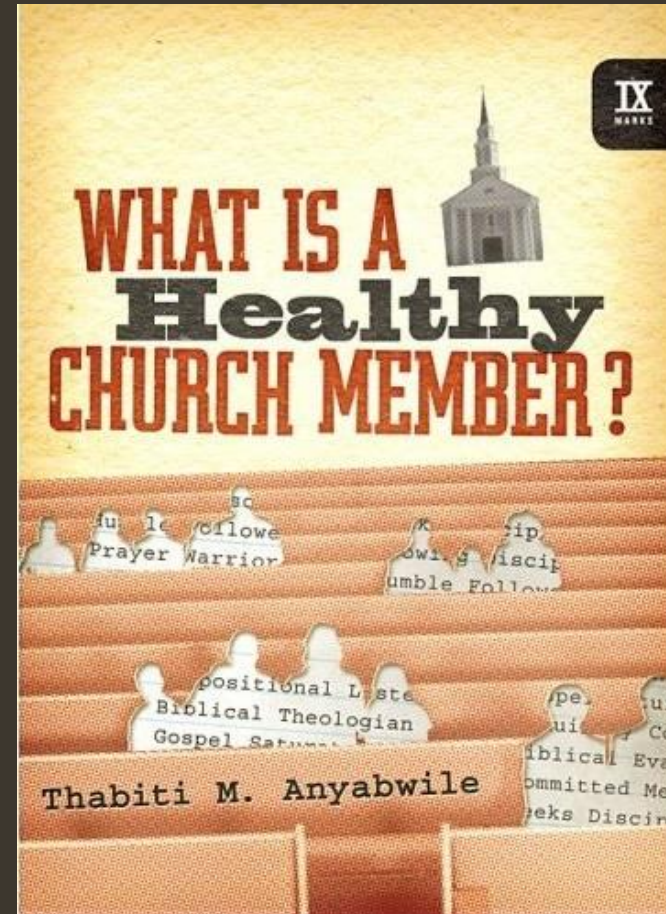
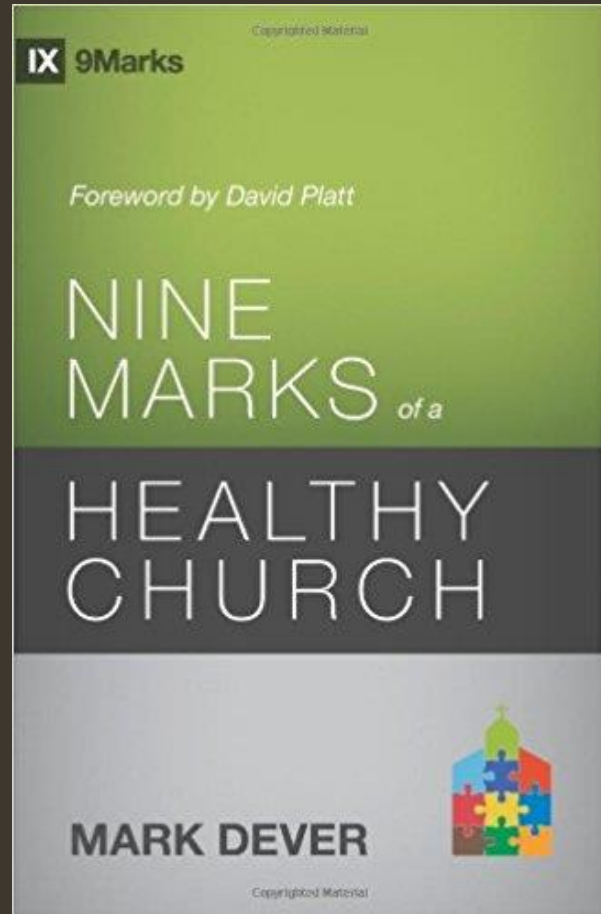


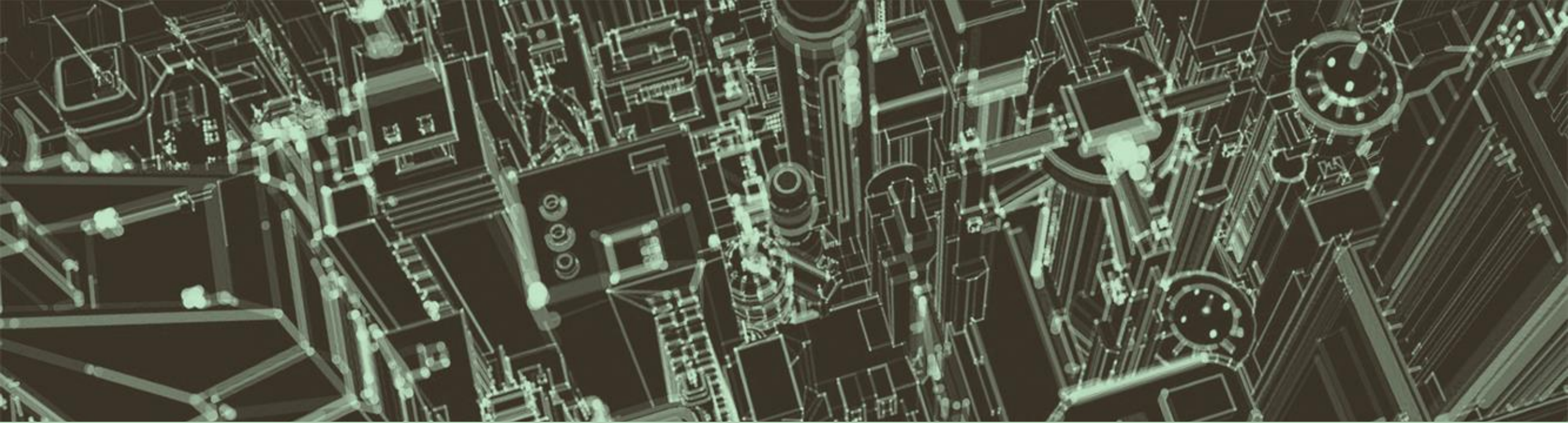
What Is A Healthy Church? Part 1

CITY SESSIONS



SOURCE MATERIAL





INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

- “The Reformation made the gospel, not ecclesiastical organization, the test of the true church.”
 - Since then, marks/tests of the church have been a focus of discussion.
- Traditionally, two main marks have determined the true church over imposters:
 - The preaching of the gospel
 - Proper administering of the sacraments/ordinances

INTRODUCTION

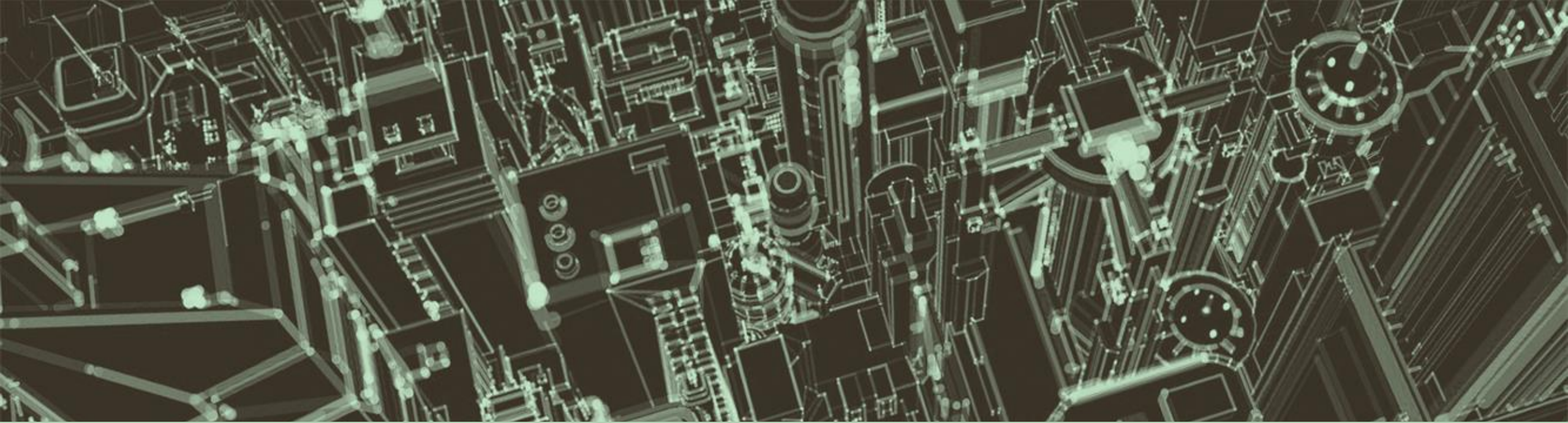
- What we will look at is what sets a true healthy church apart from a true unhealthy church.
- A lot of the illness of the church today is due to its secularization.
 - Os Guinness notes that even churches that appose secularism verbally are practically secularized and that “the two most easily recognizable hallmarks of secularization in America are the exaltation of numbers and of technique.”
- We want to recover a biblical vision of the church as true and healthy.

INTRODUCTION

- What are signs that a church is healthy?
 - If it is not technique or numbers; if it is not the fruit of the ministry, then what is it?
- “Biblically, we must realize that the size of what our eyes see is rarely a good way to estimate the greatness of something in the eyes of God.” Looks can be deceiving.”
- “We must rehear the Bible and reimagine the concept of successful ministry not as necessarily immediately fruitful but as demonstrably faithful to God’s Word.”
- Let’s look at what we will learn through this class...

INTRODUCTION

- We will look at ten signs or marks of a healthy church.
- One half of these marks will concern preaching the word of God correctly.
- The other half will deal with problems in leading disciples.
- With each mark, we will consider what we must do as church members to make this happen.
 - “The health of the local church depends on the willingness of its members to inspect their hearts, correct their thinking, and apply their hands to the work of the ministry.”



1. Expository Preaching



Expositional Preaching

- This is not only the first mark, it is the most important because if you get this right, all others should follow.
- “Expositional preaching is not simply producing a verbal commentary on some passage of Scripture. Rather, [it] is preaching that takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture. That’s it.”
- This type of preaching serves God’s Word, not the preference of the pastor, and it presumes the authority of Scripture.

Expositional Preaching

- God's Word plays the central role in the life of the church. Let's look at 4 important roles it plays.
- 1. The Role of God's Word in Bringing Life
 - God's Word presents his promises to us. It shows us what we are to believe.
 - In Ezekiel 37, God tells the prophet to speak his word to a bunch of dead, dry bones. The result? They come to life!
 - Jesus, the Word become flesh, came to bring life!
 - Romans 10:17

Expositional Preaching

- 2. The Role of God's Word in Preaching
 - Preaching that will most edify the church must expose God's Word to God's people.
 - This sort of preaching must expose the truth, but it must do it in a way where the congregation can understand the truth there.
- 3. The Role of God's Word in Sanctifying
 - The Spirit uses the Word to create faith in us and make us grow.
 - John 17:17
 - Ephesians 5:25-26

Expositional Preaching

- 4. The Role of the Preacher of God's Word
 - “The preacher instead of looking out upon the world, looks out upon public opinion, trying to find out what the public would like to hear. Then he tries his best to duplicate that, and bring his finished product into a marketplace in which others are trying to do the same. The public, turning to our church culture to find out about the world, discovers there nothing but its own reflection.” – Os Guinness
 - A healthy church will have a preacher committed to preaching not what people want to hear, but what God's Word says.
 - 2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 6:3-4

Expositional Preaching

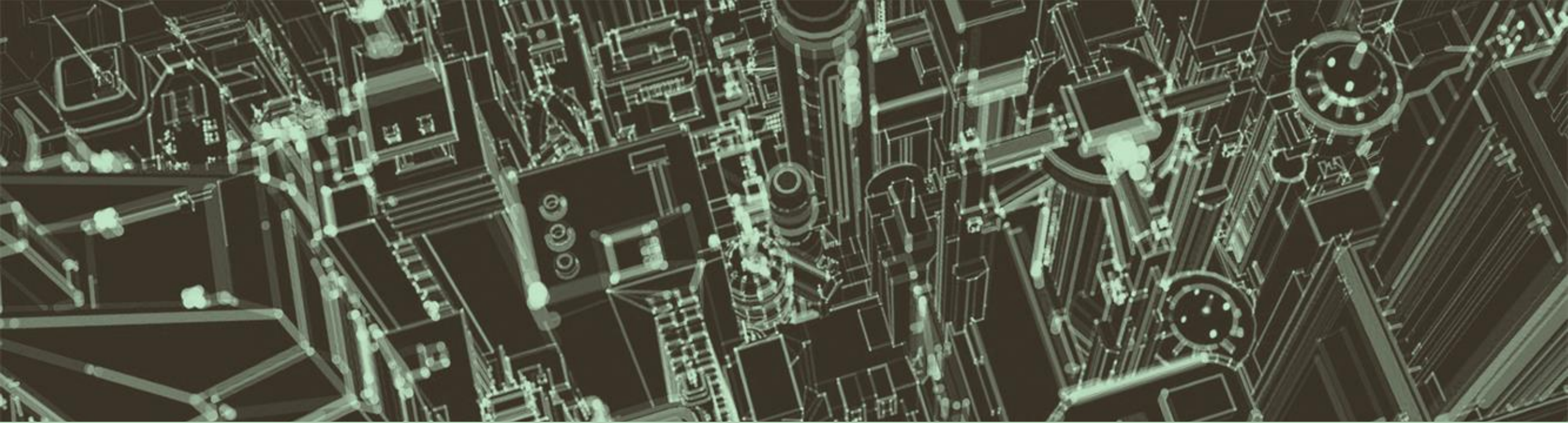
- So what can you do as a church member?
- “...we should listen primarily for the voice and message of God as revealed in his Word. We should listen to hear what he has written, in his omniscient love, for his glory and for our blessing.”
- Anyabwile calls this “expositional listening”: “listening for the meaning of a passage...and accepting [it] as the main idea to be grasped for our personal and corporate lives...”

Expositional Preaching

- What are the benefits of “expositional listening”?
 - It cultivates a hunger for God’s Word.
 - It helps us to focus on God’s will and to follow him.
 - It protects the gospel and our lives from corruption.
 - It encourages faithful pastors.
 - It benefits the gathered congregation.

Expositional Preaching

- How can you cultivate the habit of “expositional listening”?
 - Meditate on the sermon passage during your devotional time.
 - Read good commentaries.
 - Talk and pray with friends about the sermon after church.
 - Listen to and act on the sermon throughout the week.
 - Develop the habit of addressing any questions about the text itself.
 - Cultivate humility. Don’t be a “professional sermon listener.”



2. Biblical Theology



Biblical Theology

“Ignorance of God – ignorance both of His ways and of the practice of communion with Him – lies at the root of the church’s weakness today.” This is because “Christian minds have been conformed to the modern spirit: the spirit, that is, that spawns great thoughts of man and leaves room for only small thoughts of God.”

- J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*

Biblical Theology

- Today, many *believe* to be true simply what they *desire* to be true. Many long-held Christian beliefs are altered or reshaped to make Christianity more relevant or palatable to today's hearer.
- What sets a healthy church apart is not simply that a pastor preaches from God's Word, but that what he preaches is actually in line with what God's Word says.
- We need a biblical understanding of God in his character and his ways with us.

Biblical Theology

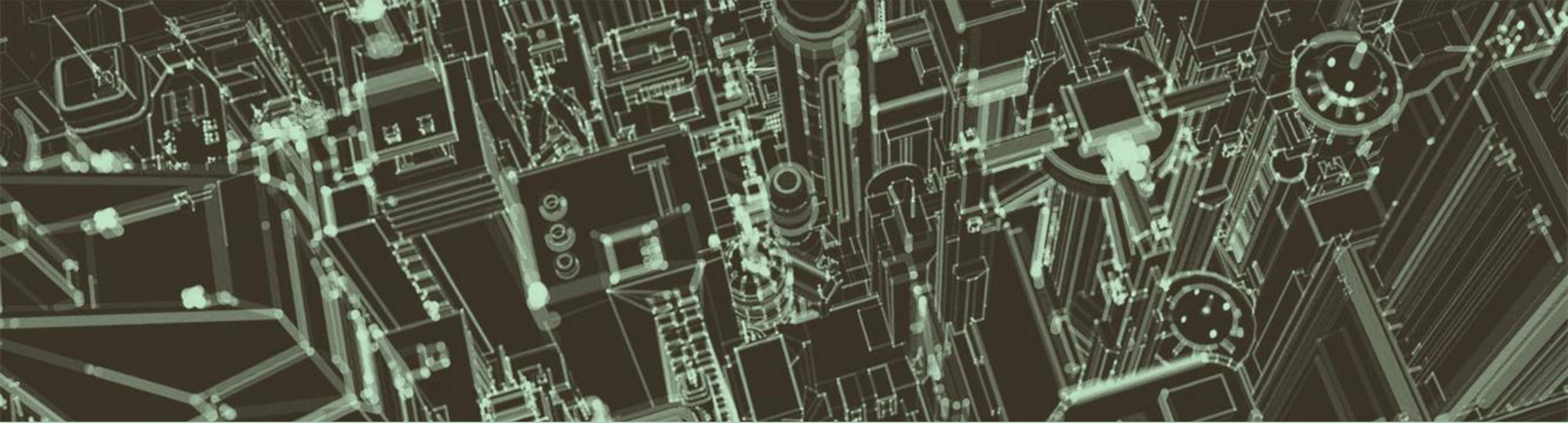
- What is Biblical theology for the church member?
 - 1. To practice biblical theology is to know God himself.
 - We must keep in mind that the Bible is the self-revelation of God; it is our source material to knowing God straight from God himself.
 - 2. To practice biblical theology is to know God's macro story of redemption.
 - A biblical theologian is committed to understanding the history of revelation, the grand themes and doctrines of the Bible, and how they fit together.

Biblical Theology

- How does biblical theology work to promote health of the church and the church member?
 - 1. It helps us grow in our reverence for God.
 - “When we see that God is, always has been, and always will be the same creating, holy, faithful, loving, and sovereign God for us that he has been for others, we are stirred to faith and awe in God.”
 - 2. It helps us to overcome our wrong ideas.
 - 3. It helps inoculate the church against doctrinal controversies.
 - 4. It is necessary to fulfilling the Great Commission.
 - 5. It deepens our understanding of and facility with the gospel.

Biblical Theology

- Ways to become a biblical theologian as a church member:
 - Read a good book on Biblical theology. (Ask Aaron or Eli for recommendations.)
 - Study the Scriptures thematically. (This should supplement a main diet of verse-by-verse, in context study.)
 - Adopt the New Testament's attitude toward the Old Testament.
 - Study the Old Testament with Jesus and the New Testament in view.
 - Study the books of prophecy in the Old Testament.
 - Know and agree to support your church's statement of faith.
 - Seek doctrinal unity and avoid needless disputes.



QUESTIONS?

