle God's Word?	
The story of Salvation is the greatest love story that we know of. It shows the love of the Father who sent His son to die in our place so that we can be redeemed, restored and reestablished in our relationship with Him. More ever, He has given the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. To	
say that God did all this just to make our life better is immensely belittling the work of God. Today Jesus is encouraging us to stay in the purity of the gospel and use this life to share with our friends about Him to those do not know Him yet.	
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LIVE IT OUT	
Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.	
MEMORISE: Memorise Revelation 2:26 as a reminder that Jesus promises the reward to one who remains steadfast till the end.	
PRAY: Pray and ask God for wisdom and discernment to	
show you when you are being taught something that does not align with the message of the Bible.	
STUDY: Make time to study God's Word. One of the	
best ways to identify false teaching is when you understand God's Word accurately.	

Study Guide	
Don't Fake It	
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BIG IDEA	
The quality of our Christian walk with Christ cannot be measured by external signs such as "Christian"	
activities, routines or using "Christian" vocabulary." Jesus looks at the inside and invites us to amend our ways by realising this truth and with repentance.	
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OPEN Have you ever been to restaurant where the ambience was beautiful, the waiters were very cordial and the pictures on the menu card enticing? However, when the food was served it tasted less than ordinary and left a bad taste in your mouth? Or have you seen a movie which advertised the most exciting trailer but after you watched it, you felt you lost two hours of your time and wasted your money? Share an experience where you felt deceived from a product or experience's advertising and what you really had? What would you say about such experiences? We wouldn't mind sitting in a simple restaurant which gives great food and watching a movie which is hardly known but yet has a moving storyline. It's not what's on the outside that matter but what's on the inside. The Church at Sardis similarly had a lot of 'external' features which seemed attractive but their relationship with Christ, they were dead. Listen to Subash's talk on Don't Fake It about The Church at Sardis. As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions. Why did the Church at Sardis not face persecution? What are the two points Jesus makes in His "realistic assessment" of the church at Sardis? What are the three remedies for "spiritual deadness" which Jesus provides? **WATCH** SESSION 5: Don't Fake It: The Church at Sardis (8 minutes)

REVIEW Subash observes that Jesus was not pleased with the church at Sardis because they "did not pose a challenge to society." How does a follower of Christ pose a challenge to society? Subash also shared that the church at Sardis had a lot of 'externals' like a nice building, a big team of clergies and a lot of Christian activities but no real life in them. What are some 'externals' that we need to be wary of in our times? In Jesus's assessment of the church, He saw them to be living an inoffensive Christian life. What does an inoffensive Christian life look like? And why do you think Jesus is offended by this? In Jesus's remedy for spiritual deadness, Subash mentions that "we are in danger when we feel comfortable and complacent." Have you ever found yourself to be in this situation? How did you overcome this situation? Subash mentions that a key highlight of this letter is that "believers cannot take God's grace for granted." In the context of exhibiting a deceptive appearance on the outside, how is God's grace taken for granted?

BIBLE EXPLORATION Read Revelation 3:1–6. Verse 4 talks about the small group of people who choose to follow Christ meaningfully even when everyone else focuses on the externals. Jesus commends these followers of His. Have you had these people in your life? How have they influenced you? Read I Samuel 16:1–13. In this passage, God teaches the prophet Samuel while he is choosing the next king of Israel that He looks at the heart and not the outward appearance as man tends to do. What are the dangers of only looking at the outside? Read Luke 16:15. Jesus says we can prove and justify ourselves to be right before men but only God knows the heart. In every sphere of our life, the people whom we interact with are going to judge us by the outward appearances. And living in this fallen world, there is a chance that even in our Christian walk we might look only at the externals. Jesus is calling us today to remember His teachings. He knows our heart better than ourselves. He promises to acknowledge the names of all who over come before the Father. **LIVE IT OUT** Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session. **MEMORISE:** Memorise Revelation 3: 5 to encourage yourself not to be satisfied with just the externals, but to focus on the inside and keep your heart right with God even if it meant to offend the world **PRAY**: Make some to reflect on your life to see where you have focused on the externals. Pray and ask God for wisdom to focus on the internal condition of your heart. **SHARE**: Find at least one friend to share how God has spoken to you through this study as an encouragement to them.

Dealing with Shut Doors	
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BIG IDEA	
When we choose to walk following Jesus, we get persecuted for our beliefs and our choices by the world	
or even by other Christians. This causes us pain but Jesus promises an eternal reward to all who persevere	
till the end.	
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	OPEN	
	Think about a time in your life when you have been totally rejected by a circle of friends, family, coworkers, classmates, or community? How did this rejection make you feel?	
	Have you ever been rejected for your faith?	
	Rejection is one of the more painful experiences human beings endure. In fact, a study done by colleagues from Purdue and the University of California found that social rejection activates the same brain regions involved in physical pain.	
	The Church at Philadelphia endured constant	
	rejections because of their belief in Jesus. They were even deprived of some basic privileges because of	
	this. Jesus was aware of the 'shut doors' in their life. Listen to Subash's talk on Dealing with Shut	
	Doors about The Church at Philadelphia.	
	As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions.	
	Compared to the other six churches, what's the key difference in Jesus's message to the Church at Philadelphia?	
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	What were the challenges the Christians in Philadelphia faced that made it unable for them to live easily?	
	What are the two important principles we learn from	
	this church.	
	In light of Jesus's message to the Church at Philadelphia, what should we do today?	
	WATCH	
	SESSION 6: Dealing with Shut Doors: The Church at Philadelphia (6 minutes)	
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REVIEW William Subash observes that Jesus did not have any criticism about the church in Philadelphia. What does it tell you about the way the Jesus sees us? The Church faced aggressive opposition from the group of Philadelphians. Are you currently facing any such circumstances in your life? How is Jesus's message to the church an encouragement to you? Subash mentions a few times about how Jesus "recognises the smallness of the church." What do you feel smallness in the eyes of the world in our times look like? How are Jesus's Words reassuring you? Subash encourages us that Jesus will give us a stephanos (a wreath), which is given to a person who has achieved something with perseverance and endurance. What does perseverance and endurance look in your life now? Subash reminds us to "safeguard your call to faith and the crown." We safeguard our faith on a day-to-day basis to receive the crown at the end. How can you safeguard your faith?

BIBLE EXPLORATION Read Revelation 3:7–13. Verses 7–8 talks about doors that God closes. In your life have there been avenues which have been closed when you wanted them to be opened and vice versa? What does this passage tell you about God and His involvement in your life? Read Psalm 27:13-14. David talks with confidence about how God will come through for Him in spite of the challenges he faces. Is it easy for us to say the same statement in our life? What can you learn about from David's experience? **Read Mathew 5:54.** As we focus on Christ and look towards the open door He has for us; we still have to deal with people who persecute us. What is Jesus' instruction to us regarding this? The pain of rejection and someone shutting the doors in our life is very real. This may want us to question God, give up and start looking at alternate solutions for our problems. Today Jesus is encouraging us. Just as how He was aware of every difficult circumstance in the lives of His followers in Philadelphia He is aware of your circumstance. He lovingly call us to persevere and He has opened a door, a path for us to keep moving. He promises us a crown and we get the greatest reward at the end. Jesus Himself! He is coming soon. **LIVE IT OUT** Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session. **MEMORISE**: Memorise Rev 3:12 to remind yourself when you go through trials that lay ahead of you, not to give up. **PRAY**: As you thank God for His encouragement to you, pray asking for strength to persevere in the midst of your circumstance. **ENCOURAGE**: Identify at least one friend who is facing similar circumstances in his/her life and encourage what you have learned from this lesson.

Lose Lukewarmness	
BIG IDEA	
A right assessment of our relationship with God can only be given by Him. Jesus chides us for believing in this mis-truth, but yet, He gently calls us to repentance.	
OPEN	
Think about a time when you were snubbed or treated indifferently by a family member, friend, colleague or neighbor. How do we feel when we are the receiving end of this treatment?	
There are instances when we show this coldness to our loved ones. Friends who were once close have now become acquaintances. We might not do this intentionally but we know there is now a distance in the relationship. What about the relationship with our Heavenly Father? Can we become lukewarm in our relationship with Him as well?	
Listen to William Subash's talk on <i>Lose Lukewarmness</i> about The Church at Laodicea as he teaches on their assessment of themselves of their relationship with God and God's response to it, and what that means for us today.	
As you watch this session, write down how William Subash answers these questions.	
What were the three things Laodicea was known for?	
What did the church lack to show that they were "neither hot nor cold"?	
What's the remedy that Jesus gave to the Laodicean church?	

WATCH	
SESSION 7: Lose Lukewarmness: The Church at Laodicea (9 minutes)	
REVIEW	
The Laodicean church was influenced by their city's culture and success. What is your city/ town/ village known for?	
How do the culture and traditions where you live affect your understanding of God?	
Jesus's assessment of the Laodicean church was contrary to what the church had perceived. Has there	
been a time in your life when you had misperceived your understanding about God and God has corrected you?	
The bank, the black wool factories and the eye hospital were the "centres of idols" for the Laodiceans. That which they thought were their assets led to their downfall. What do you think can be the "centres of idols" for a follower of Christ in our current time?	
Subash encourages us to search our hearts and lives to check if we have become lukewarm. What are you able to see if you search your heart now?	
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BIBLE EXPLORATION Read Rev 3:14–21. Among the seven churches, Jesus admonishes the church at Laodicea the most. In verses 19–21 He reveals why He corrects us and how to overcome this predicament. What does it tell you about the nature of Jesus? Can you think of some active steps you need to take to overcome lukewarmness? Read Isaiah 29:13. These words by prophet Isaiah were spoken centuries before the letters in Revelation. What are the similarities in God's assessment of His people in both the cases? Based on this verse, what are the dangers and pitfalls that a believer should avoid? Read Hebrews 13:8. The Bible says that God never changes and He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The only variable is this relationship is us. Can you come up with a system of daily tracking to check your heart with God? Similar to losing the first love, becoming lukewarm towards Christ can be a gradual decline rather than a change that happens overnight. But 'lukewarmness' can be more dangerous as it gives us a feeling that we are fine in our relationship with God and that He is pleased with us. Today, Jesus is calling us to repentance. **LIVE IT OUT** Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session. **MEMORISE**: Memorise Revelation 3:20 as a reminder that Jesus is standing close by when you feel far away from Him. **PRAY**: Pray with a friend that God will show you clearly His assessment of your relationship with Him so that you can set things right with Him. **ACT**: Write three steps that you will take to overcome lukewarmness this week.

Erncken Ridge

Erncken Piologe