

Well, there's a lot to talk about this week, and I'm going to do it primarily by means of attachments to this introductory page. It's likely more than you want to read all at once, but perhaps you can come back to these documents for reading all week long.

The **first** thing I want to do is to thank **Robin Brodtkin** for the testimony of recommitment she shared with us on Sunday morning. She told us that her desire was to bring her public commitment to Jesus up-to-date with her private spiritual journey, and in that she is an example and an encouragement to us all.

Robin's testimony reminded me of something I read during my devotions this week. The text speaks of King Amaziah, and records that "*He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly*" (2 Chronicles 25:2).

And that reminded me of a conversation we had in "The Incendiary Fellowship" last night, as we discussed Francis Chan's book, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*. Francis devotes a good portion of the book to a consideration of what it might look like to be a "lukewarm" follower of Jesus as compared with being a "wholehearted" follower of Jesus. I've attached some **summary notes** from the book so you can wonder about that yourself.

**Second**, I invite you to join me in welcoming **Bonnie Russell** to our Fellowship. Bonnie has been a follower of Jesus for many years, and has been a Baptist before, though she comes to us at this point from a Christian congregation of another sort. Bonnie is from Ohio, has lived in Helsinki, Finland, and Paris, France, and has two children and six grandchildren. *Welcome!!*

**Third**, after reading last week's laptop about "the problem of evil," one of our members asked a question about "where Satan fits into this picture." That's a very good question, the answer to which is doubtless more complex than we presently understand. I have thought about this question a good bit over the years, however, and I've attached an explanation that helps me, even though a good bit of it could be contested by those with other views. It's called ***An Approach to Understanding the Cosmos***.

**Fourth**, feelings are running high on both sides of the same-sex marriage issue after last week's ruling by the Supreme Court. The most refreshing and productive view I've seen so far is expressed in the attachment, ***The Supreme Court Just Gave American Evangelicals a Gift***. I commend it to you as worthy of your serious personal consideration and of our serious collective commitment.

Happy reading! ☺

Dave



Notes on Francis Chan, ***Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*** (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008).

*“We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly. His perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what he might do to us. If we are afraid, it is for fear of what he might do to us, and show that we are not fully convinced that he really loves us”* (1 John 4:18).

“We need to stop giving people excuses not to believe in God” (p. 21).

“It is important that we not measure our spiritual health by the people around us, who are pretty much like us” (p. 22).

“**Worry** implies that we don’t quite trust that God is big enough, powerful enough, or loving enough to take care of what’s happening in our lives. **Stress** says that the things we are involved in are important enough to merit our impatience, our lack of grace toward others, or our tight grip of control” (p. 42).

“God has allowed hard things in your life so you can show the world that your God is great and that knowing Him brings peace and joy, even when life is hard” (p. 44).

“Nothing compares to being truly, exuberantly wanted by your children” (p. 55).

“The irony is that while God doesn’t need us but still wants us, we desperately need God but don’t really want Him most of the time” (p. 61).

On Mark 4:13-20 – “My caution to you is this: *do not assume you are good soil*. I think most American churchgoers are the soil that chokes the seed because of all the thorns” (p. 67).

“The goals of American Christianity are often a nice marriage, children who don’t swear, and good church attendance. Taking the words of Christ literally and seriously is rarely considered. That’s for the ‘radicals’ who are ‘unbalanced’ and who go ‘overboard.’ Most of us want a balanced life that we can control, that is safe, and that does not involve suffering. Would you describe yourself as totally in love with Jesus Christ? Or do the words *halfhearted*, *lukewarm*, and *partially committed* fit better?” (p. 68).

“Lukewarm people don’t really believe that this new life Jesus offers is better than the old sinful one” (p. 70).

“The truth is, the lives of lukewarm people wouldn’t look much different if they suddenly stopped believing in God” (p. 78).

### **Profile of the Lukewarm** (Revelation 3:15-16)

1. Lukewarm People attend church fairly regularly.
2. Lukewarm People give money to charity and to the church . . . as long as it doesn’t impinge on their standard of living.
3. Lukewarm People tend to choose what is popular over what is right when they are in conflict.
4. Lukewarm People don’t really want to be saved from their sin; they only want to be saved from the penalty of their sin. They don’t genuinely hate sin and aren’t truly sorry for it; they’re merely sorry because God is going to punish them.

5. Lukewarm People are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Christ; yet they do not act.
6. Lukewarm People rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends. They do not want to be rejected, nor do they want to make people uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion.
7. Lukewarm People gauge their morality or “goodness” by comparing themselves to the secular world. They feel satisfied that while they aren’t as hard-core for Jesus as so-and-so, they are nowhere as horrible as the guy down the street.
8. Lukewarm People say they love Jesus, and He is, indeed, a part of their lives, but only a part.
9. Lukewarm People love God, but they do not love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength. They would be quick to assure you that they try to love God that much, but that sort of total devotion isn’t really possible for the average person; it’s only for pastors and missionaries and radicals.
10. Lukewarm People love others but do not seek to love others as much as they love themselves.
11. Lukewarm People will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money, and energy they are willing to give.
12. Lukewarm People think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven.
13. Lukewarm People are thankful for their luxuries and comforts, and rarely consider trying to give as much as possible to the poor.
14. Lukewarm People do whatever is necessary to keep themselves from feeling too guilty. They want to do the bare minimum, to be “good enough” without it requiring too much of them.
15. Lukewarm People are continually concerned with playing it safe; they are slaves to the god of control. This focus on safe living keeps them from sacrificing and risking for God.
16. Lukewarm People feel secure because they attend church, made a profession of faith at age twelve, were baptized, come from a Christian family, vote Republican, or live in America.
17. Lukewarm People do not live by faith; their lives are structured so they never have to.
18. Lukewarm People probably drink and swear less than average, but besides that, they really aren’t very different from your typical unbeliever. They equate their partially sanitized lives with holiness, but they couldn’t be more wrong. (pp. 68-79)

**1 John 2:3-6 (NIV2011)**

<sup>3</sup> *We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.*

<sup>5</sup> *But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

“Many of us believe we have as much of God as we want right now, a reasonable portion of God among all the other things in our lives” (p.96).

**“Are you willing to say to God that He can have whatever He wants?** Do you believe that wholehearted commitment to Him is more important than any other thing or person in your life?” (p. 97).

“There is nothing better than giving up everything and stepping into a passionate love relationship with God, the God of the universe who made galaxies, leaves, laughter . . . and me . . . and you” (p. 106).

“If we allow ourselves to live recklessly for Him, then we, too, will see His glory. We will see Him do the impossible” (p. 116).

“What are you doing right now that requires serious and genuine faith? Where are you risking for Jesus to such an extent that you will be in trouble if He doesn’t come through?” (p. 124).

### **Profile of the Obsessed**

1. People who are obsessed with Jesus give freely and openly, without censure. Obsessed people love those who hate them and who can never love them back.
2. People who are obsessed with Jesus aren’t consumed with their personal safety and comfort above all else. Obsessed people care more about God’s kingdom coming to this earth than their own lives being shielded from pain or distress.
3. People who are obsessed with Jesus live lives that connect them with the poor in some way or another. Obsessed people believe that Jesus talked about money and the poor so often because it was really important to Him (1 John 2:4-6; Matthew 16:24-26).
4. Obsessed people are more concerned with obeying God than doing what is expected or fulfilling the status quo. A person who is obsessed with Jesus will do things that don’t always make sense in terms of success or wealth on this earth. As Martin Luther put it, “There are two days on my calendar: this day and that day” (Luke 14:25-35; Matthew 7:13-23, 8:18-22; Revelation 3:1-6).
5. A person who is obsessed with Jesus knows that the sin of pride is always a battle. Obsessed people know that you can never be “humble enough,” and so they seek to make themselves less known and Christ more known (Matthew 5:16).
6. People who are obsessed with Jesus do not consider service a burden. Obsessed people take joy in loving God by loving His people (Matthew 13:44; John 15:8).
7. People who are obsessed with God are known as givers, not takers. Obsessed people genuinely think that others matter as much as they do, and they are particularly aware of those who are poor around the world (James 2:14-26).
8. A person who is obsessed thinks about heaven frequently. Obsessed people orient their lives around eternity; they are not fixed only on what is here in front of them.
9. A person who is obsessed is characterized by committed, settled, passionate love for God, above and before every other thing and every other being.
10. People who are obsessed are raw with God; they do not attempt to mask the ugliness of their sins or their failures. Obsessed people don’t “put it on” for God; He is their safe place, where they can be at peace.
11. People who are obsessed with God have an intimate relationship with Him. They are nourished by God’s Word throughout the day because they know that forty minutes on Sunday is not enough to sustain them for a whole week, especially when they will encounter so many distractions and alternative messages.
12. A person who is obsessed with Jesus is more concerned with his or her character than comfort. Obsessed people know that true joy doesn’t depend on circumstances or

environment; it is a gift that must be chosen and cultivated, a gift that ultimately comes from God (James 1:2-4).

13. A person who is obsessed with Jesus knows that the best thing he can do is be faithful to his Savior in every aspect of his life, continually saying “Thank You!” to God. An obsessed person knows there can never be intimacy if he is always trying to pay God back or work hard enough to be worthy. He revels in his role as child and friend of God (pp. 132-148).

“Am I loving my neighbor and my God by living where I live, by driving what I drive, by talking how I talk? The point is that there *is* another path, an alternative to the individualism, selfishness, and materialism of the American Dream (even the so-called ‘Christian’ version)” (p. 166).

“The world needs Christians who don’t tolerate the complacency of their own lives. My hope and prayer is that you finish this book with hope, believing that part of your responsibility in the body of Christ is to help set the pace for the church by listening to and obeying and *living* Christ” (p. 172).

“Jesus, I need to give myself up.  
I am not strong enough to love You and walk with You on my own.  
I can’t do it, and I need You.  
I need You deeply and desperately.  
I believe You are worth it,  
that You are better than anything else I could have in this life or the next,  
and I want You.  
And when I don’t, I want to want You.  
Be all in me.  
Take all of me.  
Have your way in me.  
Amen”  
(p. 111).

# An Approach to Understanding the Cosmos<sup>Ⓞ</sup>

- 1. The problem of evil and suffering is the greatest challenge to Christian faith.**
- 2. The problem arises out of the biblical affirmations that God is both truly good and fully powerful.**

*“Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “Only God is good” (Matthew 19:17).*

*“I am the LORD, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?”  
(Jeremiah 32:27).*

- 3. The problem is mitigated to some extent by understanding the nature of our freedom vis-à-vis God.**

When God made human persons, God gave them/us freedom to choose and to act. To have genuine freedom to act means to possess power that can be exercised independently of God. So, although we humans have made evil actual by our personal choosing, it was God’s prior choice to grant us real freedom that made evil possible.

- 4. The question remains, however, as to how such a circumstance preserves God’s goodness. What’s the value of human freedom if it leads to such pain? Ephesians 3:10-11 provides a clue . . .**

*“God’s purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

- 5. There was a prior creation of the angels, the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.” These beings had some measure of freedom vis-à-vis God.**

*“One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan the Accuser came with them”  
(Job 1:6).*

- 6. Some of these beings used their freedom to rebel against God, and there was war in heaven.**

*“Then there was war in heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels” (Revelation 12:7).*

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<sup>Ⓞ</sup> This outline makes inferences that go beyond what can be clearly seen in scripture, and is therefore offered as suggestive. (David C. Stancil, Ph.D., 2/18/2001)

## 7. **Satan and his cohorts were defeated and cast out of the heavenly realms.**

*“Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan falling from heaven as a flash of lightning!” (Luke 10:18).*

*“Then this further message came to me from the LORD: ‘Son of man, weep for the king of Tyre. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: You were the perfection of wisdom and beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone—red carnelian, chrysolite, white moonstone, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald—all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created. I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire.*

*“You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you. Your great wealth filled you with violence, and you sinned. So I banished you from the mountain of God. I expelled you, O mighty guardian, from your place among the stones of fire. Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings. You defiled your sanctuaries with your many sins and your dishonest trade. So I brought fire from within you, and it consumed you. I let it burn you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All who knew you are appalled at your fate. You have come to a terrible end, and you are no more”” (Ezekiel 28:11-19).*

*“How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God’s stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.’ But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths” (Isaiah 14:12-15, [Babylon]).*

## 8. **At some point thereafter, God decided to create again, this time granting an even more radical freedom to the humans that would be created.**

It would seem that the rulers and authorities in God’s service approached God and said, “With all due respect, Sir, the last time you did this, things didn’t turn out so well. Are you sure that this is a good idea?”

## 9. **God had a purpose in this new creation.**

*“Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes” (Ephesians 1:4).*

*“God’s purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11).*

C.S. Lewis called Earth “the Silent Planet.” He thought that Earth is Heaven’s Alcatraz, cut off from the normal communications and commerce of the universe. Lewis thought that God’s creation of humans as free beings right here in the middle of Satan’s prison camp was the ultimate “in your face, Satan” from God: “I’m going to show you. I’m going to make creatures out of nothing but dirt, and I’m going to put them in your back yard, where you have access to

them all the time. I'm going to love them so much that they are freely drawn to me, and I'm going to recreate what you destroyed right under your nose."

**10. God knew how these new creatures (humans) would use their freedom—that there would be rebellion once again . . . and God was prepared to deal with this second rebellion in a different way.**

*"And all the people who belong to this world [the rebels of the current creation] worshiped the beast [Satan's ambassador on earth]. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life, which belongs to the Lamb who was killed before the world was made" (Revelation 13:8).*

*"God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you" (1 Peter 1:20).*

Carl Bates has suggested that the Cross of Jesus has a more fundamental meaning than that of human redemption from the evil we have created. According to Bates, the Cross is first of all God's way of taking responsibility for having created a world in which evil is possible, taking into the Divine Being the enormity of suffering that has ensued and rendering it impotent with respect to eternity.<sup>1</sup>

**11. Jesus' death and resurrection defeated the Second Rebellion. The Wall is down!**

*"The time of judgment for the world has come, when the prince of this world will be cast out" (John 12:31).*

*"For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us" (Ephesians 2:14).*

*"He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe" (Colossians 2:10).*

**12. This defeat made possible the Great Reversal, through which the warring parties might be reconciled, creating a New Reality on the other side of War.**

*"What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!"*

*"All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).*

*"Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).*

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Bates, sermon at Lakeside Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 5, 1983.

*“Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose” (Philippians 2:1-2).*

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband.*

*“I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever.’*

*“And the one sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making all things new!’ And then he said to me, ‘Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true’” (Revelation 21:1-5).*

**13. While Satan has been defeated in the ultimate sense, vis-à-vis God, he continues to subvert the accomplishment of reconciliation among humans by every means possible.**

*“A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.*

*“Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:10-17).*

**14. The process of the Great Reversal continues until this very moment, and will continue until God says, “Enough!”**

*“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment” (2 Peter 3:9-10).*

*“You also must be ready all the time. For the Son of Man will come when least expected” (Matthew 24:44).*

**15. The rulers and authorities continue to watch to see whether the Redeemed Reality God envisions can indeed come into being . . . and whether it will be worth its cost.**

*“God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church” (Ephesians 3:10).*

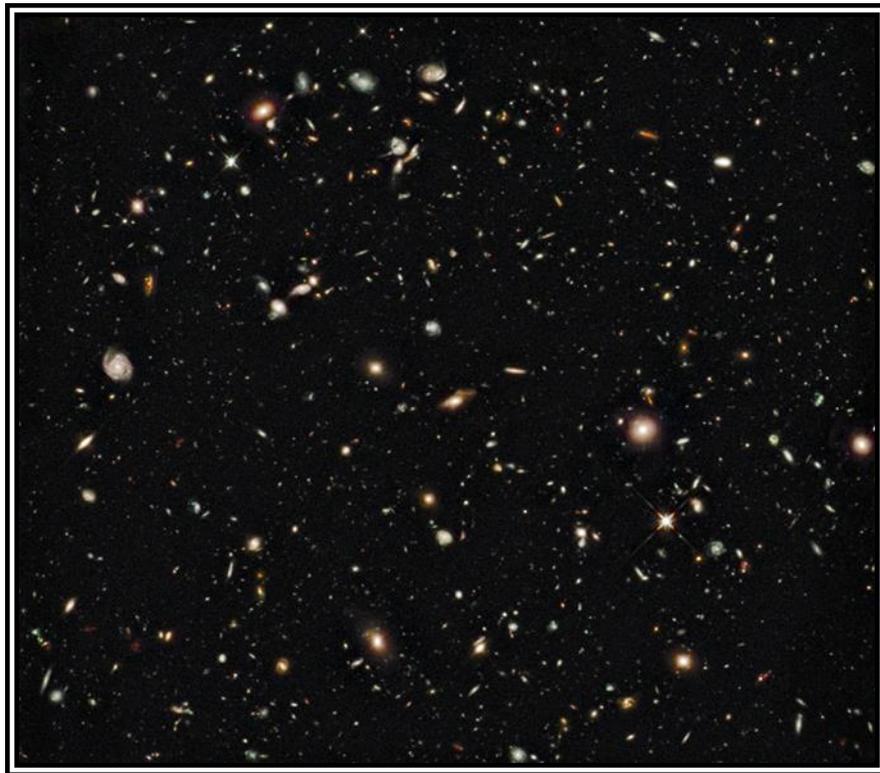
*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven” (Hebrews 12:1-2).*

**16. And so it is that what you and I choose to do and what we choose not to do has cosmic significance. Is it true that love is stronger than hatred? Your life, my life, and especially our life together, answers that eternal question, this very day.**

*“For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10).*

*“God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church” (Ephesians 3:10).*

*“Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21)!*



The Hubble Ultra-Deep Field

# The Supreme Court Just Gave American Evangelicals a Gift

[June 26, 2015](#) / [Ed Cyzewski](#)



Evangelicals are tenacious, persistent, and driven when they want to fight for a cause. The problem is that American evangelicals have been swept up in fighting for the wrong cause for a long time.

When the Supreme Court ruled to make same sex marriage the law of the land, American evangelicals received a gift that many don't want: **official permission to fight for people in need instead of fighting against same sex marriage.**

Whatever you believe about same sex marriage, the role of government, and the future of the church in America, disagreeing with same sex marriage on moral grounds does not demand a public campaign to prevent it from becoming legally sanctioned. While I remain committed to creating room for affirming and non-affirming evangelicals who unite under the common banner of saving faith in Christ, evangelicals in America should have never made legalized same sex marriage a central moral issue to fight in the courts.

While I don't believe [Matthew 25](#) is exhaustive in its presentation of what matters to God, we do get a glimpse of the kinds of people who have internalized and lived out the message of Jesus. They work to alleviate the most pressing needs of others in our world.

That isn't a call to relativize our sexual standards. Rather, **I see Jesus pointing us toward the issues that pertain to the most basic aspects of human dignity:** food, shelter, clothing, justice, and sickness:

***“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you invited me in,  
I needed clothes and you clothed me,  
I was sick and you looked after me,  
I was in prison and you came to visit me.”***

We can disagree all day about same sex marriage. Heck, the majority of evangelicals will most likely continue to disagree about this issue for another 20 years until the millennials take their place in church leadership.

However, there's no denying that millions of people around the world are suffering significantly, and Jesus wants us to focus our energies on serving them. If there was ever a group of people who should care about children dying of hunger, deeply wounded people suffering in prison, and thousands upon thousands of refugees fleeing unprecedented violence in the Middle East, it should be American evangelicals.

It's not like these massive global needs are a secret:

- Over 49 million Americans and 870 million people overall in the world are going hungry ([source](#)).
- 750 million people worldwide lack access to clean water, leading to diseases that disproportionately kill children under age 5 who are unable to fight bacteria ([source 1](#), [source 2](#))
- The U.S. prison system incarcerates over 2.3 million people, including a disproportionate number of African Americans ([source](#)).
- Over 100 million Christians around the world face severe persecution, including the believers living in refugee camps after fleeing Syria and Iraq ([source](#)).
- Over 500,000 Americans are homeless ([source](#)), but worldwide an estimated 1 billion people are living in housing that is inadequate ([source](#)).

If you care about preventing terrible things like human trafficking, rape, forced prostitution, and child soldiers, partnering with groups that empower communities to meet these basic needs will go a long way in keeping potential victims safe, healthy, and in control of their own lives.

Declarations about the collapse of civilization because of same sex marriage ring hollow when we consider that Americans toss [31.1% of our food](#) while allowing millions to go hungry, fail to ask whether our ridiculously high incarceration rates ruin thousands of lives that could have been set right through treatment programs, and Christians in the Middle East have to flee their villages after ISIS invades, steals their women and children, and threatens to kill anyone who refuses to convert.

If God is going to condemn us over anything in America, it's going to be our indifference and inaction when it comes to feeding people, giving out clean water, offering shelter, visiting the sick, and helping the prisoners, *not a Supreme Court ruling*.

It boggles the mind that evangelicals in America have long seen this ruling coming, but we have fought tooth and nail in what many suspected to be a losing cause. So many millions of dollars and hours were tossed into legal battles that were a long shot at best.

And yet, we have always had financial resources, competent charities, and passionate workers who are more than willing to travel to the ends of the earth to fulfill the very words of Jesus. If we collectively gave these most basic causes just a fraction of the time and energy that we had devoted to fighting same sex marriage, who knows how many thousands or millions of lives could have been saved.

We have been given a gift: The Supreme Court ruling means we can stop throwing our time and money into fighting same sex marriage and fulfill the words of Matthew 25.

We need not lament, lick our wounds, or bemoan the “terrible” world that our grandchildren will inherit. For millions of people around the world and even in our own neighborhoods, the worst has already happened and will continue to happen.

We need not wave the white flag of surrender on same sex marriage and pray for God’s mercy. If we’re going to take the words of Jesus seriously, know this:

**God’s judgment has been upon us long before a single state allowed same sex marriage.**

God’s judgment came upon us when we left people hungry, thirsty, sick, unclothed, and alone.

It’s time to stop blaming the court system. If we disagree on same sex marriage, that is our right. That doesn’t change the call of Jesus for his followers, especially American evangelicals at this time. We have our marching orders. We shouldn’t act surprised at who we’re called to serve.

We aren’t called to fight against someone. We aren’t called to litigation.

We are called to fight for everyone—especially those suffering in the most basic ways.

The longer we engage in legal fights against same sex marriage, the more apparent it becomes that we’d rather throw ourselves into any losing cause than obey the most basic commands of Jesus.

Let’s take our tenacity, energy, and resources and throw them into serving the people who are suffering the most in this world.

We might even hear the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant,” one day.