

*The Lord's church in an
"Experience Driven Culture"*

WHY ARE MANY
CHURCHES OF CHRIST
SHRINKING?
(JOHN 6:60-69)

The Shrinking Denominations...

% of US population attending an Orthodox church on any given weekend



the U.S. population has grown by 18.1% -

The younger generation demonstrates a decline in spiritual interest,

Traditional churches are not keeping up with population growth,

To change the trend - Many churches change themselves to give the

population whatever it is they are seeking

The Shrinking Denominations...

The Willingness To “Be Conformed” - Rom 12:1,2



- ◆ As denominations decline in membership, they begin to compromise to sustain numbers
 - * Relaxed moral standards (MDR; abortion; homosexuality; etc)
 - * Greater emphasis on grace & love ... (no pressure to repent or change their thinking or lives ...)
 - * An incorrect association between emotionalism and spirituality.
- ◆ Many churches of Christ have done the same thing!

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We Cannot "Be Conformed" - Rom 12:1,2

ROMANS 12:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Shrinking Church ...

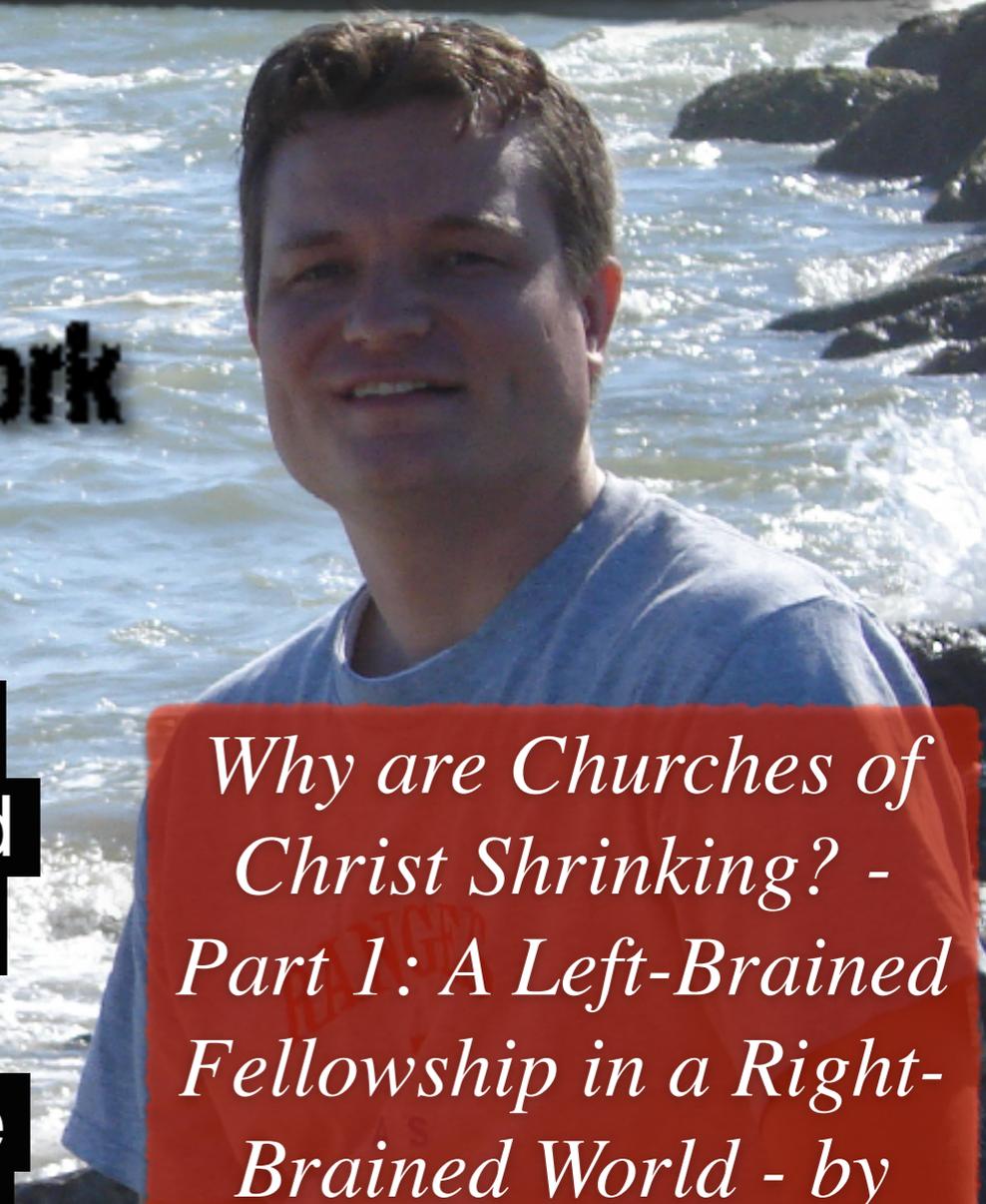
The Lord's church in an "Experience Driven Culture"

Welcome!

To the **Missional Outreach Network**

As long as we were "holding our own," we could just keep doing what we had always been doing, "holding to our principals"--not changing anything--and waiting for the world to change and come around to our point of view. ... But now, as we slowly, painfully, begin to acknowledge that we are dying, we now are perhaps more willing to look at the causes of our death, with the hope perhaps that a cure can be found.

Why are Churches of Christ Shrinking? - Part 1: A Left-Brained Fellowship in a Right-Brained World - by James Nored



The Shrinking Church ...

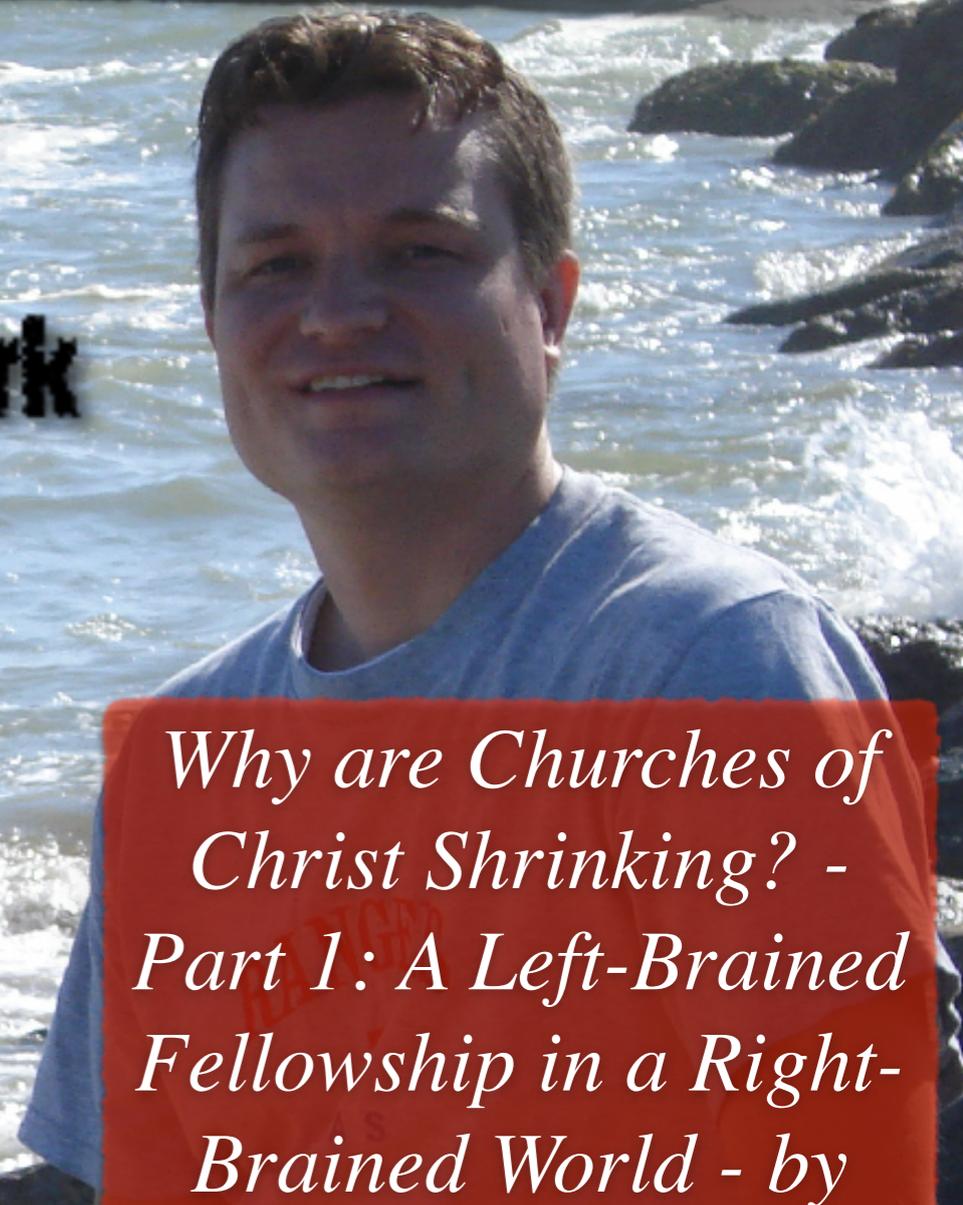
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Churches of Christ in their current, visible form were birthed in the 1800s during the height of the "modern" worldview. This was the age of Reason. ... it was a print medium world, so this fit into the times. Reason and scientific study of the Bible and *knowledge* would lead us to all come to *agreement and thus unity*. (I was reminded recently by a preacher friend that our motto for decades was "Come, let us reason together.")

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The Shrinking Church ...

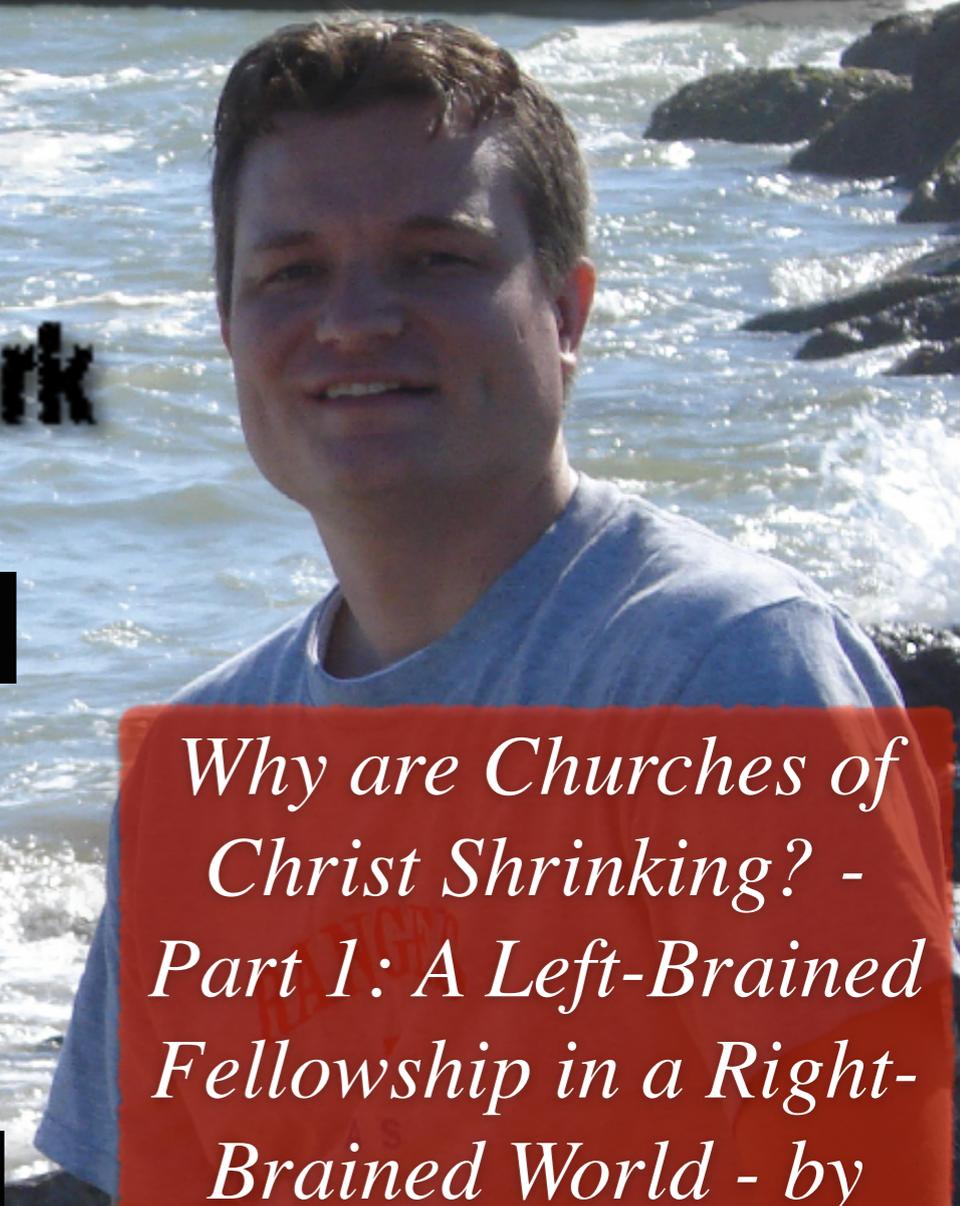
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So our worship services and Bible classes were designed to give out information and prove points. We wanted to *educate* people--not shape them spiritually or transform them or disciple them. ... We had preachers who dispensed information and proved their *points*. It was assumed that education equals transformation. ...

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The Shrinking Church ...

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Fast forward two hundred years to today. We are now in an Apple based, image and icon based world. A world of pictures and videos. A world of music and surround sound. A world of 75" plasma screens in homes ... It is reality. We are in an Apple based, image based, icon based, *experienced* based world. This is the world that those 35 and under in particular grew up in, though it extends up through Gen X ...

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The Shrinking Church ...

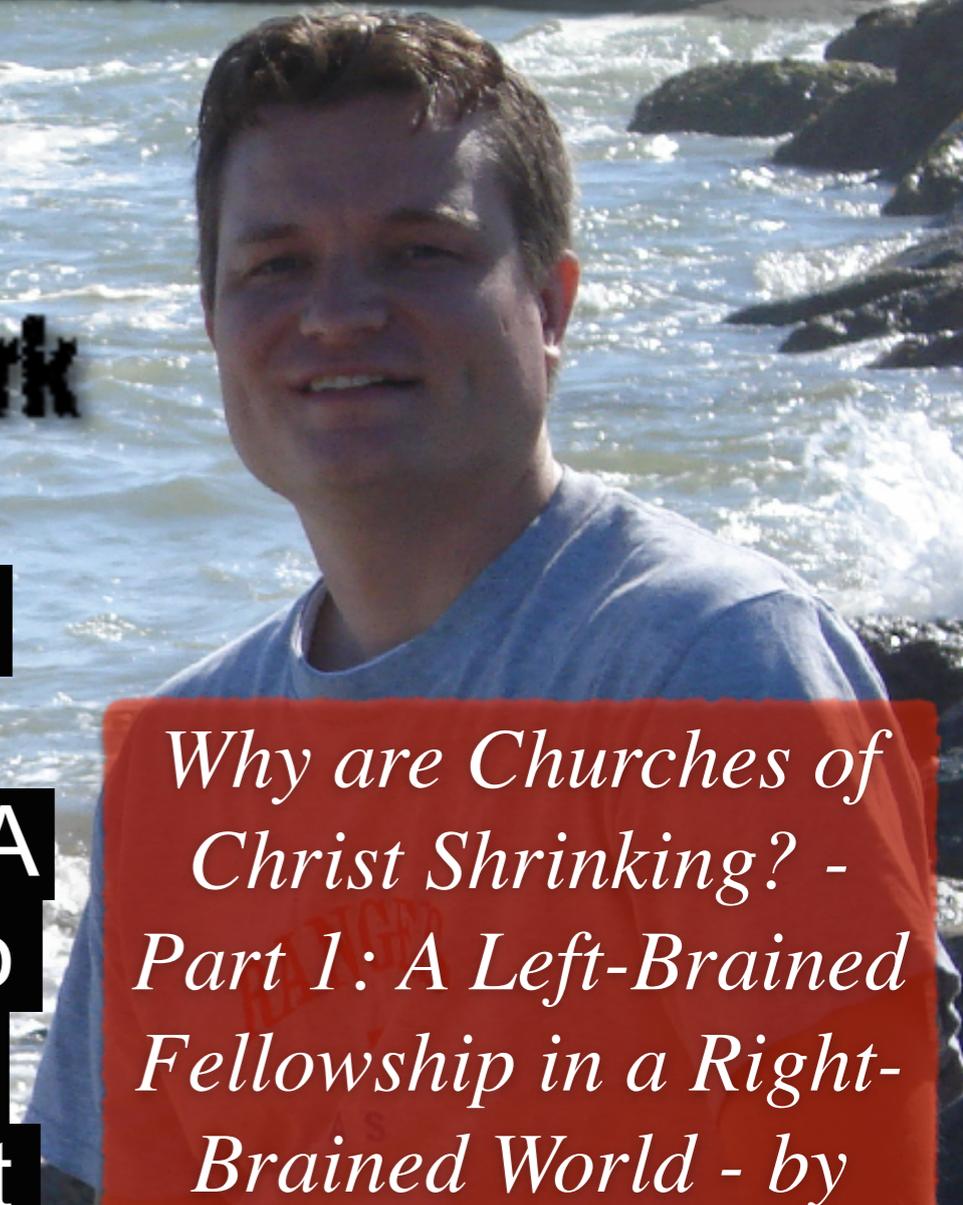
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Welcome!

To the **Missional Outreach Network**

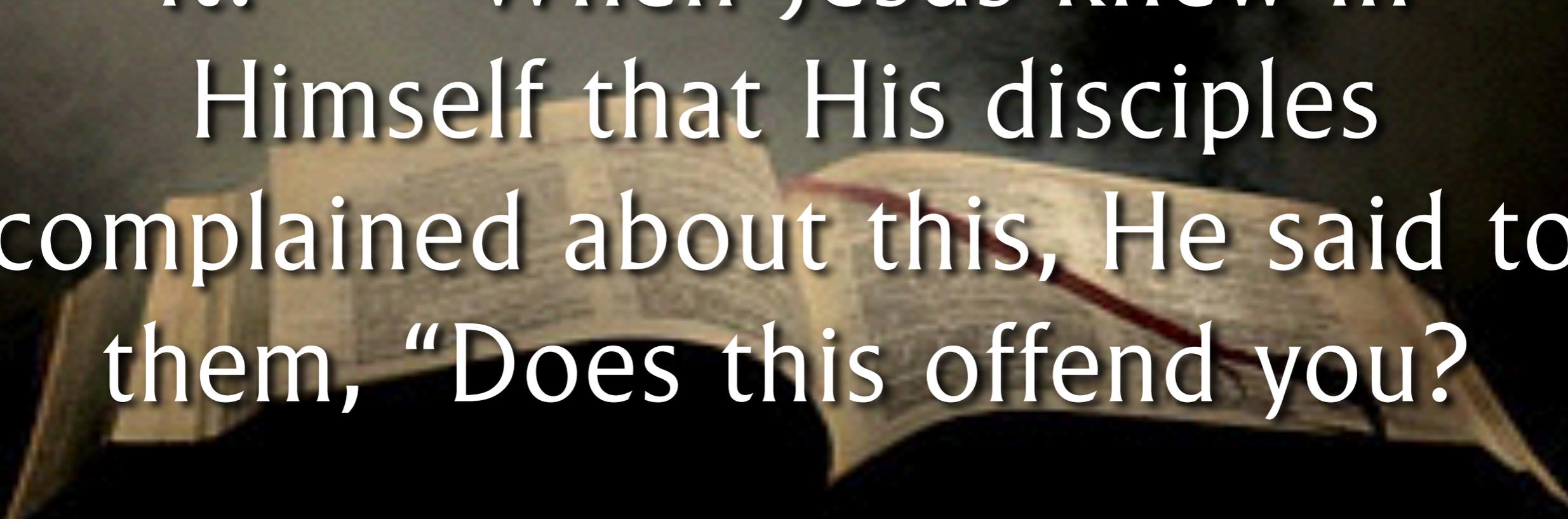
And these younger generations come into our worship services looking for an *experience*. And what do they get? A lecture. Information. Someone trying to build a reasoned argument and make their *points*. And they just don't get it. It does not speak their language. . . .

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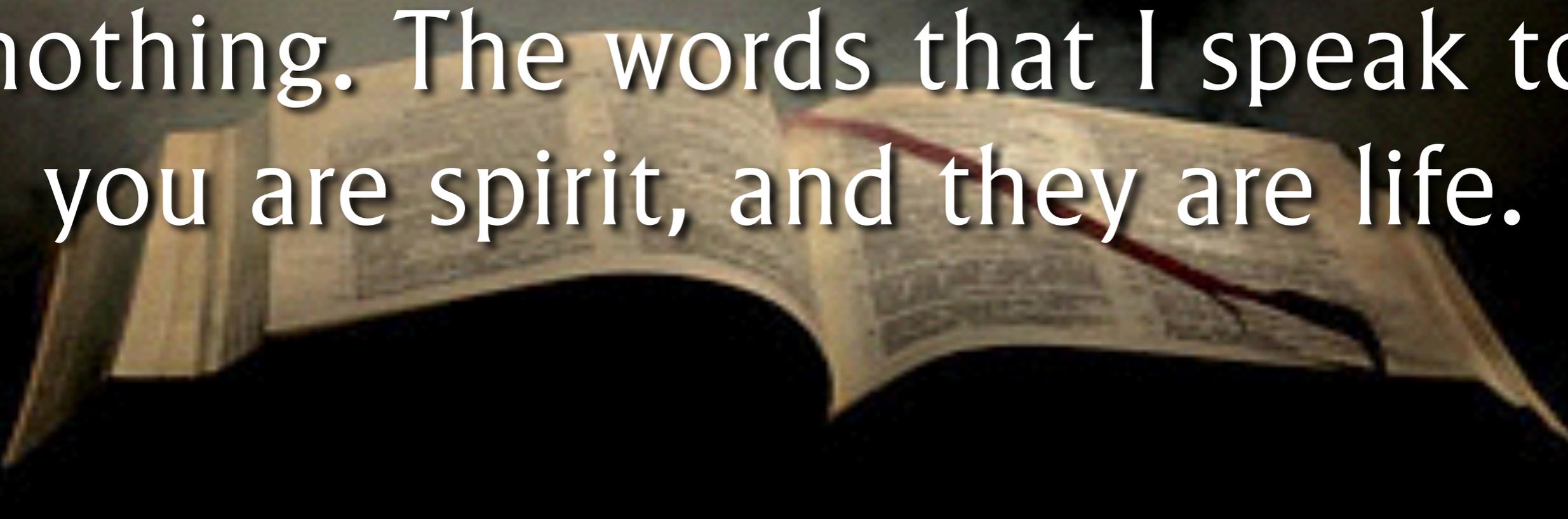
John 6:60-69 (NKJV)

⁶⁰ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" ⁶¹ When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?"



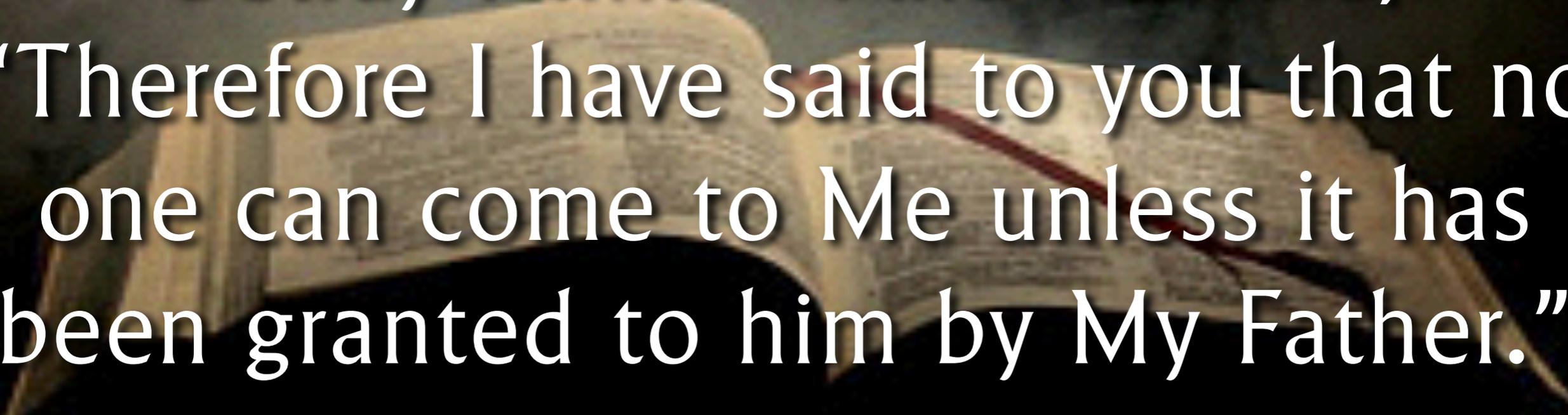
John 6:60-69 (NKJV)

⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.



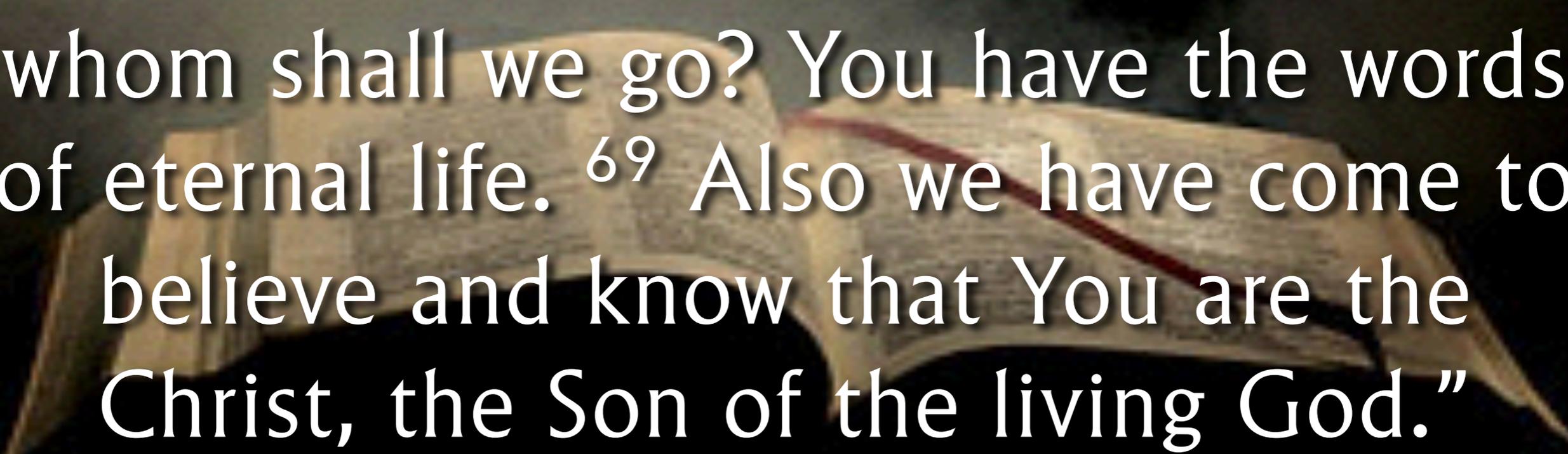
John 6:60-69 (NKJV)

⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”



John 6:60-69 (NKJV)

⁶⁶ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” ⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”



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We Cannot "Be Conformed" - Rom 12:1,2

◆ **We cannot deny reality!**

- * Many sound churches are shrinking - just as Jesus' followers left Him. (Jn 6:66; Mat 7:13,14)
- * What sound churches are doing does not appeal to the masses - especially the younger generation. - (Lu. 6:22; 9:24; 21:12, 17. Jno. 15:21)
- * We are losing many of our young people. - (Judges 2:10–14)

*The
questions
are -
WHY? &
WHAT CAN
WE DO
ABOUT IT?*

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WHY ARE MANY SOUND CHURCHES SHRINKING?

◆ Could It Be That ...

* Some churches have failed to equip members with the spiritual nourishment needed? - (Acts 20:28-32; 2 Tim 4:1-4)

* In far too many instances our homes have failed? - (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:1-3)

* The secularization of our society & Lack of love for the truth & spiritual things plays a huge role in the current state of religion in America and has infected & effected the church? - (Rom 1:18-32; 2 Tim 3:1-7; 2 Thes 2:10-12)



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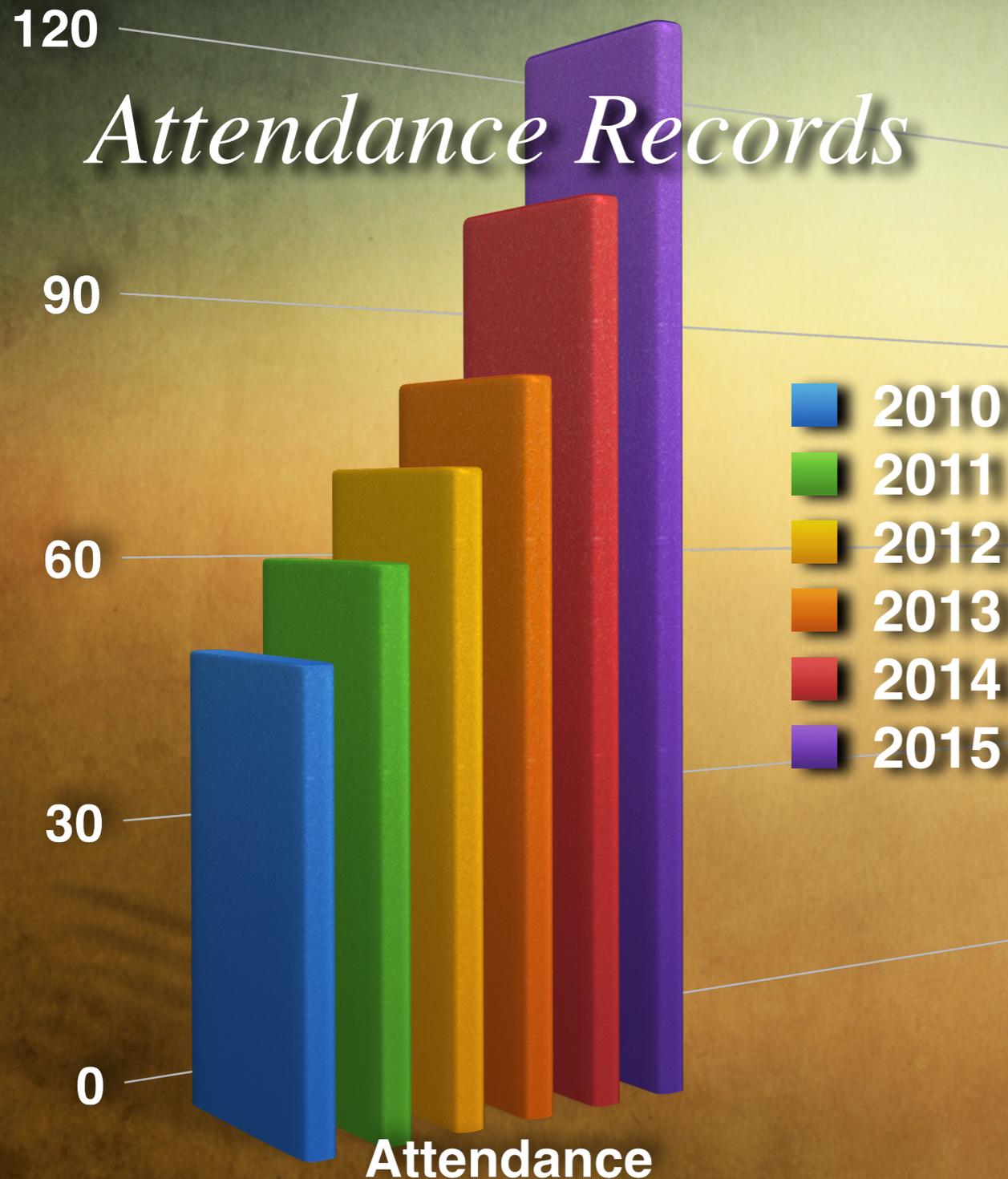
We Cannot "Be Conformed" - Rom 12:1,2



- ◆ Can the church fight apathy and materialism by feeding people's appetite for recreation & entertainment?
- ◆ Has the word of God lost it's power & effectiveness? - Heb 4:12; Rom 1:16,17; 1 Cor 1:18-21

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To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Pursue The Wrong Goal



◆ Chasing the Numbers –
◆ “The customer is always right” – Provide what people want – (tolerance – anonymity – positive reinforcement – humor – entertainment . . .)

◆ Provide a social – non threatening atmosphere where unbelievers can feel comfortable – never having their sins challenged . . .

The Lord's church in an "Experience Driven Culture"

To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Pursue The Wrong Goal

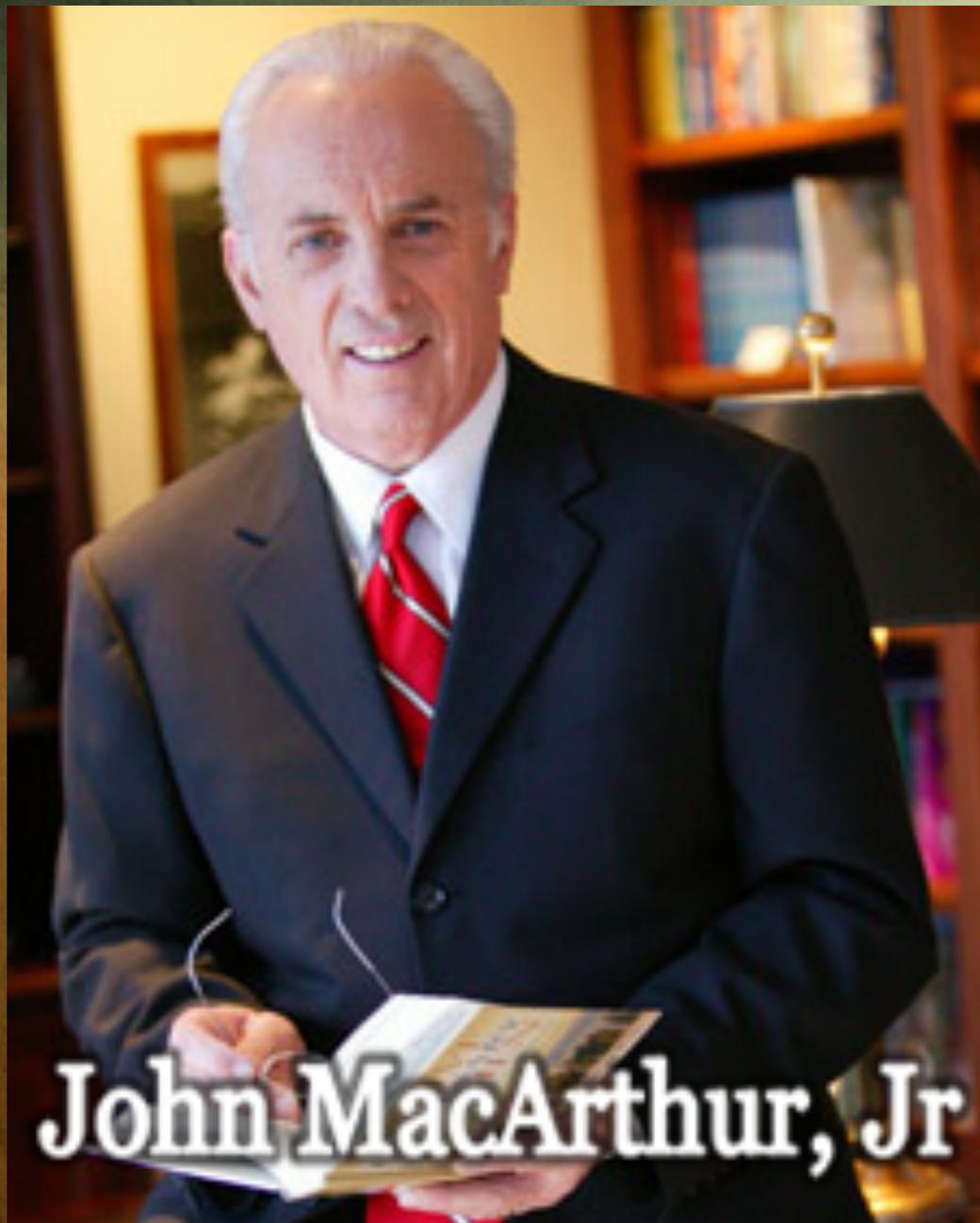
Not A New Problem



“The fact is, that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly.” [“Another Word Concerning The Downgrade” – *The Sword and The Trowel* (Aug. 1887), 398]

The Lord's church in an "Experience Driven Culture"

To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Pursue The Wrong Goal



John MacArthur, Jr

“We have a society filled with people who want what they want when they want it. They are into their own lifestyle, recreation, and entertainment. They want comfort, happiness, and success. When churches appeal to those selfish desires, they only fuel fires that hinder true godliness.”

(Ashamed of The Gospel, When The Church Becomes Like The World, pg 85)

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To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Pursue The Wrong Goal



- ◆ A deeper spiritual problem is revealed and perpetuated by the "EXPERIENCE DRIVEN" atmosphere.
- ◆ Many do not know what it means to worship and serve God – They incorrectly associate emotionalism and spirituality. - (Jn 4:24)
- ◆ Could it be that many are actually seeking what they WANT rather than seeking to please God? - (Phil 3:18,19; Rom 1:25)

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Should Be Pursuing:



- ◆ **Conversion – (Acts 2:36-38; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Pet 1:22,23)**
- ◆ **Transformation – (Ro 12:1,2)**
- ◆ **Unity in truth – (Eph 4:1-6)**
- ◆ **Edification , (Eph. 4:11-16)**
- ◆ **Holiness – (Eph 4:17-5:17)**
- ◆ **Maturity – (Col. 1:28; 2 Pet 1:3-10; Heb 10:24,25)**
- ◆ **Obeying God!! – (Ecc1 12:13; Mat 7:21-23; Col 3:17)**

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To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Have no boundaries



- ◆ The aforementioned blog post encourages churches of Christ to incorporate mood lighting, video, music, body movement, and social media into the **worship experience**.
- ◆ When we are "driven" to provide memorable & enjoyable experiences - we will find people will always want brighter, faster, and more exciting experiences.

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- ◆ **A market driven ministry** - Find out what people want and give it to them - **WHAT EVER THAT IS!** - (do not offer what they do not want)
- ◆ **Special Music** / Punk Rockers / Rap Artist /
- ◆ **Gimmick's for attractions** - Professional Wrestlers / Body Builders / Comedians / Dancers / Actors
- ◆ Hollywood / Disney Land / Las Vegas --- becomes the model - **Not God & His Word!**

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To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Have no boundaries



Ron Sylvia is the founding pastor of Church @ The Springs in Ocala, Fla. - has grown from 21 to 2500 people in 10 years

“Worship style is as important as theology. ... The entire worship experience must be evaluated through the eyes of your target. When you confidently determine who your target is—who you’re trying to reach—it makes crafting a worship experience for that person a lot easier. Through some trial and error you will learn what works and what does not work for your target group.” —

(Ron Sylvia “Determining Your Worship Style” PurposeDriven Website, July 2007, pg 135)

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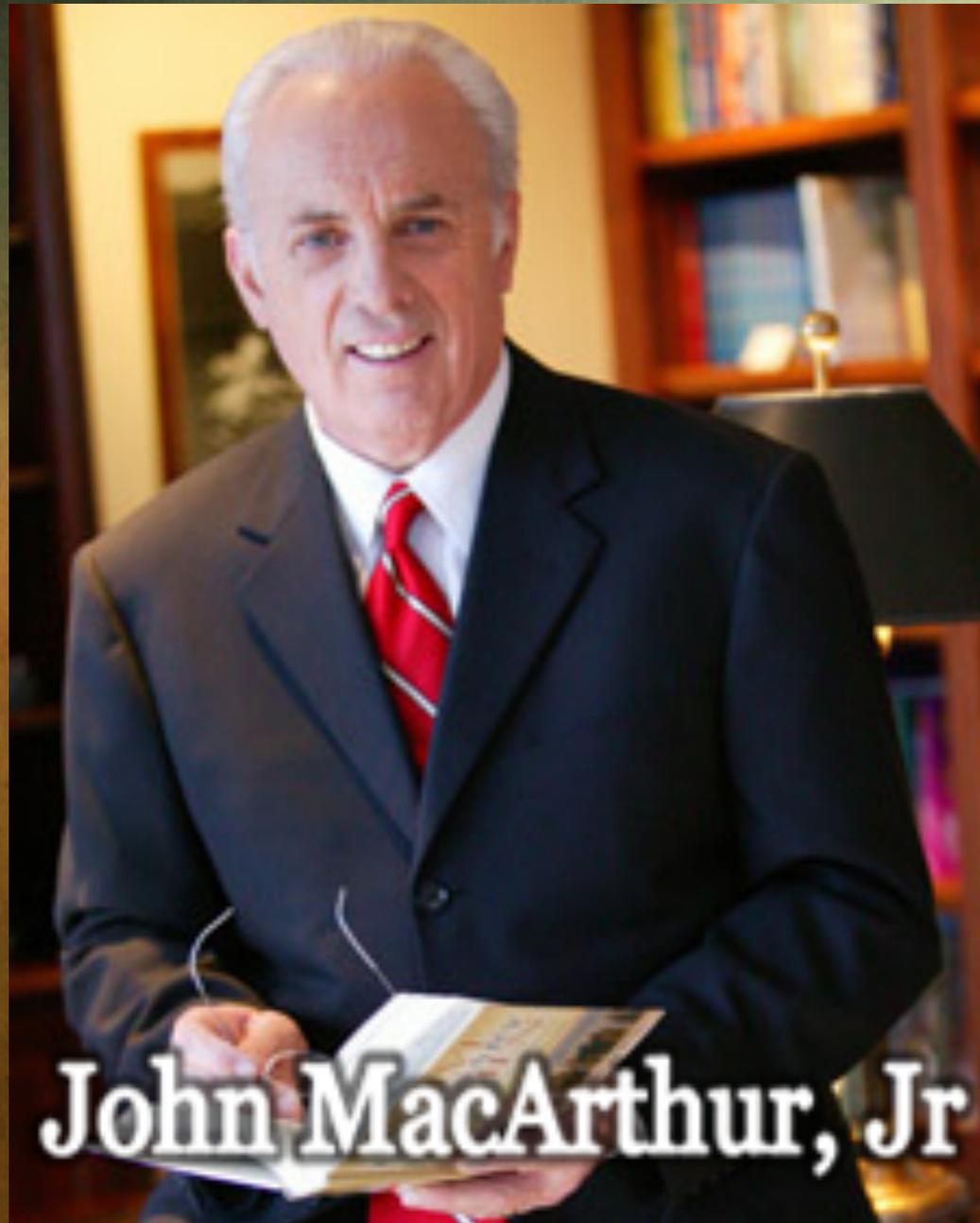
Wes McAdams



<http://www.radicallychristian.com/stop-turning-worship-into-a-talent-show>

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John MacArthur, Jr

“Now evangelicals everywhere are frantically seeking new techniques and new forms of entertainment to attract people. Whether a method is biblical or not scarcely seems to matter to the average church leader today. Does it work? That is the test of legitimacy. And so raw pragmatism has become the driving force in much of the professing church.”

(Ashamed of The Gospel, When The Church Becomes Like The World, pg 71)

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To Be "Experience Driven" Is To Have no boundaries

- ◆ **Pragmatism – If it works it is good – (man's wisdom has always failed to please God!)**
- ◆ **Shouldn't we be asking "what does God want? What has He told us?"**
- ◆ **If we do what God commands - it will work and accomplish what He wants - Isaiah 55:8-11**

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What Does God Want?

- ◆ **Scriptural worship – where the focus is on the Creator – NOT the creature – (John 4:24; Romans 1:25)**
- * The Lord's supper - Act 20:7; 1 Cor 11:23-34
- * Prayer - Acts 4:23-31
- * Sacrificial giving - 1 Cor 16:1,2
- * SINGING psalms, hymns & spiritual songs - Eph 5:19; Col. 3:16
- * Preaching / teaching - Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 14; Eph 4:12-16

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What Does God Want?

- ◆ **Scriptural worship – where the focus is on the Creator – NOT the creature – (John 4:24; Romans 1:25)**
- ◆ **Sound Bible preaching and teaching that is both negative and positive – (1 Cor. 1:18; 3:6; 2 Tim 4:2; Col 1:24-29; Jude 3)**
- ◆ **So real edification can occur – (Eph 4:12-16)**
- ◆ **Church purity – Our salvation – (1 Cor 5:1-7; Acts 5:1-11; 2 Jn 9,10; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9)**

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What Does God Want?



John MacArthur, Jr

“If you get bored in church, may I suggest to you that it’s not a commentary on the sermon – it’s a commentary on your heart! Even if the sermon isn’t particularly worth listening to, the chance to pick up some truths about God that come through, should be the most exhilarating time of your life. If you’re uninterested or indifferent, it’s not a commentary on the sermon, it’s a commentary on you.”

(True Worship, MacArthur’s Bible Studies Series, Chicago: Moody Press, 1982, pg 89)

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The Results of Being "Experience Driven" ...



- ◆ The Israelites miraculously crossed the Red Sea; - they sang, they danced, and they played the tambourine (Exodus 15:1-21). But, just a few short verses later, they were dissatisfied - (15:24).
- ◆ When Jesus fed the five thousand, healed the sick, and raised the dead, people flocked to Him. But, when Jesus challenged them, the experience driven followers left (John 6:66). but who stayed? - "You have words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).

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The Results of Being "Experience Driven" ...



- ◆ Reinforces a "Man Centered" and a "Self Serving" View of Worship – [Idolatry] - (Rom 1:25)
- ◆ Cannot Adequately Convey Deeper Truths Necessary For Growth! – (1 Tim 4:12-16)
- ◆ Diminishes Sense of Awe and Reverence That Should Be Present When Approaching God – (Heb 12:28)
- ◆ Both Reflects and Promotes A Lack of Confidence in the Power of the Gospel!! – (Rom 1:16)

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The Results of Being "Experience Driven" ...



- ◆ Churches are filled with worldly minded people, with worldly values, worldly interest and worldly practices – Thus their influence for God is destroyed.
- ◆ Religious people “YES” – but I am afraid just religious enough to inoculate them from the real thing!

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The "Experience Driven" Church ...



- ◆ Has NO New Testament or Historical Precedent – (1 Cor 14; Heb 12:28; John 4:24)
- ◆ Channels Worship Away From God Toward the Worshipper – (Rom 1:28)
- ◆ Cheapens the Occasion and Purpose of Worship – (John 4:24; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 14:26)

The Lord's church in an "Experience Driven Culture"

What Does God Want?



- ◆ The way to cure apathy and materialism is **NOT** through materialism and mere emotional stimulation!
- ◆ The answer is found in conversion from carnality to true spirituality! - (Rom 8:7,8; 10:17; Ecc 12:13)
- ◆ The only way to convert people is by teaching the gospel - holding firmly to the truth - (Phili 2:14-16)

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What Does God Want?



- ◆ **The OLD TIME religion IS SUFFICIENT TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSE & PLEASE HIM!- (Jer 6:16; Heb 1:1; Mat 7:21; 17:5; 2 Tim 4:1-4; 1 Cor 3:6)**
- ◆ **We are dedicated to finding the pattern revealed in the New Testament - and following that pattern! - (2 Tim 1:13)**

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What Does God Want?

I WANT THIS CHURCH TO GROW!

But Growth **MUST BE** Based
On Truth – Not Gimmicks!

- ◆ **Not Just Growth – But The Right Kind Of Growth!!**
- ◆ **The Need For Edification –**
- ◆ **The Need For Evangelism –**
- ◆ **The Need To Provide An Environment For Growth!**

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What Does God Want?

It isn't the cleverness of our methods, the techniques of our teaching, or the wit of our sermons that puts saving power in a message and efficacy in our worship.

The POWER is in the Word of God & is effectual through our faithful submission to God's word! He 4:12; Rom 1:16; 10:17; 1 Jn. 2:3,6; 4:5, 6

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WHY ARE MANY CHURCHES OF CHRIST SHRINKING? (JOHN 6:60-69)

Charts by Don McClain

Prepared May 15, 16, , 2015 - Preached May 17, 2015

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Prepared using Keynote

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More PPT & Audio Sermons:

<http://w65stchurchofchrist.org/coc/sermons/>

Note – Many of the transition effects used in this presentation may be lost using PPT 2007 Viewer

<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?>

[FamilyID=cb9bf144-1076-4615-9951-294eeb832823&displaylang=en](http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=cb9bf144-1076-4615-9951-294eeb832823&displaylang=en)

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 (NKJV)

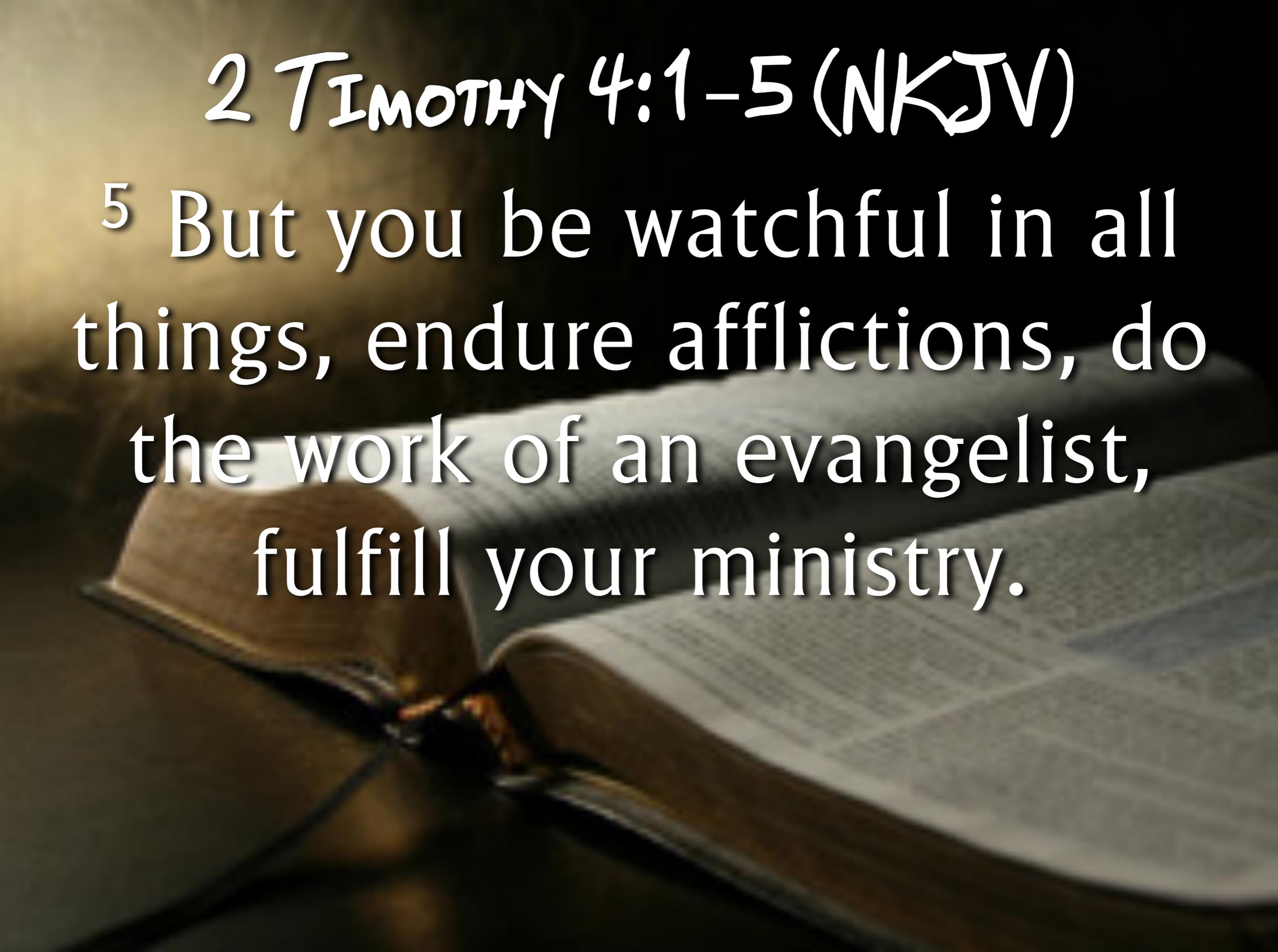
¹ I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 (NKJV)

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 (NKJV)

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

An open book with a brown cover is shown from a high angle, slightly out of focus. The pages are white with black text. The background is dark and moody, with a soft light source on the left creating a glow.