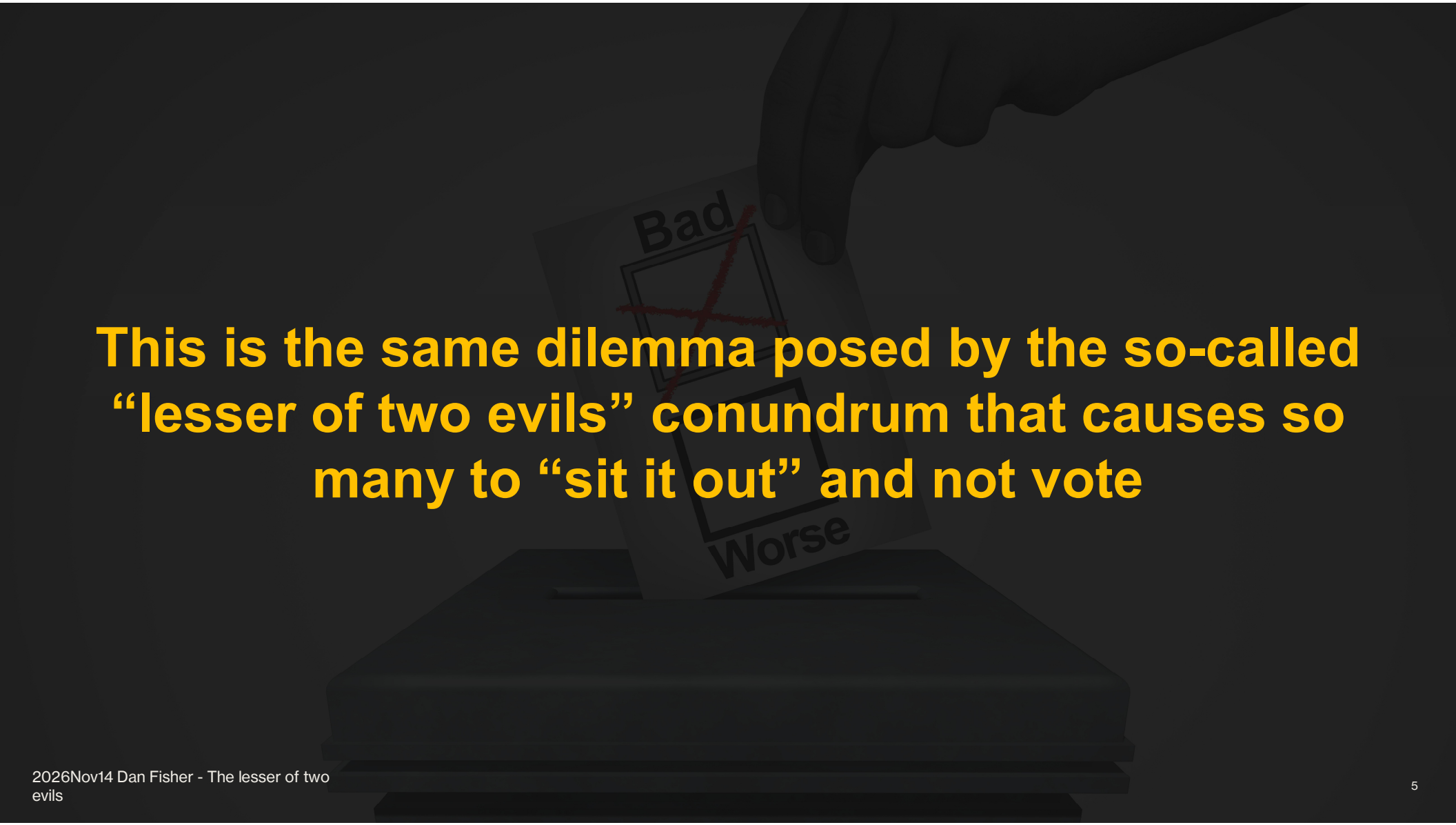

The lesser of
"two evils"?
Bad
Worse

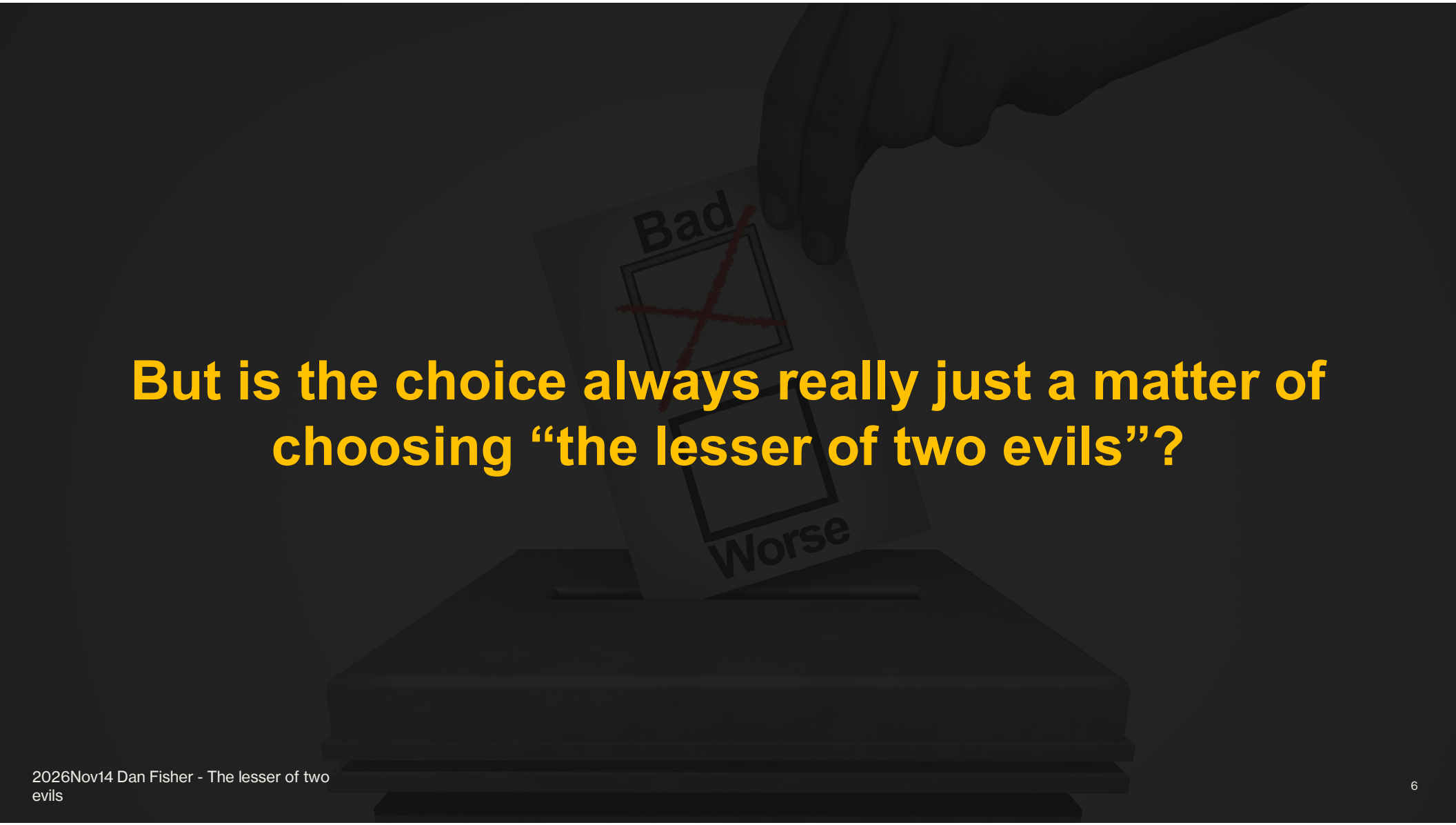


- A 3rd year medical student survives but another man is badly injured
- Without an operation, the man will die
- The medical could operate and risk killing the man by nicking an artery or run the risk of his getting an infection and dying
- Would it glorify God more to risk the operation or to just let him die?

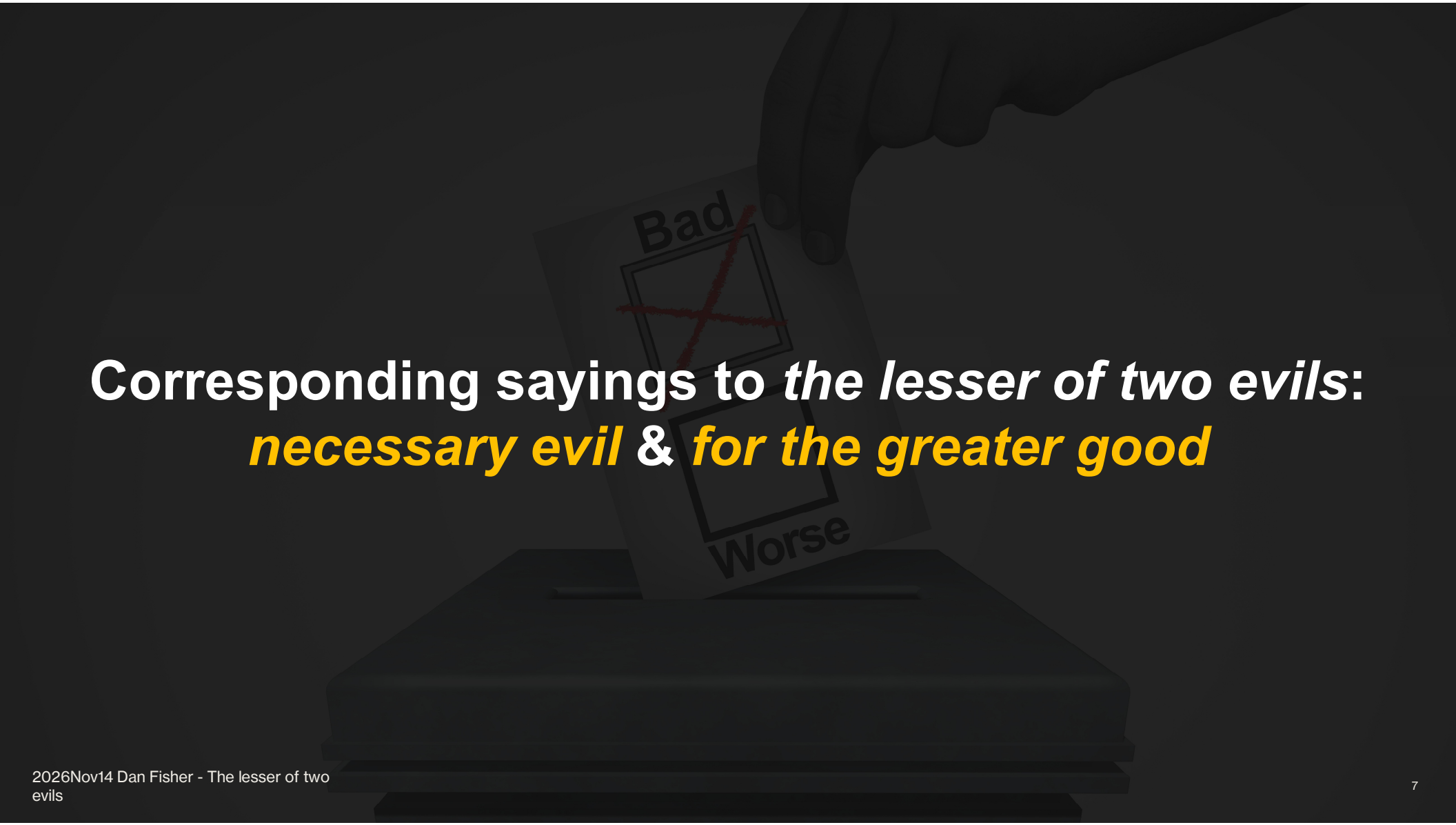




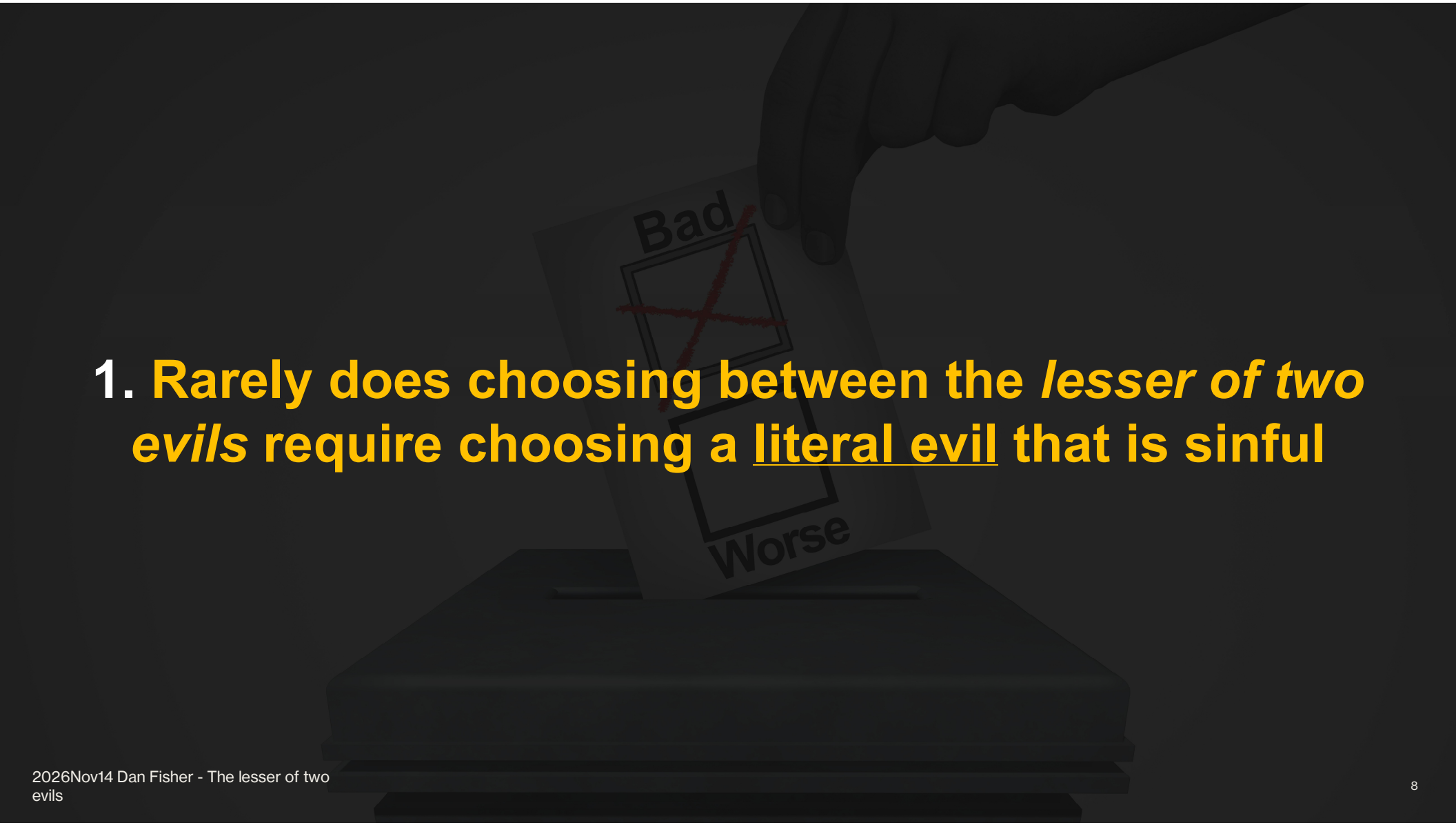
This is the same dilemma posed by the so-called "lesser of two evils" conundrum that causes so many to "sit it out" and not vote



But is the choice always really just a matter of choosing “the lesser of two evils”?



Corresponding sayings to *the lesser of two evils*: *necessary evil* & *for the greater good*

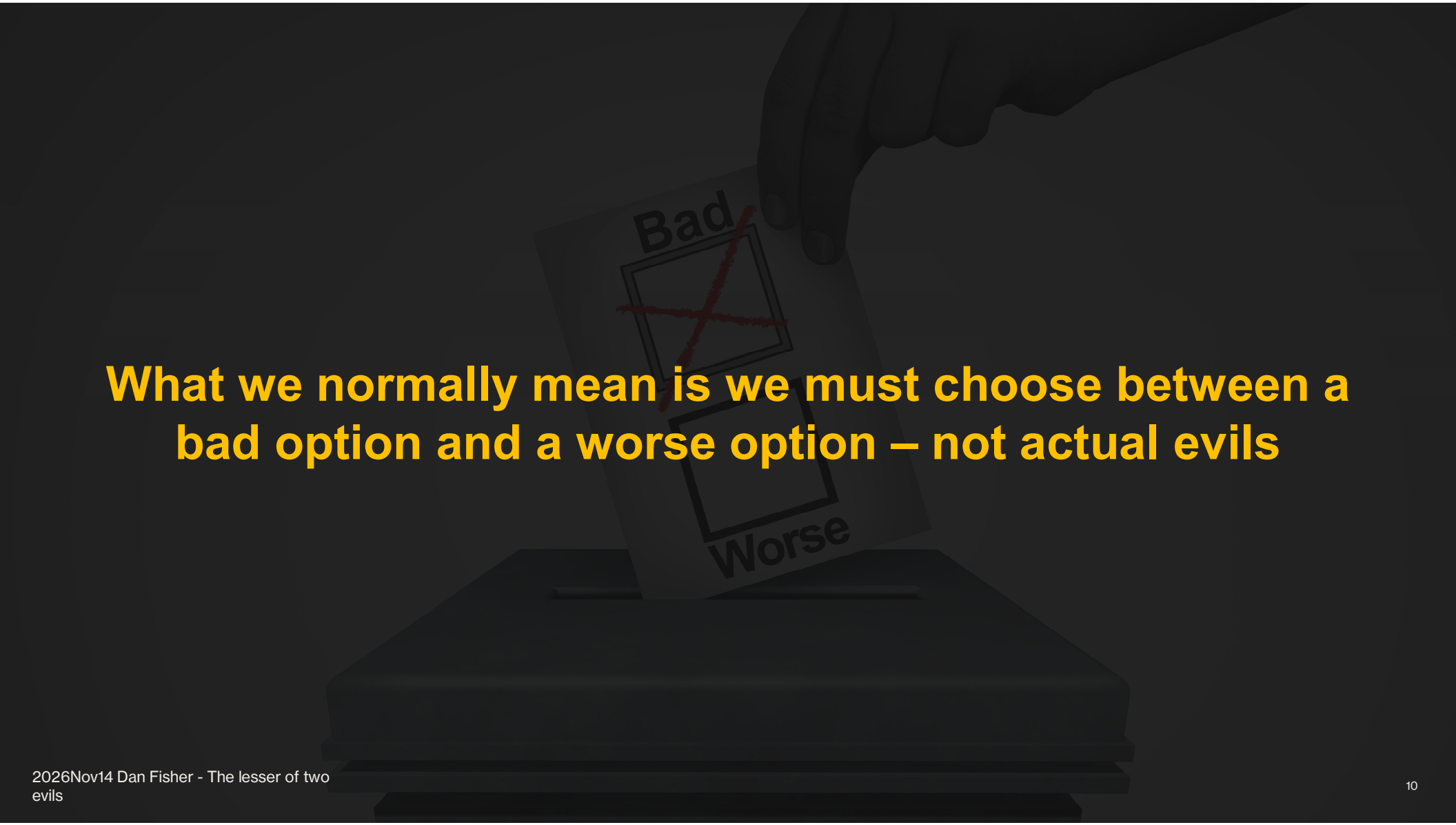


1. Rarely does choosing between the *lesser of two evils* require choosing a literal evil that is sinful

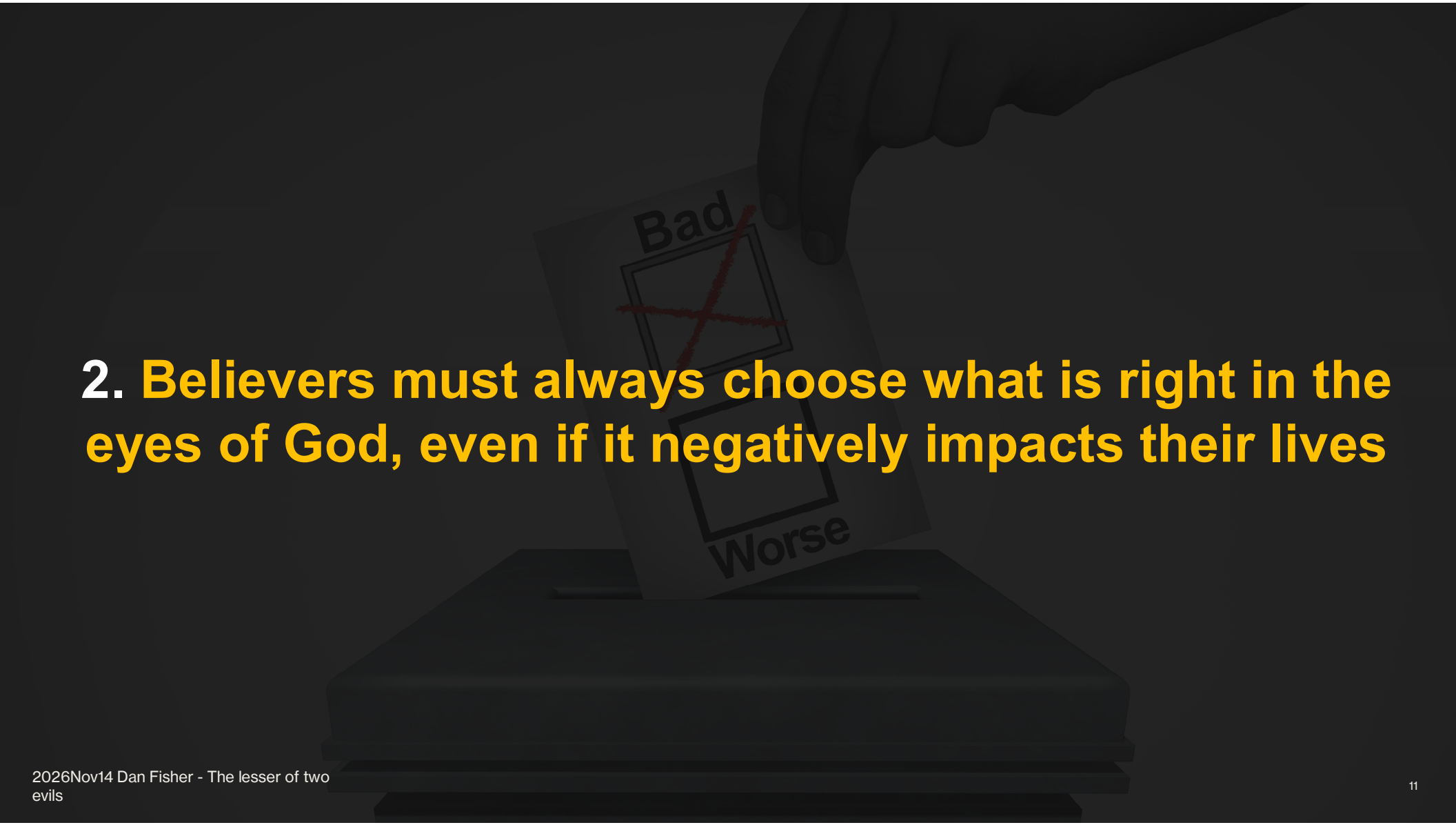
If it does, it is never acceptable for a Christian to choose evil

"Abstain from every form of evil" ("reject every kind of evil" ESV) 1 Thess 5:22

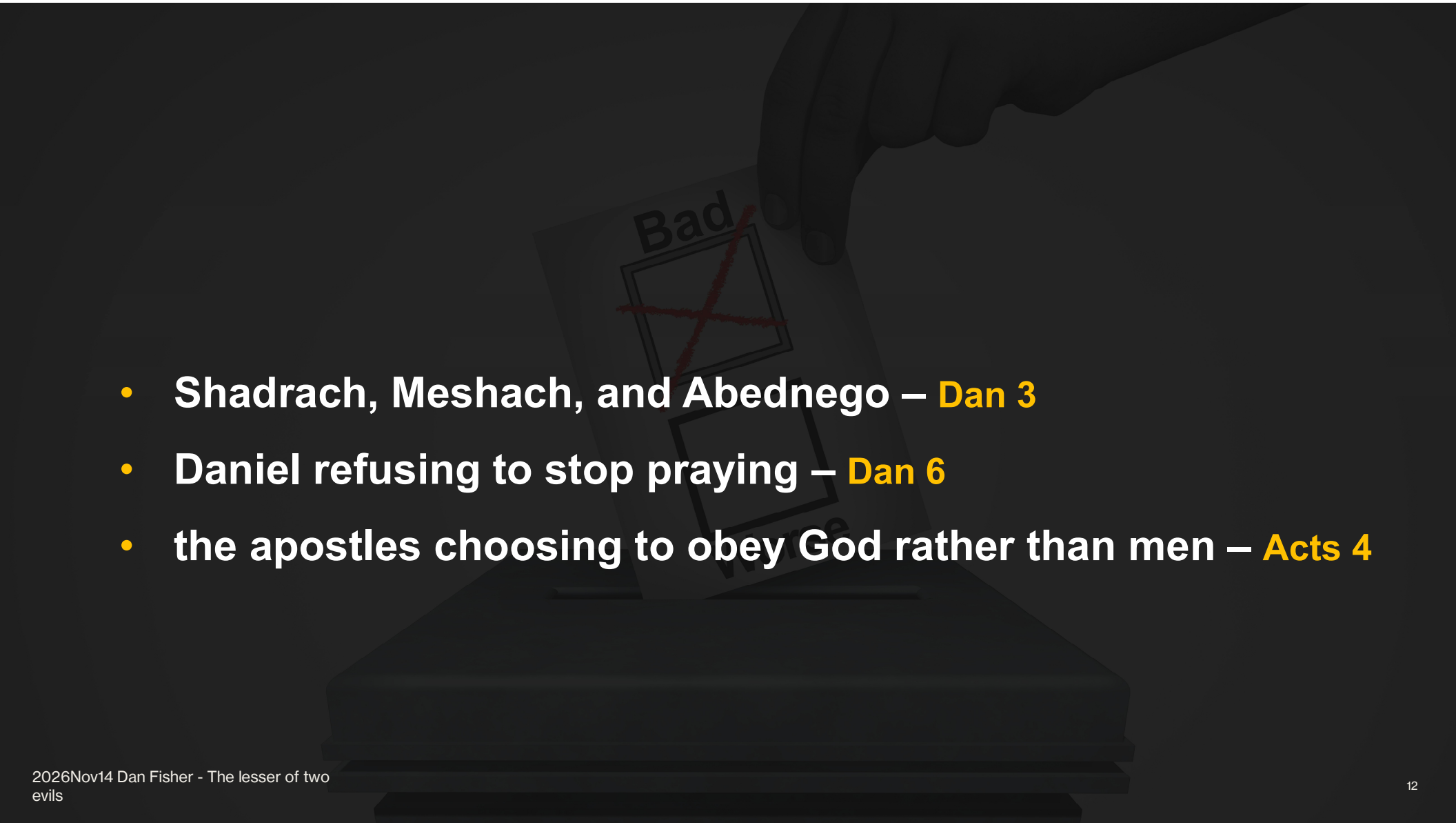
"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." 1 Cor 10:13



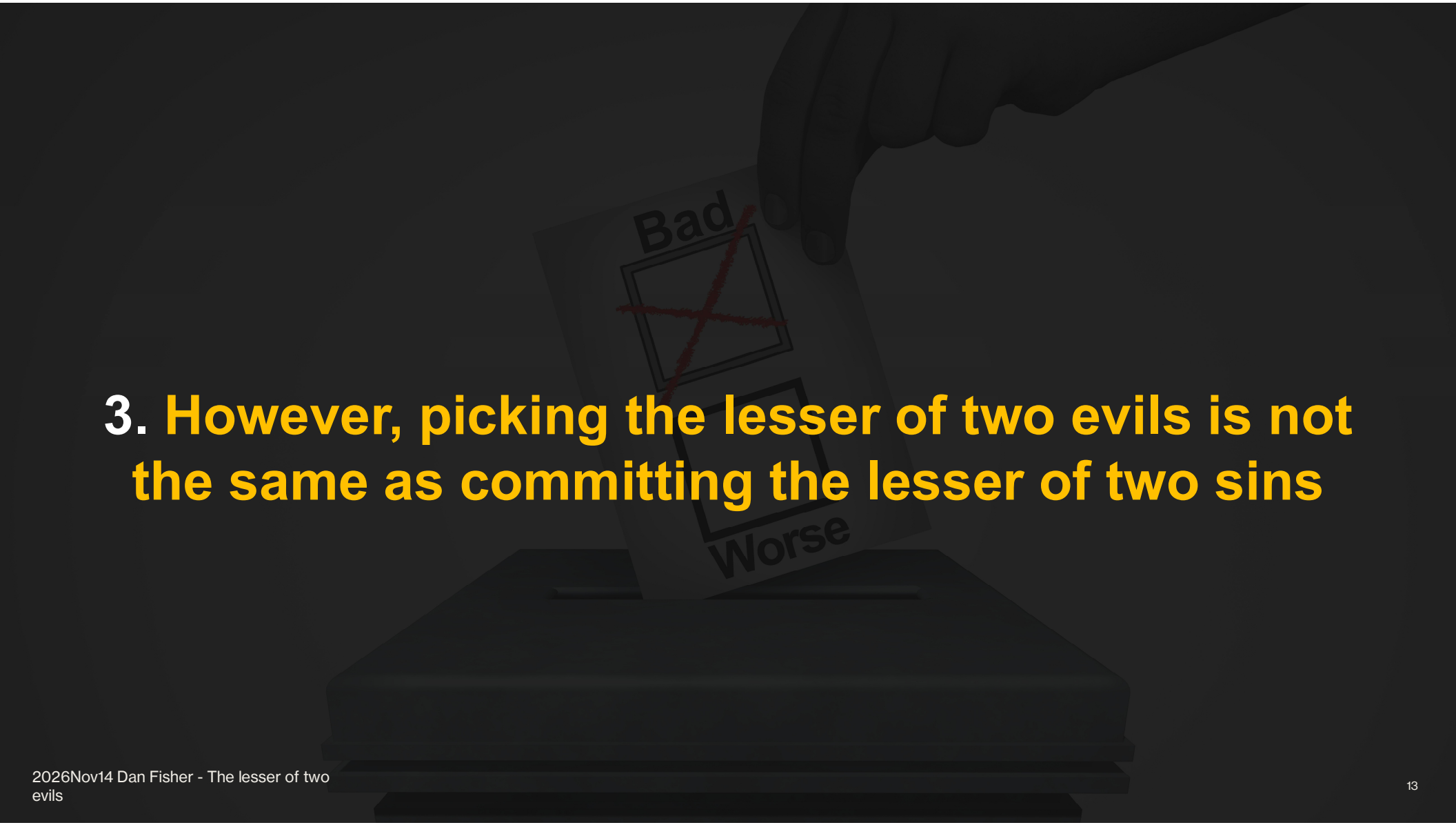
What we normally mean is we must choose between a bad option and a worse option – not actual evils



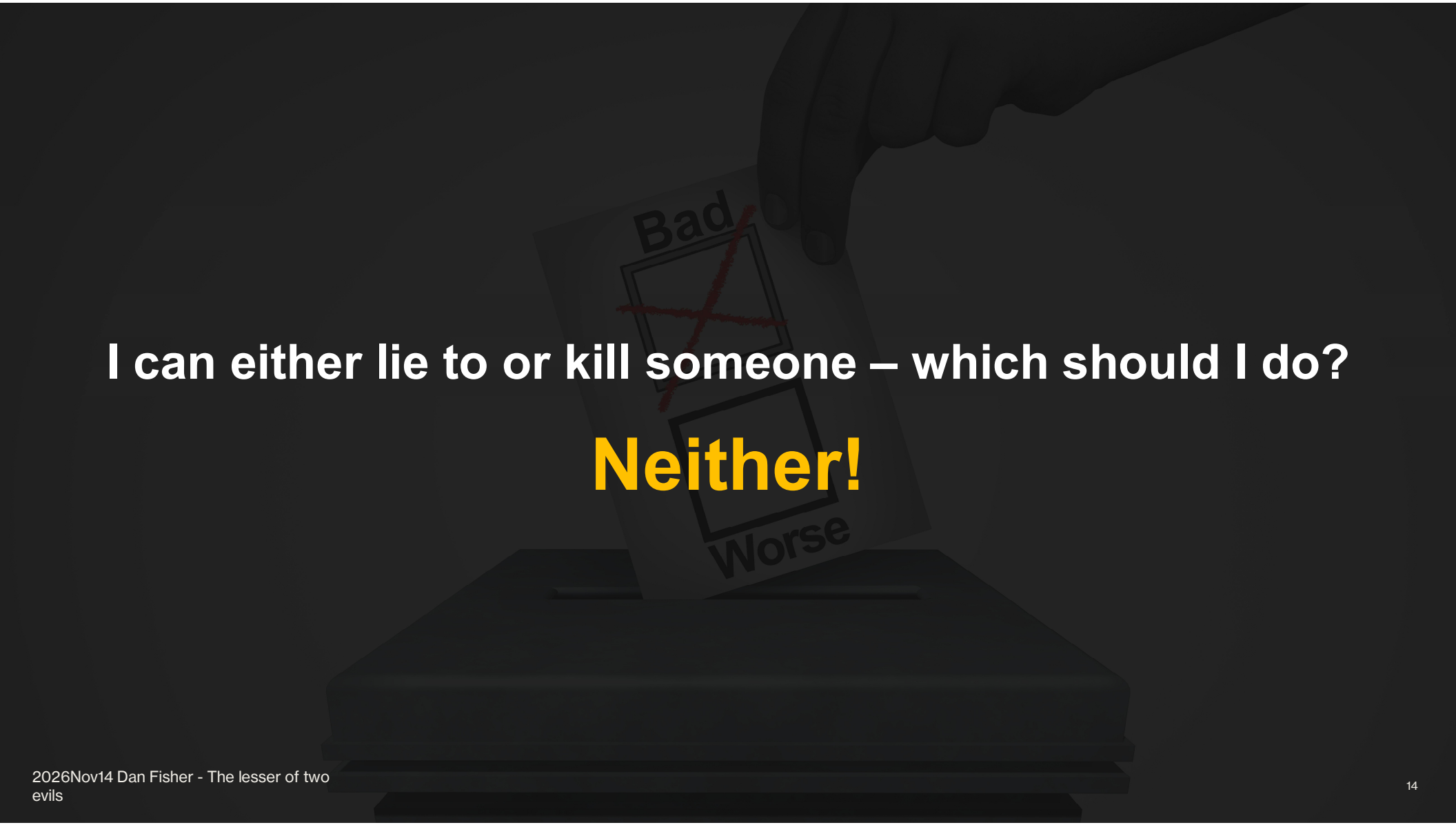
2. Believers must always choose what is right in the eyes of God, even if it negatively impacts their lives



- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – Dan 3
- Daniel refusing to stop praying – Dan 6
- the apostles choosing to obey God rather than men – Acts 4



3. However, picking the lesser of two evils is not the same as committing the lesser of two sins



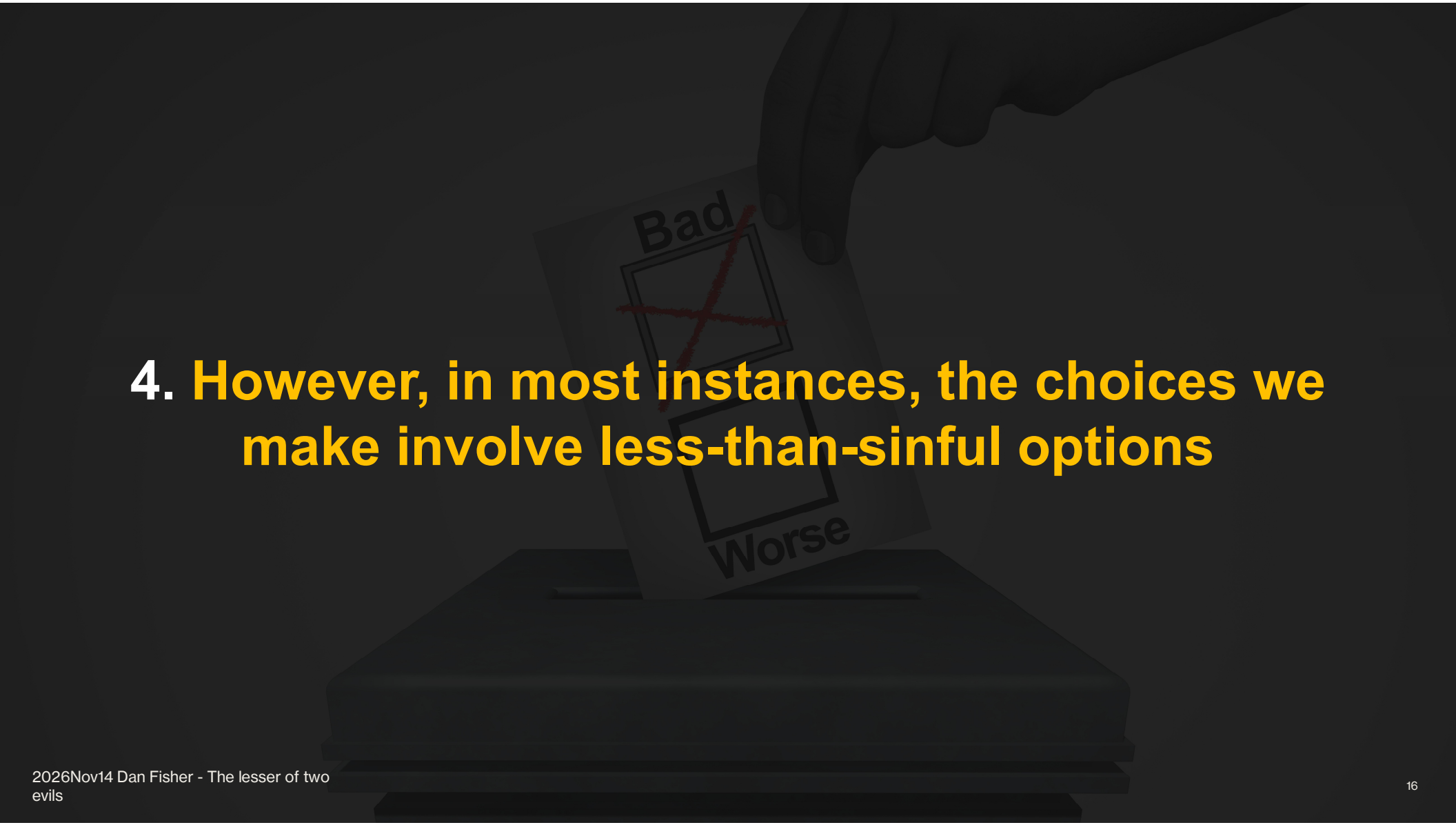
I can either lie to or kill someone – which should I do?

Neither!

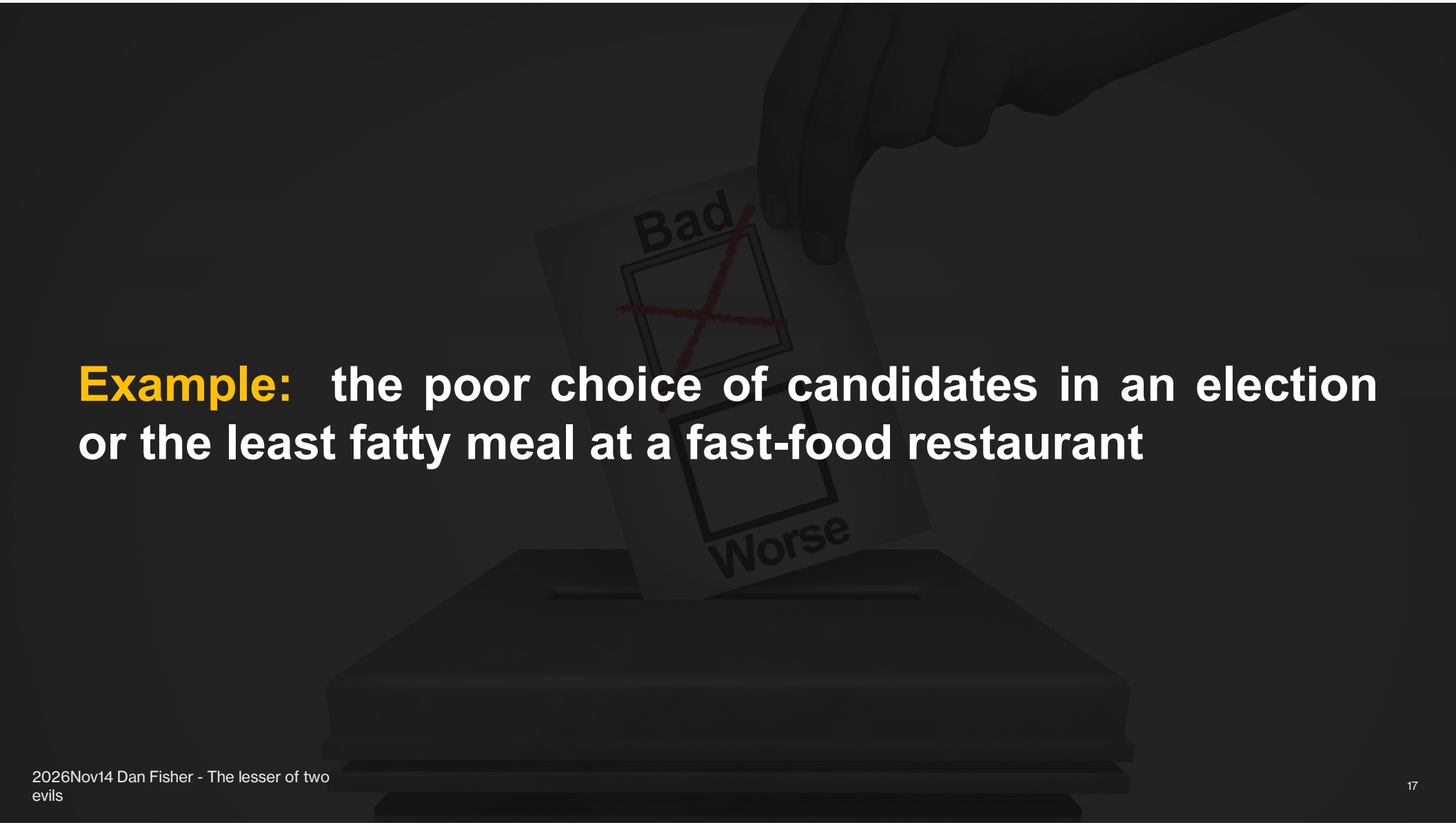


I can either defraud my creditors or rob a bank – which should I do?

Neither!



4. However, in most instances, the choices we make involve less-than-sinful options



Example: the poor choice of candidates in an election or the least fatty meal at a fast-food restaurant



The English word “evil” has wide-ranging applications

It has two main applications in Scripture:

- **moral wickedness or sin** – transgressions that are contrary to God’s holy character, good purposes, and law

“Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord” Jud 3:12

“To fear the Lord is to hate evil” Prov 8:13

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” Mt 12:35

“Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. ” 3 Jn 1:11



- **harmful or destructive natural events**

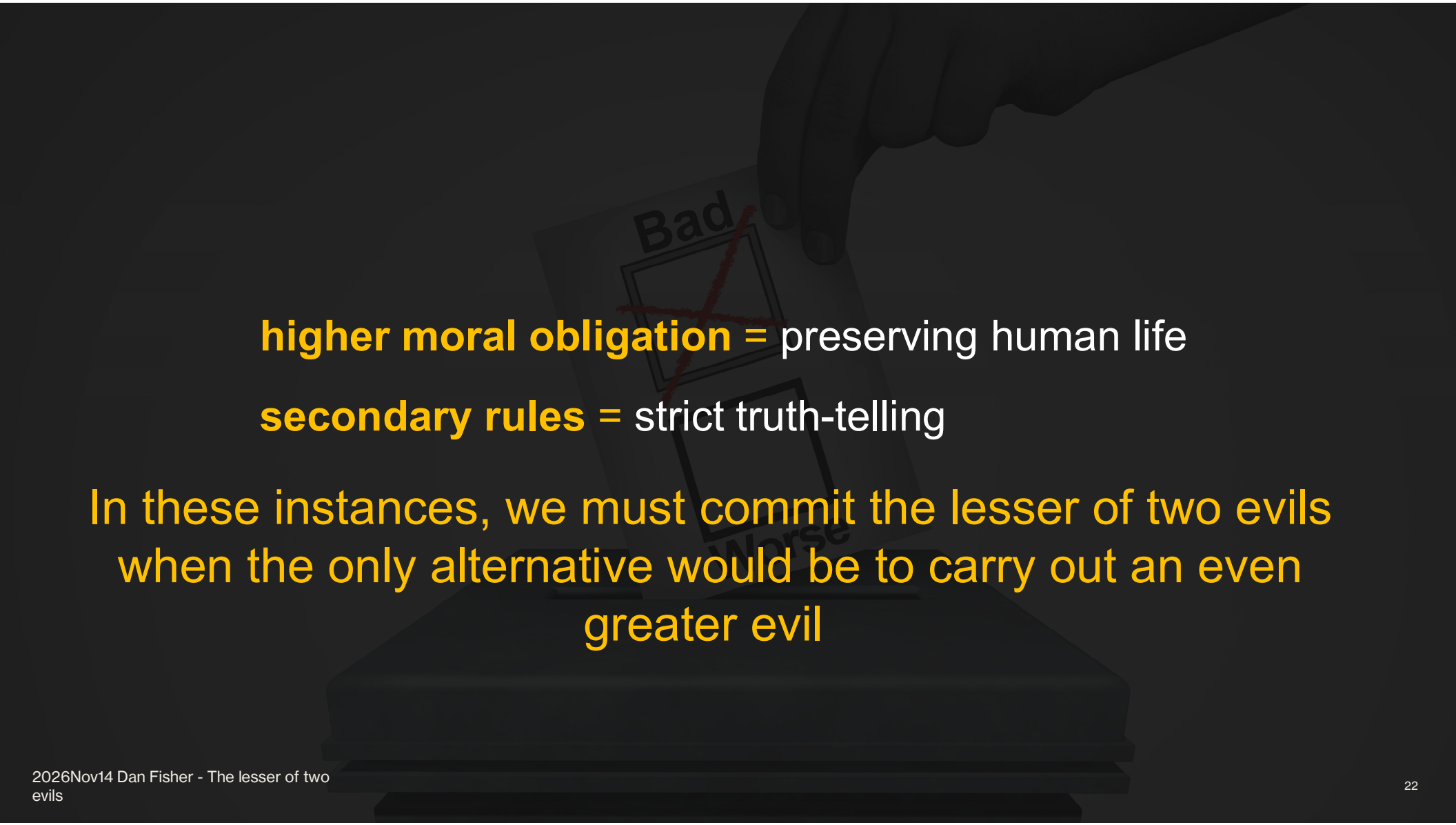
Theologians call this physical or natural evil

Circumstances that trigger harm, injury, or suffering are called evil

An ugly or sinister look is called an “evil eye”



5. In a fallen world, we occasionally face tragic dilemmas where higher moral obligations clash with secondary rules



higher moral obligation = preserving human life

secondary rules = strict truth-telling

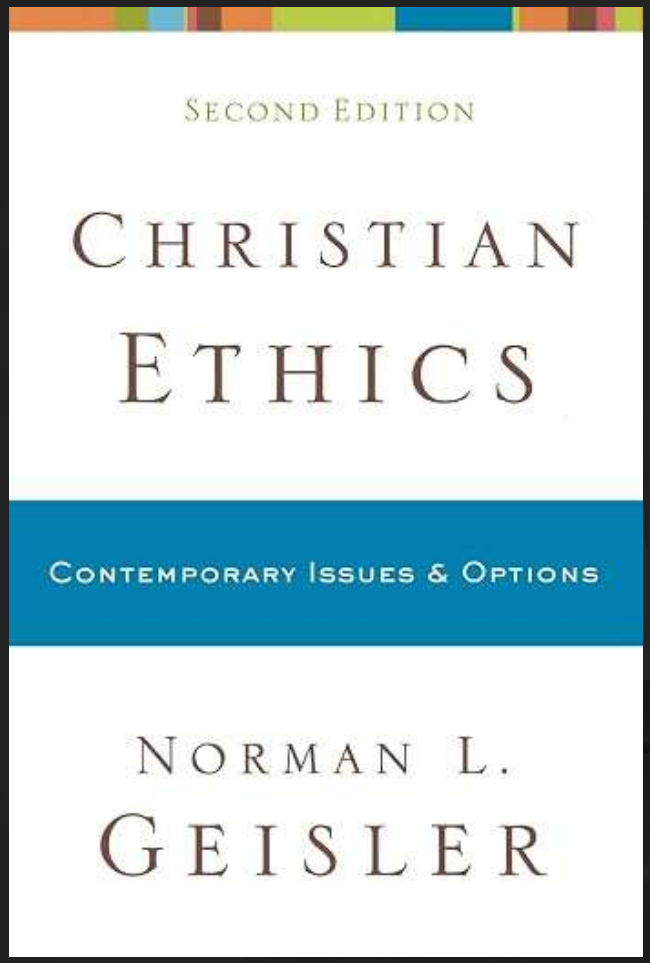
In these instances, we must commit the lesser of two evils when the only alternative would be to carry out an even greater evil



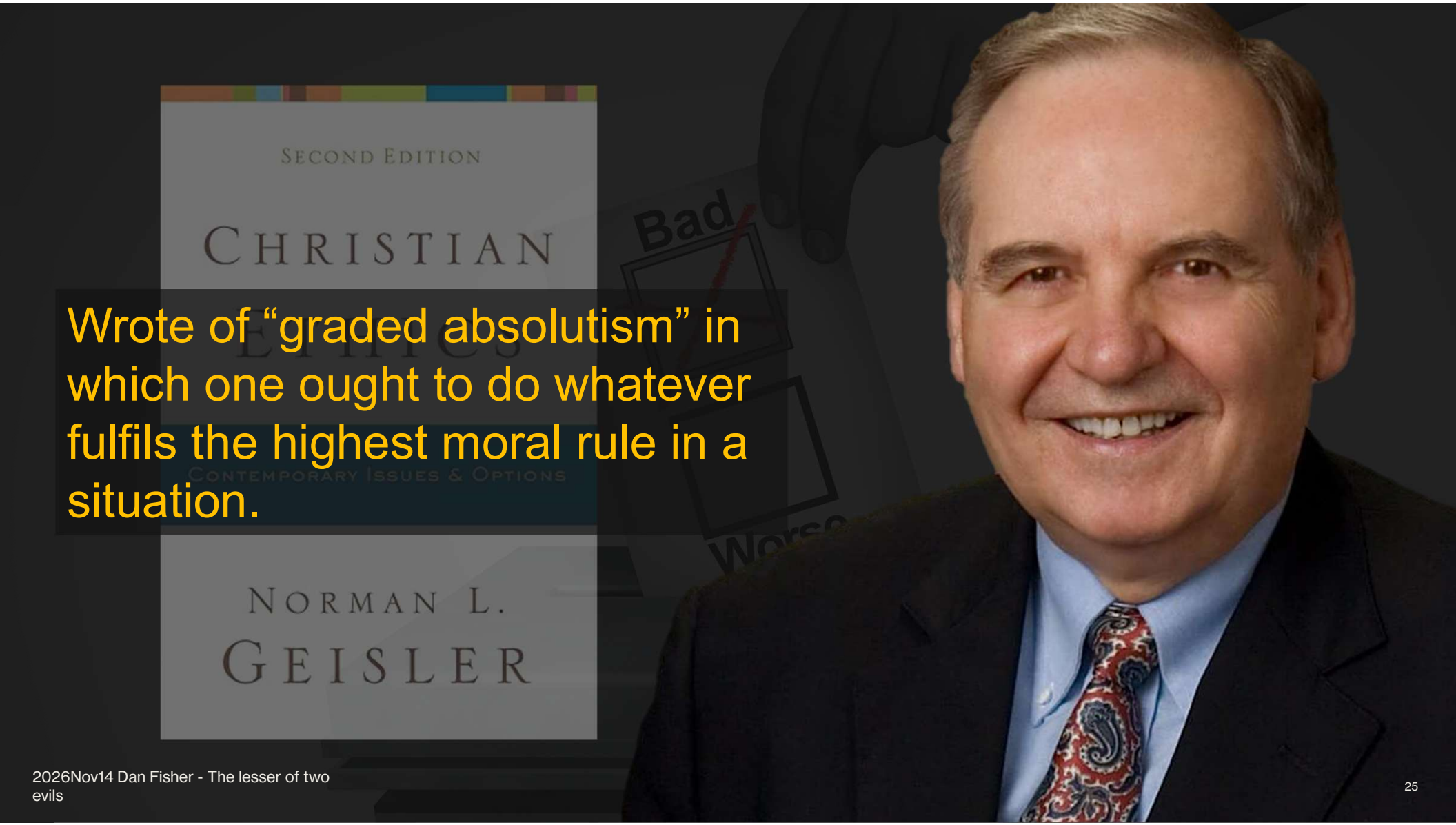
J.I. Packer held that there are cases of conflicting duties in which:

"love's task … is to find how to do the most good and the least evil … love for persons must arbitrate between the conflicting claims of moral principles. [We shall] insist that evil remains evil, even when, being the lesser evil, it appears the right thing to do; we shall do it with heavy heart and seek God's cleansing of our conscience for having done it."

[J.I. Packer, '*Situations and Principles*', *Law, Morality and the Bible*, B.N. Kaye and G.J. Wenham eds. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 151-67.]


SECOND EDITION
CHRISTIAN
ETHICS
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES & OPTIONS
NORMAN L.
GEISLER


Bad



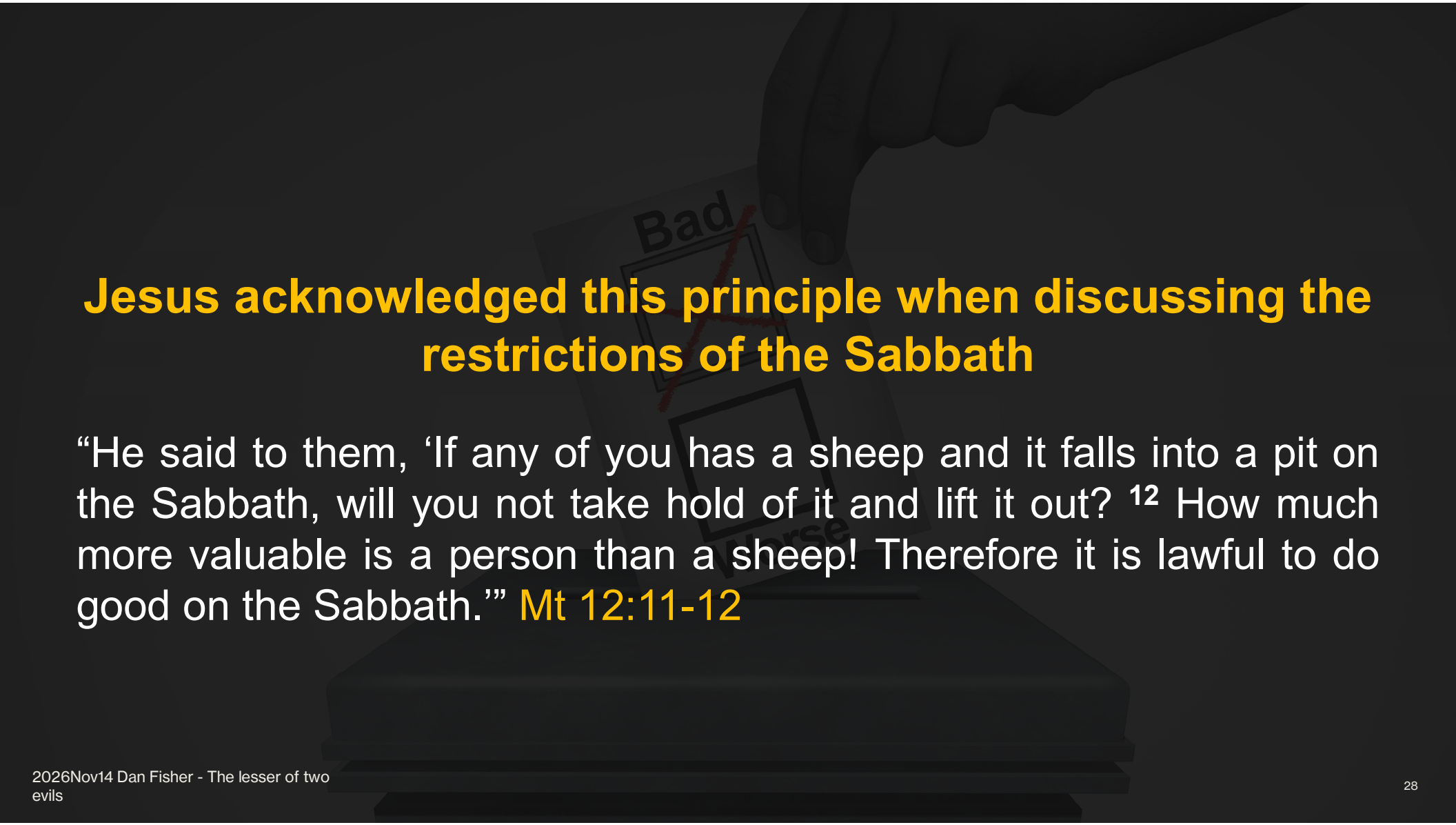
Wrote of “graded absolutism” in which one ought to do whatever fulfils the highest moral rule in a situation.

Are there biblical examples of this principle in action?

- Jewish midwives deceiving Pharaoh about the Hebrew baby boys – Ex 1:15-20
- Rahab lying to the King of Jericho – Josh 2:3-6
- Michal lying to her father, King Saul, to protect her husband David – 1 Sam 19:14
- David misleading Ahimelek the priest – 1 Sam 21:2
- Samuel saying he was visiting Jesse to offer a sacrifice when he was actually there to anoint David as king – 1 Sam 16:1-5

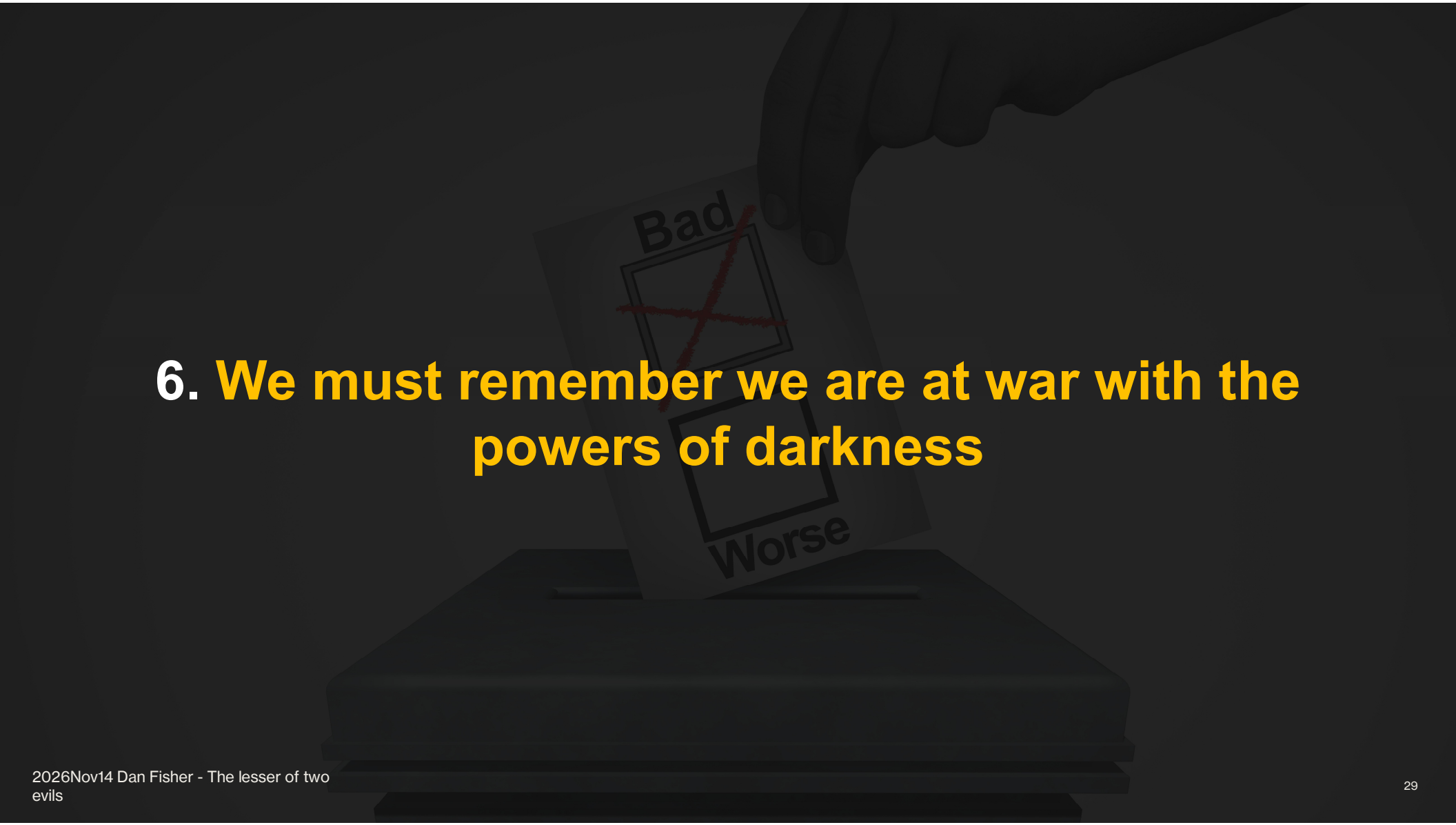
Are there biblical examples of this principle in action?

- Elisha enticing Hazel to lie to Ben-Hadad king of Aram – 2 Kings 8:10-15
- Jonathan betraying his father, King Saul, in favor of his friend David – 1 Sam 20
- The apostles disobeying human authorities to obey God – Acts 4:19; 5:29



Jesus acknowledged this principle when discussing the restrictions of the Sabbath

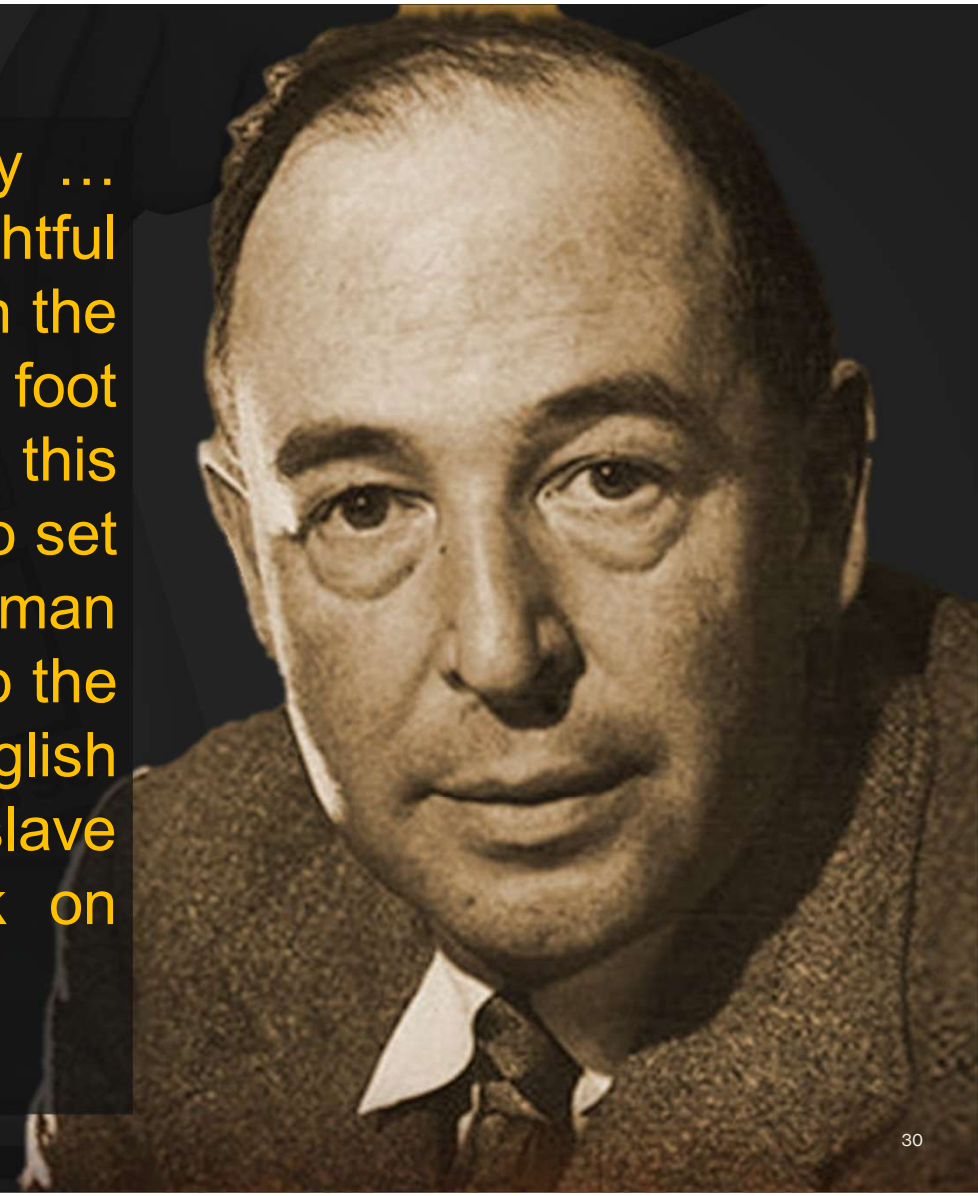
“He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? **12** How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’” Mt 12:11-12



6. We must remember we are at war with the powers of darkness

"We are in enemy-occupied territory … Christianity is the story of how the rightful King … is calling us all to take part in the great campaign of sabotage. … the foot soldiers who have preceded us in this war are the apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire … the great men who built up the Middle Ages, and the English Evangelicals who abolished the slave trade. … All these left their mark on Earth." C.S. Lewis

Mere Christianity, Book III, Chapter 10 ("Hope")



“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
Eph 6:12

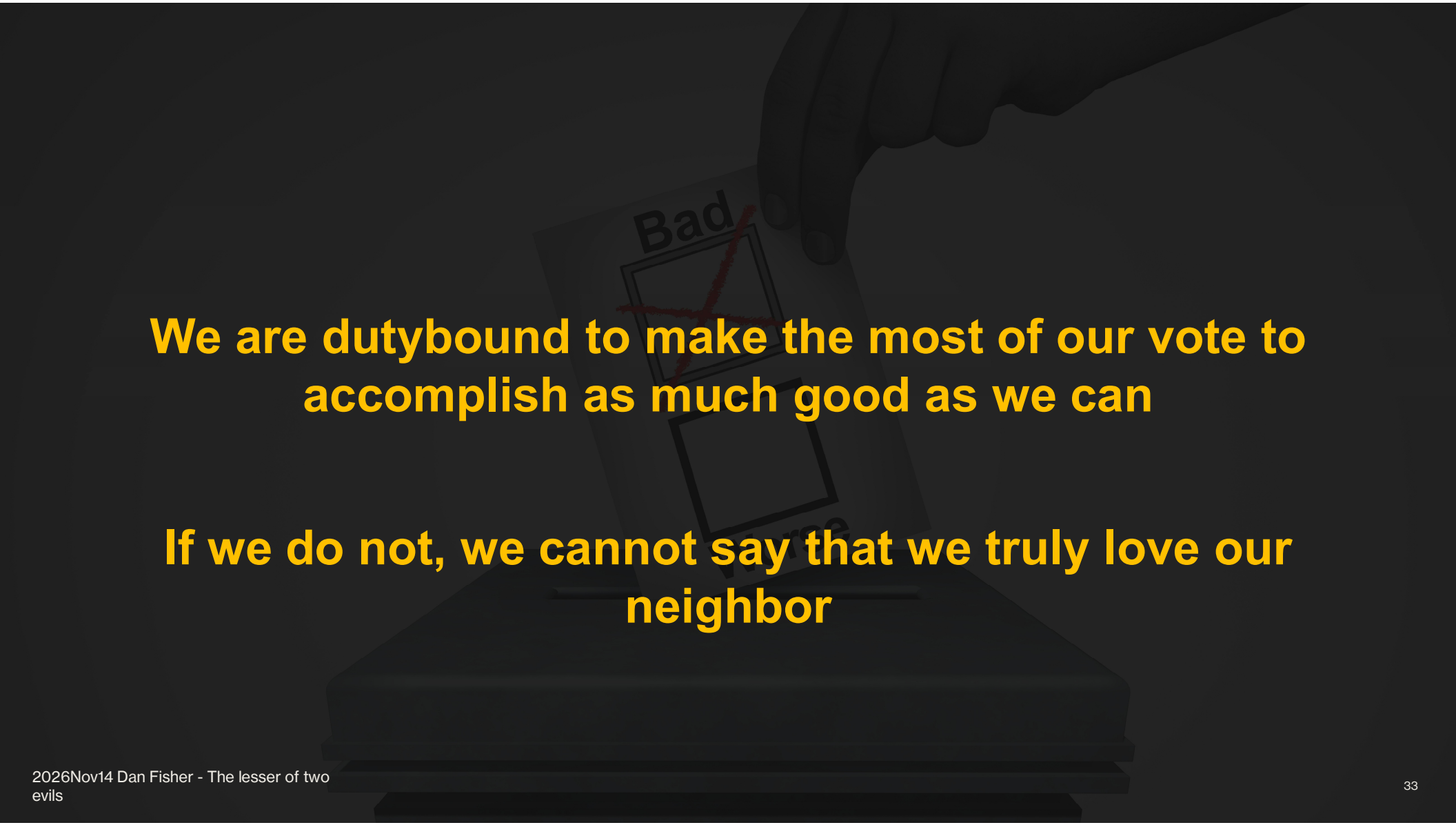
“For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,” 2 Cor 10:4

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”
2 Tim 2:3-4



We cannot do this by disengaging & “sitting it out” just because we don’t have great candidates to choose from

We certainly cannot do this by voting for Leftists to “teach the Republicans a lesson” **(Accelerationists)**

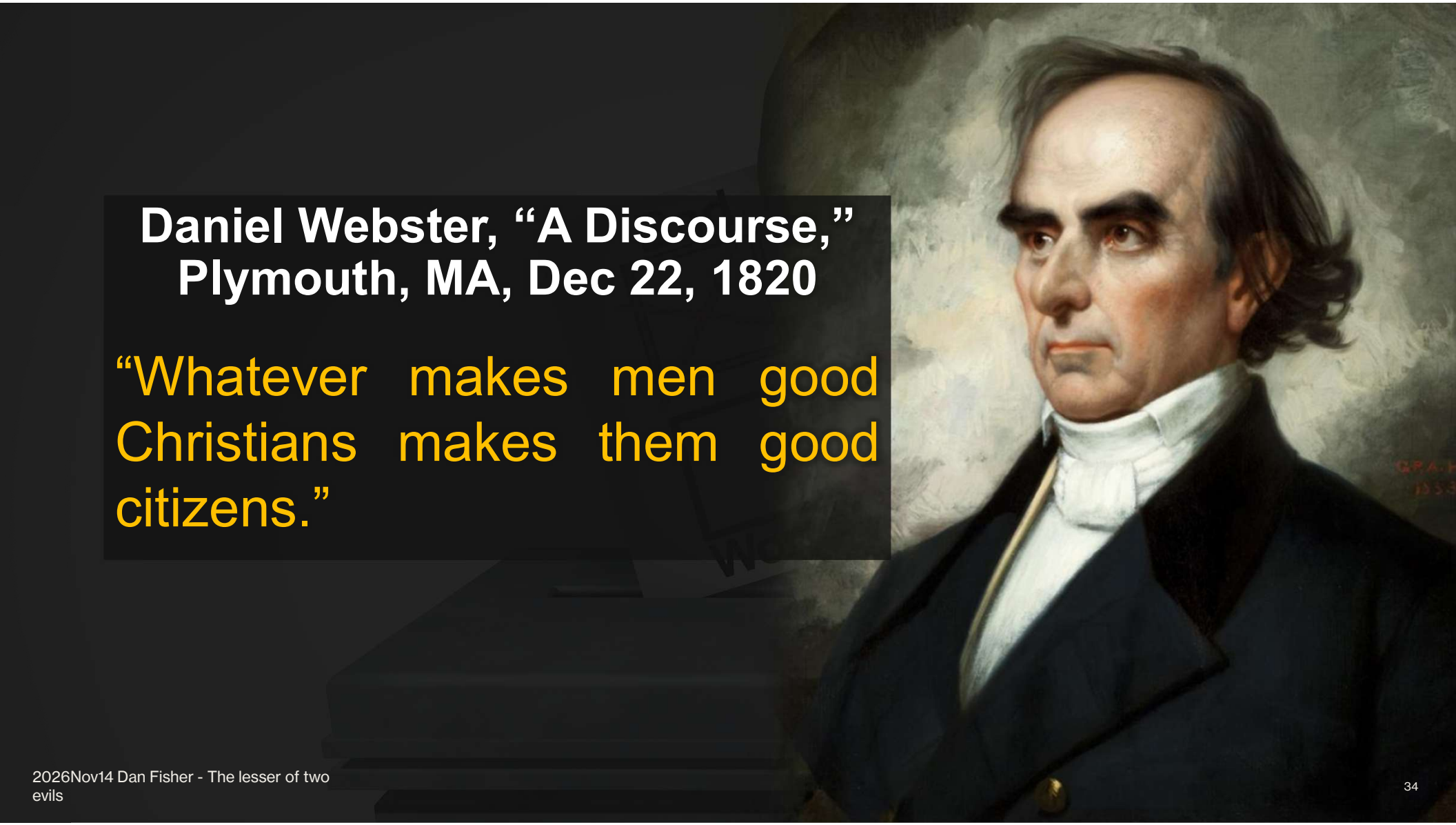


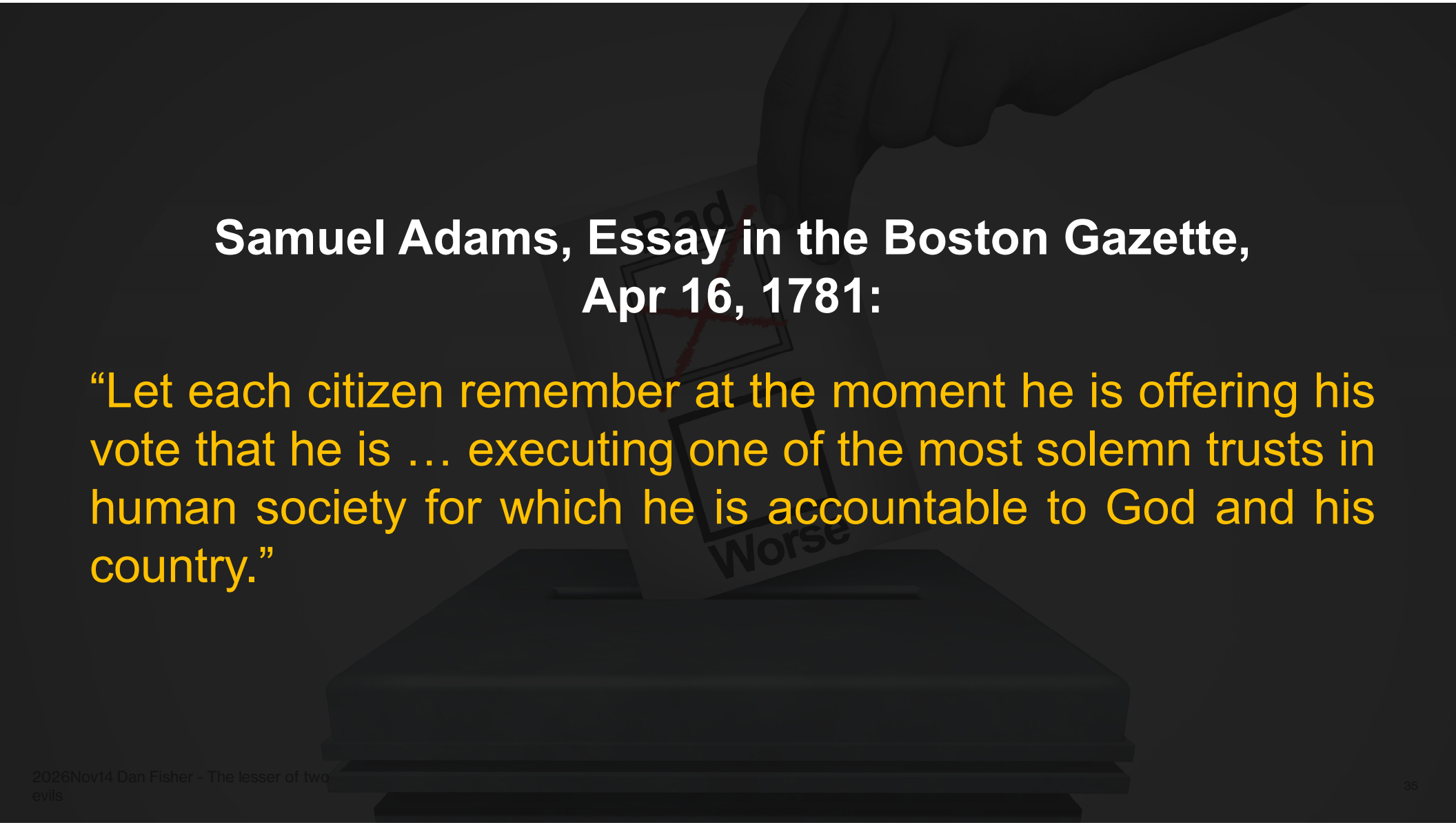
We are dutybound to make the most of our vote to accomplish as much good as we can

If we do not, we cannot say that we truly love our neighbor

Daniel Webster, "A Discourse," Plymouth, MA, Dec 22, 1820

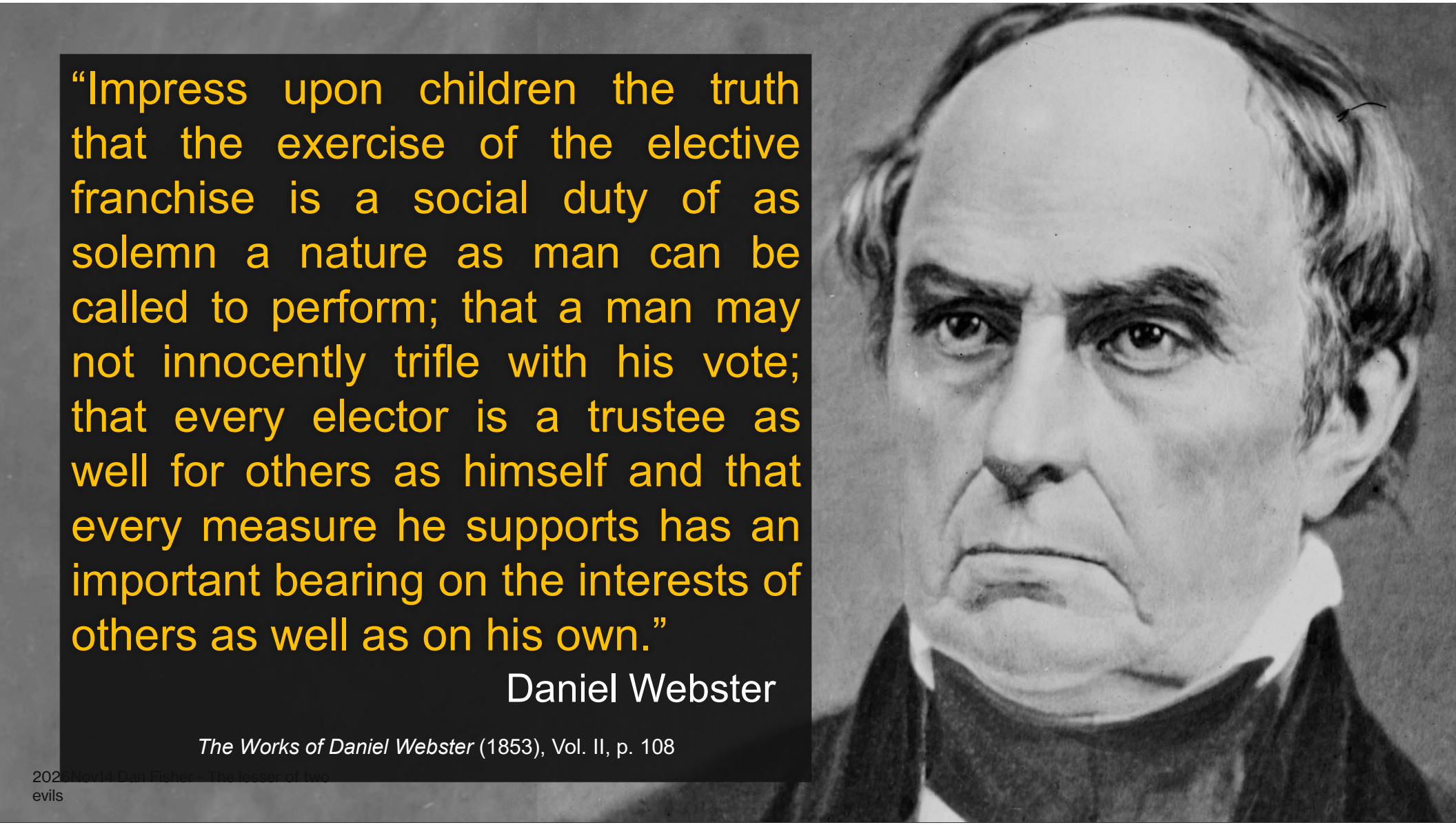
"Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens."





Samuel Adams, Essay in the Boston Gazette, Apr 16, 1781:

"Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is … executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country."


“Impress upon children the truth that the exercise of the elective franchise is a social duty of as solemn a nature as man can be called to perform; that a man may not innocently trifle with his vote; that every elector is a trustee as well for others as himself and that every measure he supports has an important bearing on the interests of others as well as on his own.”
Daniel Webster
The Works of Daniel Webster (1853), Vol. II, p. 108

The job of the voter is to pick between the lesser of flawed candidates (none are sinless)

There was a time when both candidates would most likely evenly protect the good and punish the evil – not so today

We are not choosing a pastor, we are choosing a magistrate who will promote good and punish evil – at least the greater evils (such as violence or injustice)

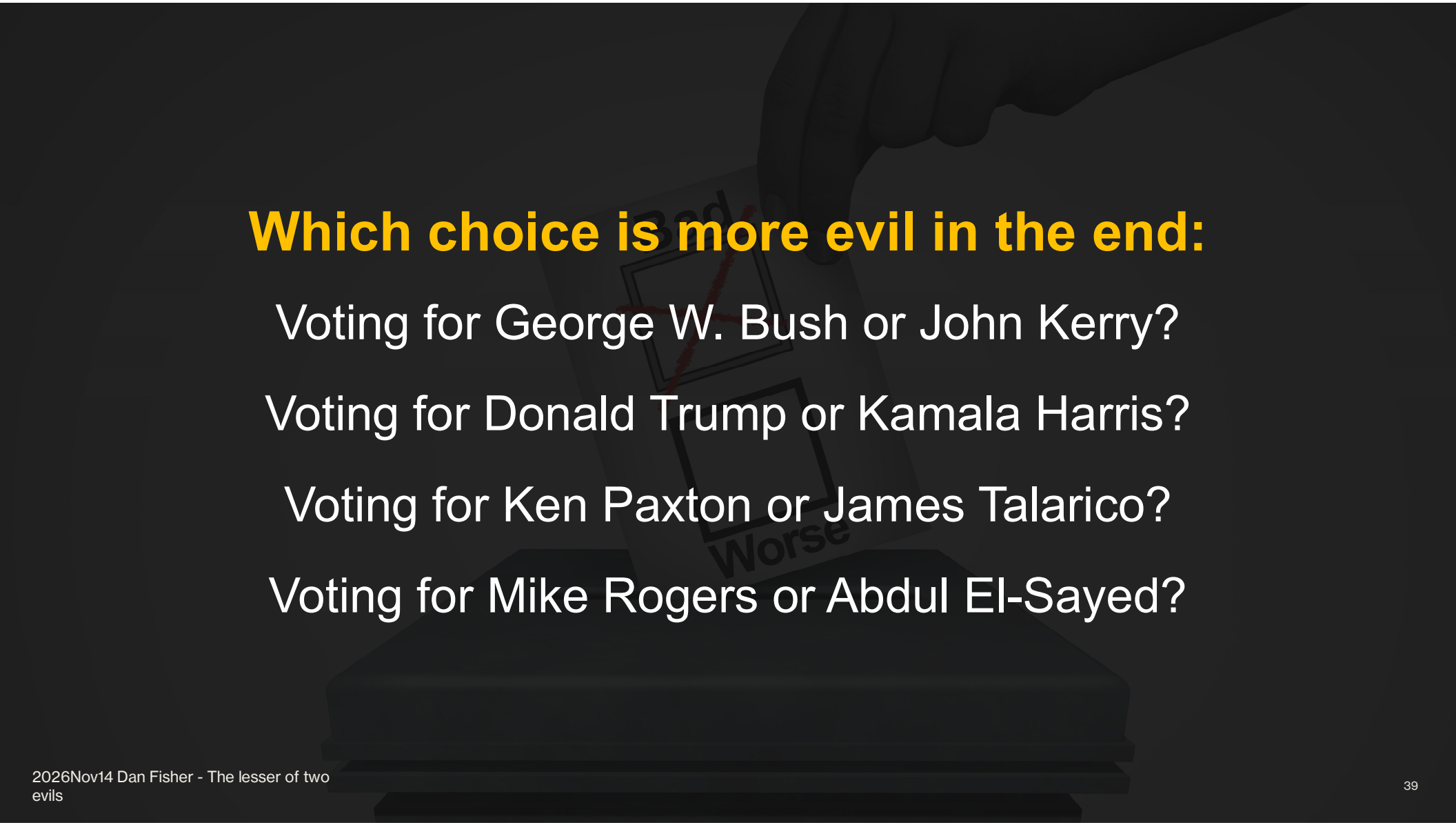
When we vote, we're not just voting for a candidate, we're voting for a political party and their platform

Voting for a candidate is a stewardship decision – not an endorsement of their personal lifestyle

One of two candidates will win – and one will be better than the other

Are things like abortion, illegal immigration, & sexual perverts being allowed to do “story hour” with elementary children & allowed in girls’ bathrooms/locker rooms more important …

Or things like bad taxation policy, fuel prices, Pres. Trump’s personality flaws, etc.?



Which choice is more evil in the end:

Voting for George W. Bush or John Kerry?

Voting for Donald Trump or Kamala Harris?

Voting for Ken Paxton or James Talarico?

Voting for Mike Rogers or Abdul El-Sayed?

We need discernment

"I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment" Phil 1:9

"ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" Col 1:9

"finding out what is acceptable to the Lord … Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Eph 5:10,17

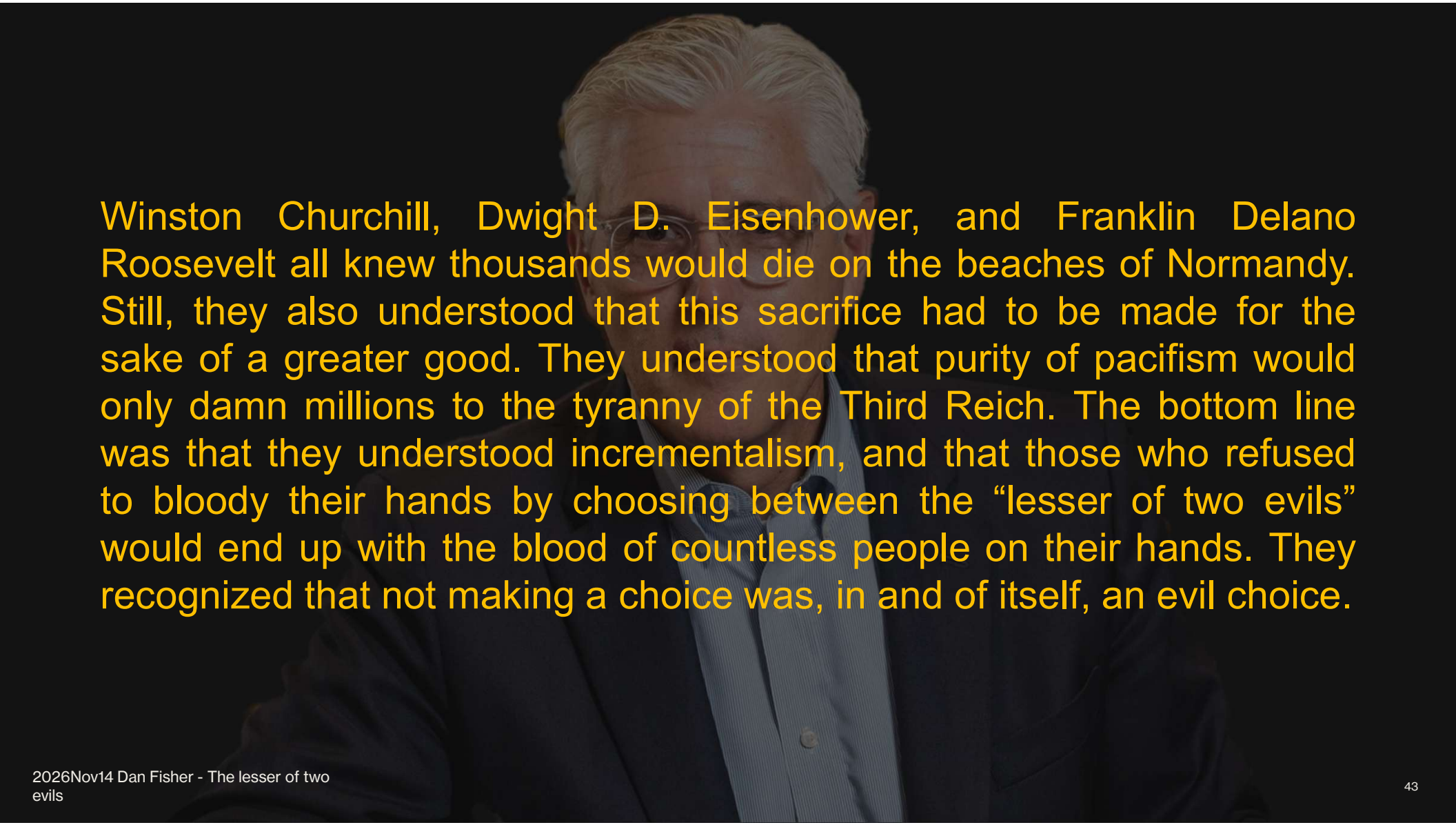
"those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Heb 5:14

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Js 1:5

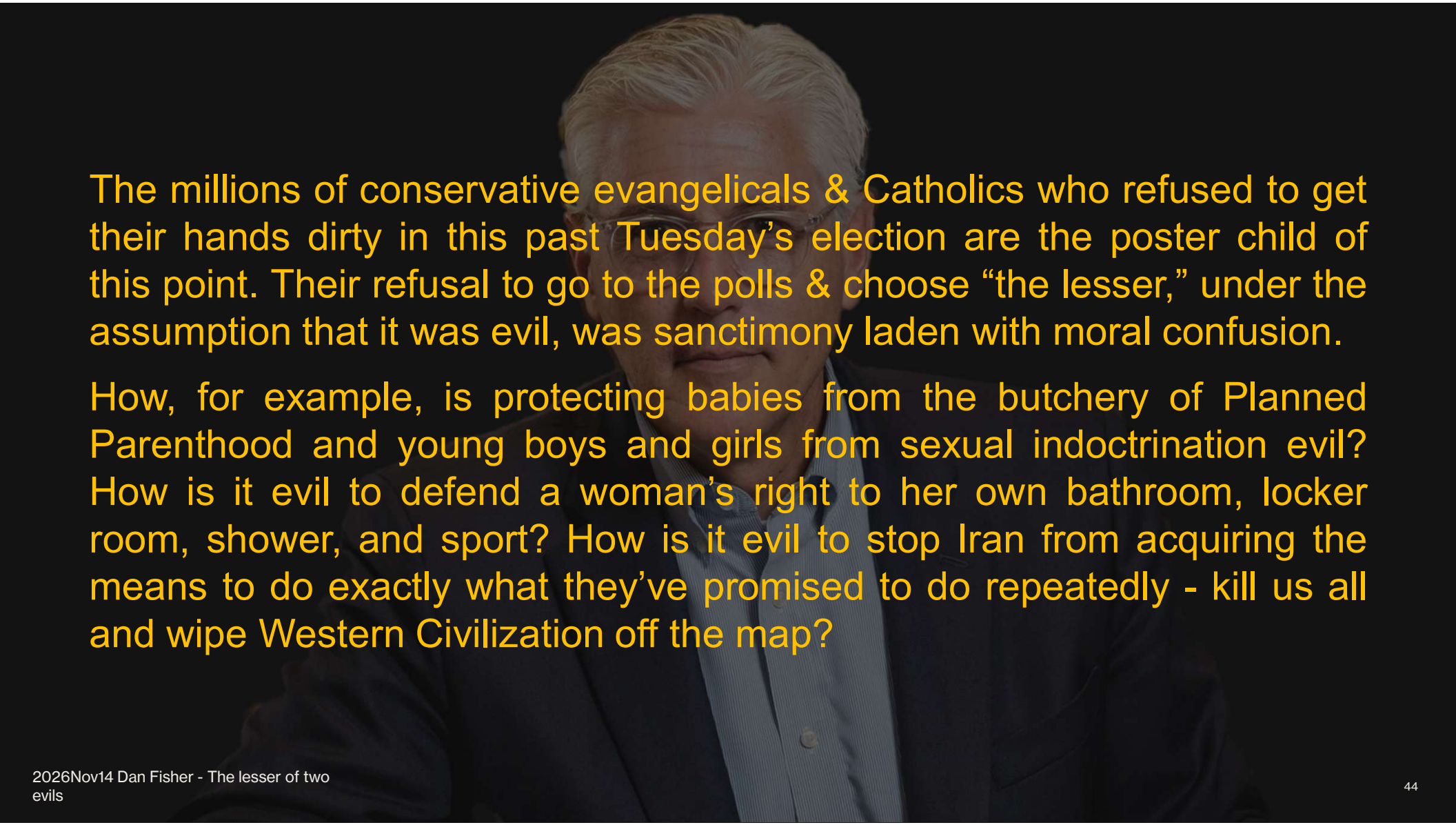




2026Nov14 Dan Fisher - The lesser of two evils

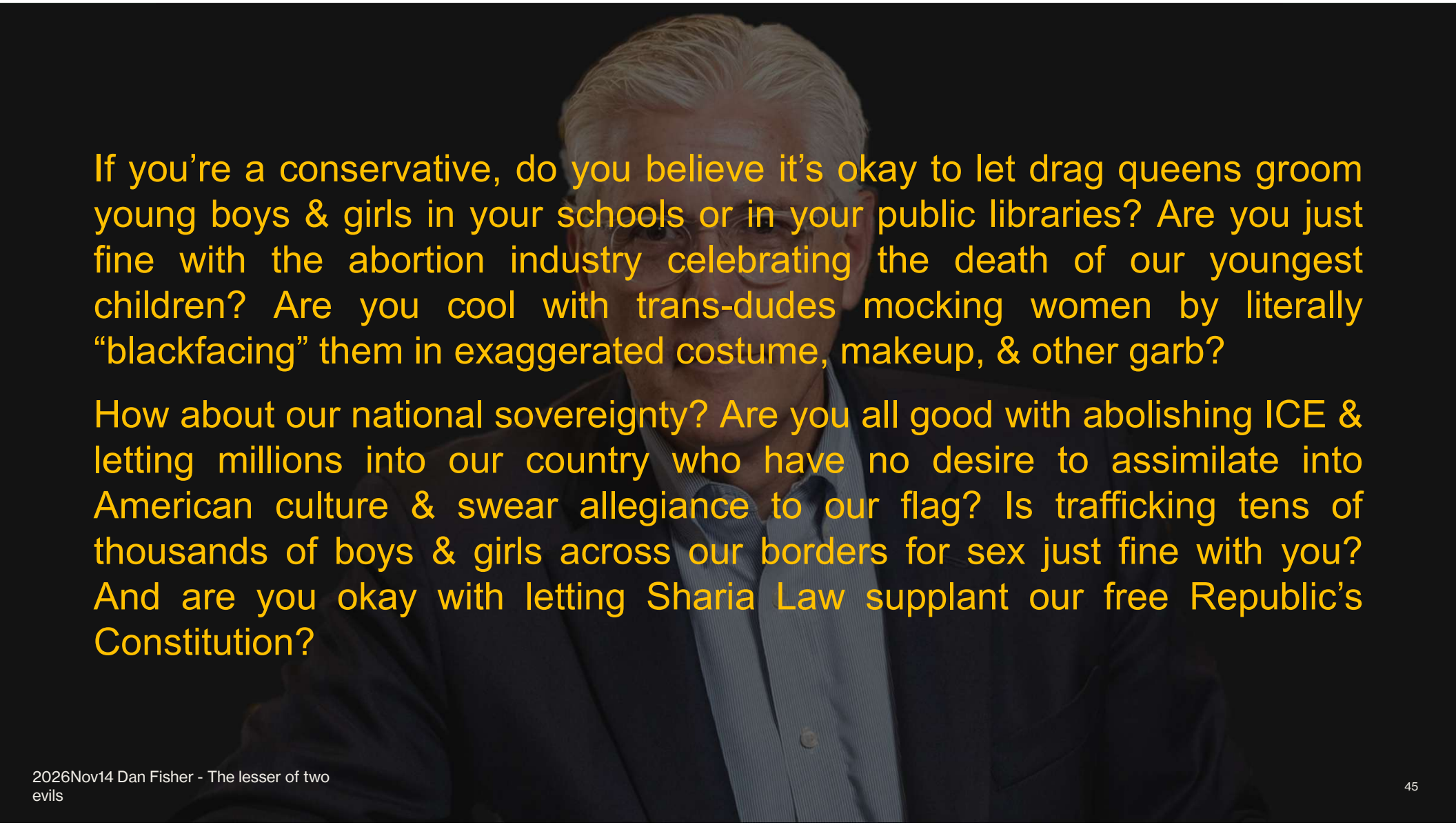


Winston Churchill, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt all knew thousands would die on the beaches of Normandy. Still, they also understood that this sacrifice had to be made for the sake of a greater good. They understood that purity of pacifism would only damn millions to the tyranny of the Third Reich. The bottom line was that they understood incrementalism, and that those who refused to bloody their hands by choosing between the “lesser of two evils” would end up with the blood of countless people on their hands. They recognized that not making a choice was, in and of itself, an evil choice.



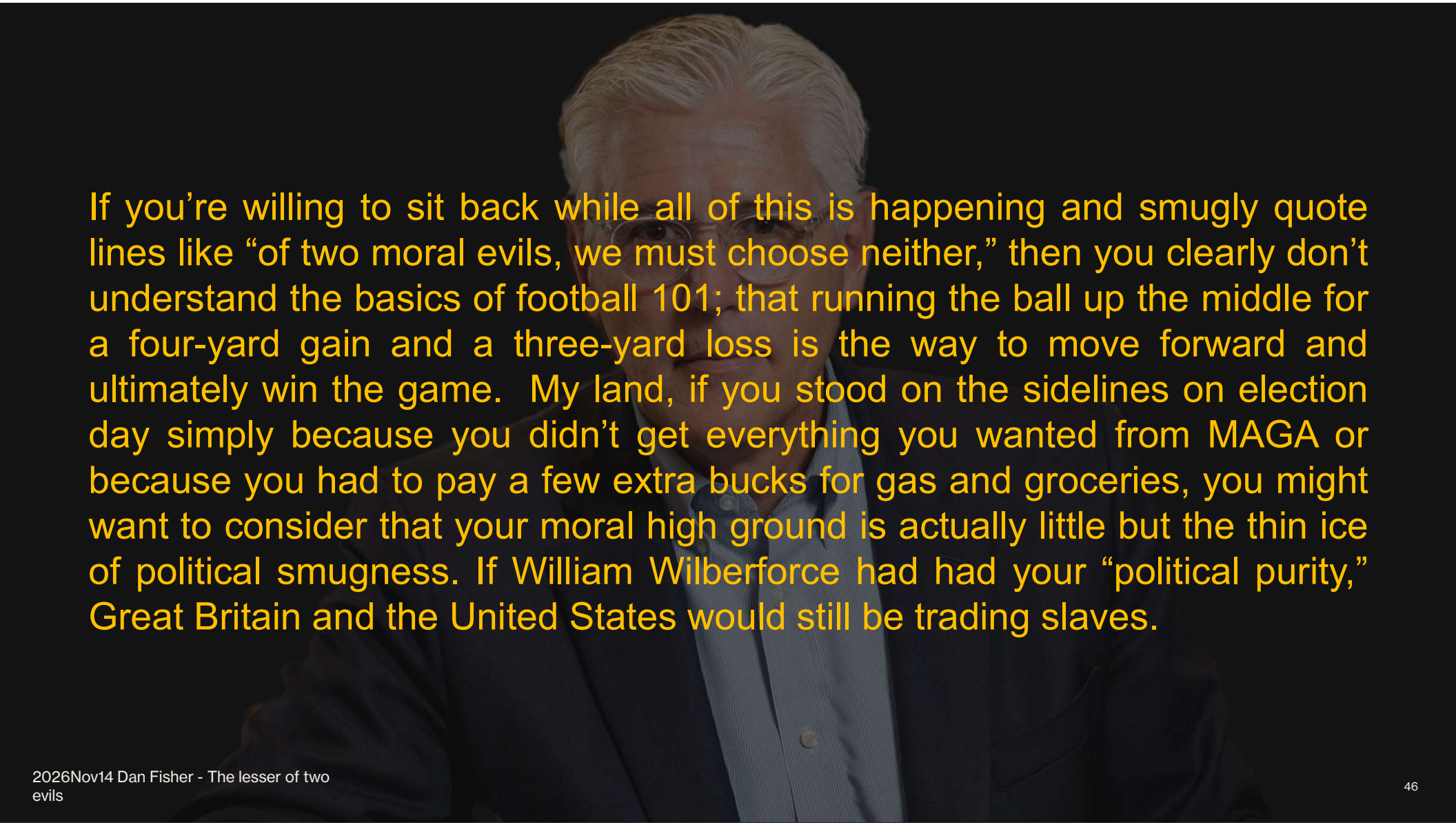
The millions of conservative evangelicals & Catholics who refused to get their hands dirty in this past Tuesday's election are the poster child of this point. Their refusal to go to the polls & choose "the lesser," under the assumption that it was evil, was sanctimony laden with moral confusion.

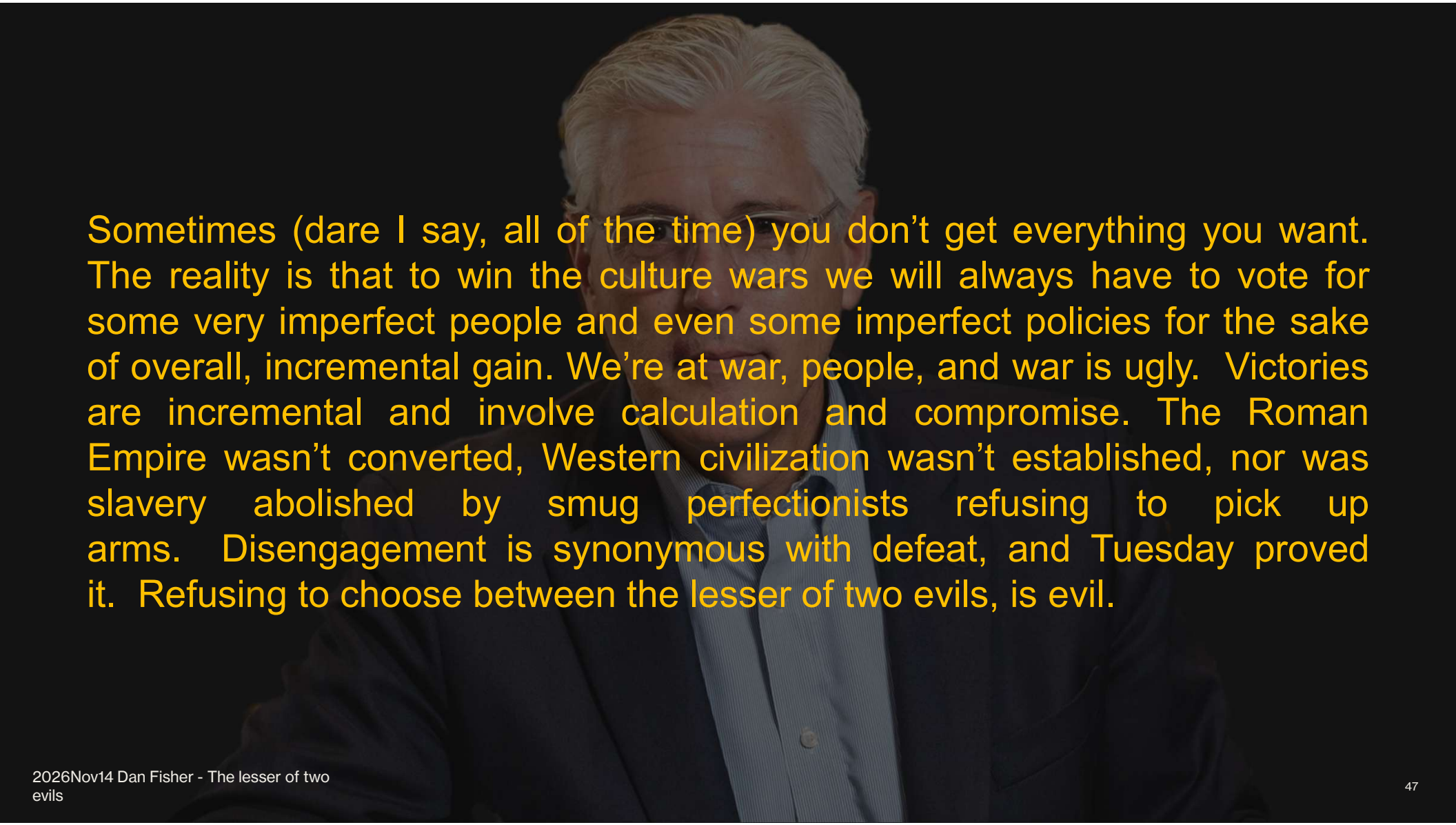
How, for example, is protecting babies from the butchery of Planned Parenthood and young boys and girls from sexual indoctrination evil? How is it evil to defend a woman's right to her own bathroom, locker room, shower, and sport? How is it evil to stop Iran from acquiring the means to do exactly what they've promised to do repeatedly - kill us all and wipe Western Civilization off the map?



If you're a conservative, do you believe it's okay to let drag queens groom young boys & girls in your schools or in your public libraries? Are you just fine with the abortion industry celebrating the death of our youngest children? Are you cool with trans-dudes mocking women by literally "blackfacing" them in exaggerated costume, makeup, & other garb?

How about our national sovereignty? Are you all good with abolishing ICE & letting millions into our country who have no desire to assimilate into American culture & swear allegiance to our flag? Is trafficking tens of thousands of boys & girls across our borders for sex just fine with you? And are you okay with letting Sharia Law supplant our free Republic's Constitution?


If you're willing to sit back while all of this is happening and smugly quote lines like "of two moral evils, we must choose neither," then you clearly don't understand the basics of football 101; that running the ball up the middle for a four-yard gain and a three-yard loss is the way to move forward and ultimately win the game. My land, if you stood on the sidelines on election day simply because you didn't get everything you wanted from MAGA or because you had to pay a few extra bucks for gas and groceries, you might want to consider that your moral high ground is actually little but the thin ice of political smugness. If William Wilberforce had had your "political purity," Great Britain and the United States would still be trading slaves.


Sometimes (dare I say, all of the time) you don't get everything you want. The reality is that to win the culture wars we will always have to vote for some very imperfect people and even some imperfect policies for the sake of overall, incremental gain. We're at war, people, and war is ugly. Victories are incremental and involve calculation and compromise. The Roman Empire wasn't converted, Western civilization wasn't established, nor was slavery abolished by smug perfectionists refusing to pick up arms. Disengagement is synonymous with defeat, and Tuesday proved it. Refusing to choose between the lesser of two evils, is evil.