



# David's Web Wonder

## Thoughts on Christianity and the Church

June 23 2007: The Spectrum of Christian Commitment

A lot of us are aware of Revelation 3:15-16

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

The uniform reaction is, "Well, *I'm* not lukewarm, so I'm safe!"

The question is, how can you tell if you're lukewarm or not? I'm sure none of us want to be lukewarm, but wanting isn't being. We need some way to judge ourselves.

The "hot" and "cold" language in this verse suggests a **spectrum**. Let's try one one for size, and put up some candidate markers:



First off, on the cold (blue) end of the spectrum - Jesus is talking to a *church* in this passage; believers, not unbelievers. So how cold can a "believer" get? How about people who merely *call* themselves "Christian", but bear no other characteristics? Doesn't get lower than that (unfortunately, this describes the bulk of the American population, according to Barna).

On the hot (red) end of the spectrum, who might be there? How about someone totally sold out to God, who has given Him all their life, even to the point of martyrdom? Maybe missionaries, like [Will and Tim](#). That's pretty hot; no fear of *that* person being "lukewarm"!

How could we fill in some common reference points?

1. People who claim to be Christians... but that's as far as it

- goes
2. "Christians" whose only claim to the title is church attendance at Christmas and Easter
  3. Church members who attend weekly worship services, but are not otherwise seeking after God
  4. Believers who meet for communal prayer, not for tradition or family habit, but to personally plead with God
  5. Believers who seek God's direction in all aspects of their lives: job, family, finances, etc.
  6. Someone who is "sold out" for God, even to the point of martyrdom.

Of course, the key characteristic is not what someone *does*, but the relationship with Christ that is revealed by their actions. Someone who has nothing more to do with Jesus than show up at a special worship service twice a year has a pretty feeble relationship, no question. But someone who shows up every time the church house doors are open - are they in love with Jesus, or merely *religious*? Also, someone who *can't* attend more than once a week due to physical disability probably has more of a love for Jesus than someone who *won't* do more. These are questions that can only be answered by [you, yourself](#). Unfortunately, verse 17 suggests we humans may have problems with self-assessment:

Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked

But Jesus wouldn't say this sort of thing if it weren't *possible* for us to overcome our short-sighted self-confidence. I think the important thing is to recognize where you are, relative to the endpoints, and **NOT BE SATISFIED** wherever you are, and to not be afraid of hitting the top end of the spectrum! God created us to be "on fire"; He knows we will not fulfill our full potential in this short-but-important period in our lives until we arrive at that point!

**BEWARE THE COMPLACENCY OF THE MIDDLE!**

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### June 18 2007: Father's Day?

Yesterday was Father's Day. Of course, every "holiday" is a commercial event, and holidays that arrive on Sunday are accompanied by lots of advertisements in the Sunday paper.

- Hand tools
- Golf accessories
- Automobile goods or motorsports paraphernalia
- Grills and barbeque supplies
- Other items that our culture associates with maleness

Very little to do with "fatherhood". It's like our world doesn't understand what fathers are good for. But the latest from [Al Mohler](#) makes it clear that our American culture doesn't understand "fatherhood" at all, or see any value in it.

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But then, the same thing is true for Mother's Day. Clothes, cosmetics, bath accessories, jewelry - nothing about what real "motherhood" is supposed to be.

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### May 25 2007: How "Church People" are like Israelites

Recently, in my personal devotional time, I had been reading through the New Testament. I'm done with that now (Revelation is a poor devotional book), and I have started going through the Prophets, starting with Isaiah.

#### Isaiah Chapter 1:

"I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats"  
(v. 11)

"Bring your worthless offerings no longer...  
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly."  
(v. 13)

"I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts"  
(v. 14)

I know there's a problem with applying what God says about Israel to the United States. The United States is not the People of the Covenant. But God reveals a lot about what He values here. It's very easy for people to do religious stuff, like the Israelites and their temple worship, their sacrifices, and their traditions. As American Christians, we are no different; we can easily get wrapped up in our church activities, or tithes, and our traditional moral expectations. I don't know if God actually enjoys all that religious ceremony and stuff, even when the hearts doing it are right with Him, but it is clear that He hates religious posturing when the hearts are not right.

So many of us church-going "Christians" are Sunday-Morning-Only types. I know too many people from Tucson area churches that are good little Christians on Sunday Morning, who put on their nice clothes and participate in Sunday School discussions and sing the songs and take sermon notes, but the rest of the week is lived for themselves and their own interests.

I've also sworn off "Love Jesus" church songs. I will *worship* Jesus on Sunday Morning, singing *worship* songs, listening to *worship* songs (and behaviour-challenging songs; e.g., Casting Crowns) on the radio and such during the week, but I'm tired of our Sunday Morning tradition of singing songs about how much we love Jesus, when Jesus Himself said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15), and we do precious little to keep His commandments.

We have become like the Israelites in Isaiah's day, when we do

religious stuff instead of seeking to actually please God.

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Lest anyone think I'm claiming to have arrived, *I HAVE NOT*. However, the first step in solving a problem is admitting you have one, which I freely do in this area.

Plus, I have an object in mind. See Isaiah 1:15 -

So when you sprad out your hands in prayer,  
I will hide My eyes from you,  
Yes, even though you multiply prayers,  
I will not listen.

I guess I don't want answered prayers *MORE* than I want God Himself. But I *DO* want answered prayers. So I will struggle to adjust my life into accommodation with Him, so that my prayers can be acceptable.

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#### April 30 2007: How We Set Love Priorities

At our Sunday Night youth/student meeting recently, a young person asked a question:

"Does my mother love me?"

This young person's mother is divorced and living with her boyfriend, a situation that is disagreeable for the young person. The mother "threw her out of the apartment", and the young person came to Tucson to live with the birth father.

The answer I gave was very black-and-white, and probably unsatisfying: "Given that your mom has chosen her boyfriend over her child, **no**, she probably doesn't love you."

I suspect that I tend to "tell it like it is", and avoid squishy-feely responses to hard questions. I believe that people, particularly young people, want serious answers to serious questions, rather than nuanced, don't-offend, politically-correct responses. However, after further thought, I think that I was wrong in delivering a black-and-white answer here.

1. Love is misconceived in our culture. Our culture equates *Love* with a warm, gooshy feeling, or affection, or even sexual attraction. In reality (and Jesus clearly taught and demonstrated this Himself), *Love* is **action**. I don't care what kind of feelings you have, or what sort of endearing pleasant words come out of your mouth, if your actions do not advance my personal interests in any way, you don't love me.

That's pretty black-and-white. It is also *true*. However, there's more to the story than this...

2. Love admits of *degrees*, or *priorities*. I like saurkraut. I also like chocolate. But guess what? Given a choice

between saurkraut and chocolate, chocolate will win every time. In the same way, I love my wife and I love my job. Most of the time, these loves are compatible, but if they come into conflict, my love for Jerri supercedes my love for my job; I will choose to advance the interests of my wife even if doing so prevents me from advancing the interests of my job (so to speak).

With this analysis in mind, a better answer to this young person's anguished question would be: "She doesn't love you *AS MUCH AS* something else."

Note that in this particular case, that "something else" is probably not the boyfriend. It is probably the mother herself; the boyfriend satisfies some perceived need for affection or appreciation or security which the mother has. Everything I've heard about this man indicates that he has no good qualities in himself, and he is using this lady for his own interests; that is, he loves *himself*, not the woman. Just like the woman loves *herself*, and not the man. Of course, this mutual self-interest cannot support a lasting, healthy, commitment relationship, and this is why "marriages" in our culture fail, because they are not "love the other person, sacrifice myself" affairs, but rather "love myself and use the other person for what I need" affairs.

But my improved answer to this young person, and others like them (and we have a few in our larger "community" circle) is, "Yes, she probably loves you, but she loves something else *MORE* than you. At least right now."