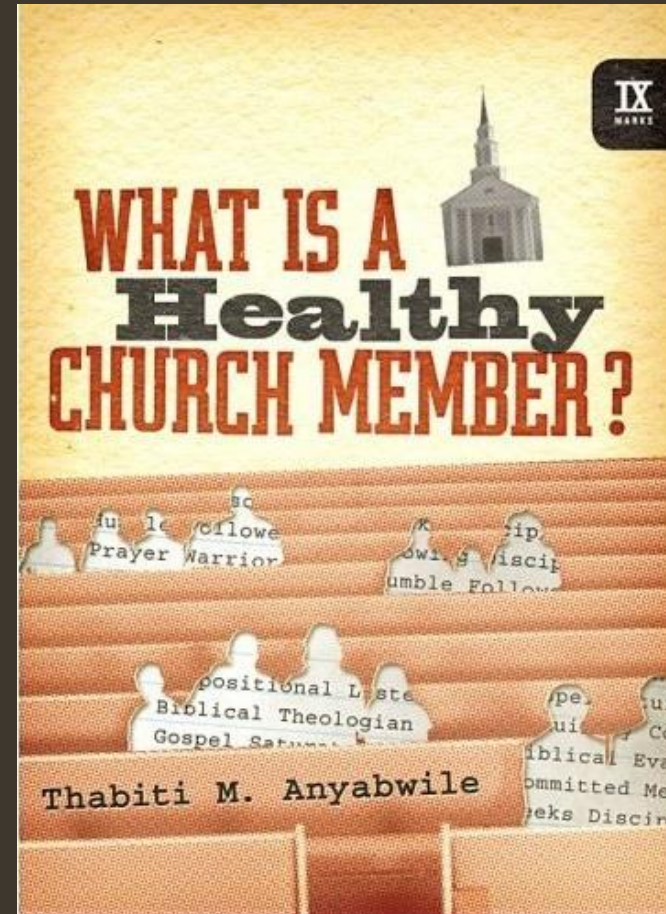
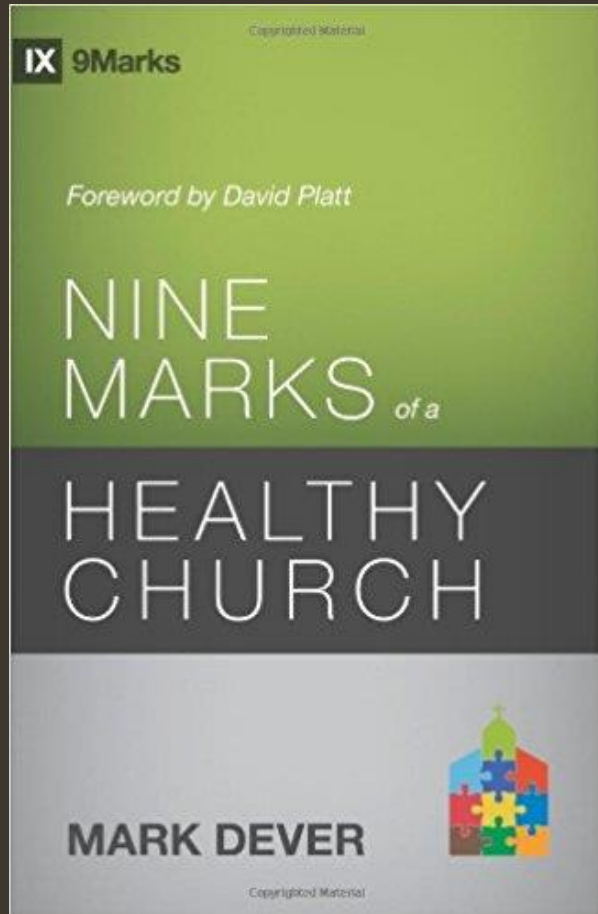


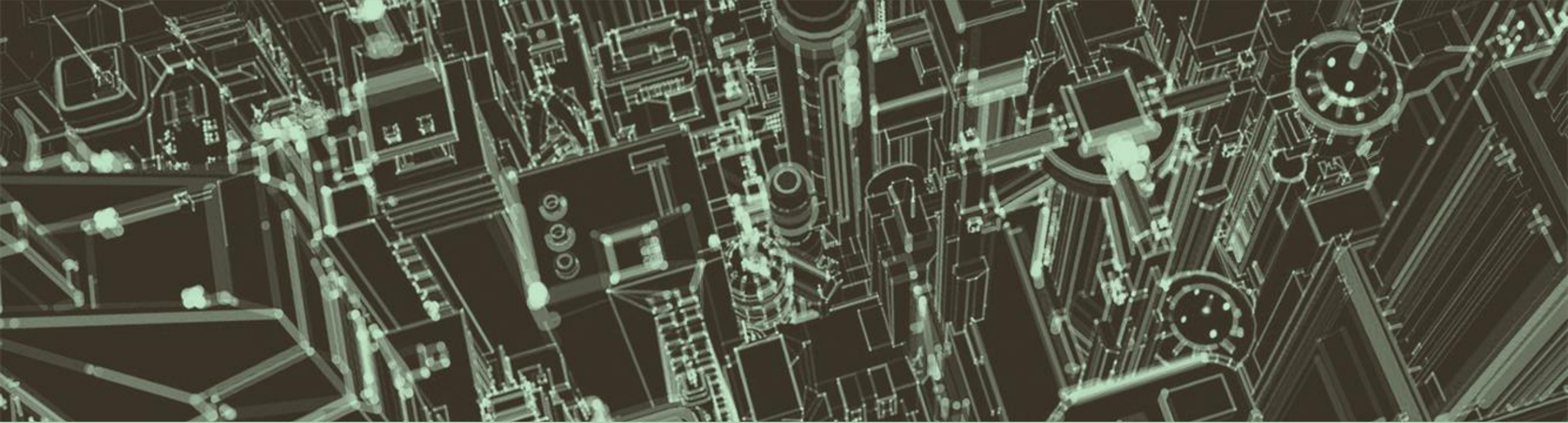
What Is A Healthy Church? Part 2

CITY SESSIONS



SOURCE MATERIAL





3. Biblical Understanding of the Gospel



Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

- Christianity is all about news: the good news!
 - In the New Testament, the word used to describe Jesus' message of salvation is *evangel*, literally “good news.”
- The Gospel is the greatest need in the world, but it is also the greatest need in the church.
- So, as church members, we must be saturated in the Gospel if we want to be a healthy member of a healthy church.
- How do we do this?

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

- First, we must *know* the gospel.
 - If we must live by the gospel, we must know it well.
 - This includes knowing what the gospel is not. It is not simply...
 - ...that we are okay.
 - ...that God is love.
 - ...that Jesus wants to be our friends.
 - ...that we should live right.
 - ...that all our problems will be fixed if we follow Jesus.
 - ...that God wants us to be healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

“The gospel or good news of Jesus Christ is that God the Father, who is holy and righteous in all his ways, is angry with sinners and will punish sin. Man, who disobeys the rule of God, is alienated from the love of God and is in danger of an eternal and agonizing condemnation at the hands of God. But God, who is also rich in mercy, because of his great love, sent his eternal Son born by the virgin Mary, to die as a ransom and a substitute for the sins of rebellious people. And now, through the perfect obedience of the Son of God and his willing death on the cross as payment for our sins, all who repent will be saved from the wrath of God to come, be declared just in his sight, have eternal life, and receive the Spirit of God as a foretaste of the glories of heaven with God himself.”

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

- Second, we must desire to hear the gospel and preach the gospel to ourselves.
 - Hearing the gospel and diving into its depths regularly “increases our knowledge of the message, our affection for our Savior, and our skill in sharing the message.”
 - Listen actively for the gospel and try to hear it afresh each time.
- Third, we must take the Gospel to its conclusion.
 - Ultimately, God is the gospel, the good news.

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

“Until the gospel *events* of Good Friday and Easter and the gospel *promises* of justification and eternal life lead you to behold and embrace *God himself* as your highest joy, you have not embraced the gospel of God. You have embraced some of his gifts. You have rejoiced over some of his rewards. But you have not yet been awakened to why the gifts, the rewards, and the miracles have come. They have come for one great reason: that you might behold forever the glory of God in Christ, and by beholding become the kind of person who delights in God above all things, and by delighting display his supreme beauty and worth with ever-increasing brightness and bliss forever.”

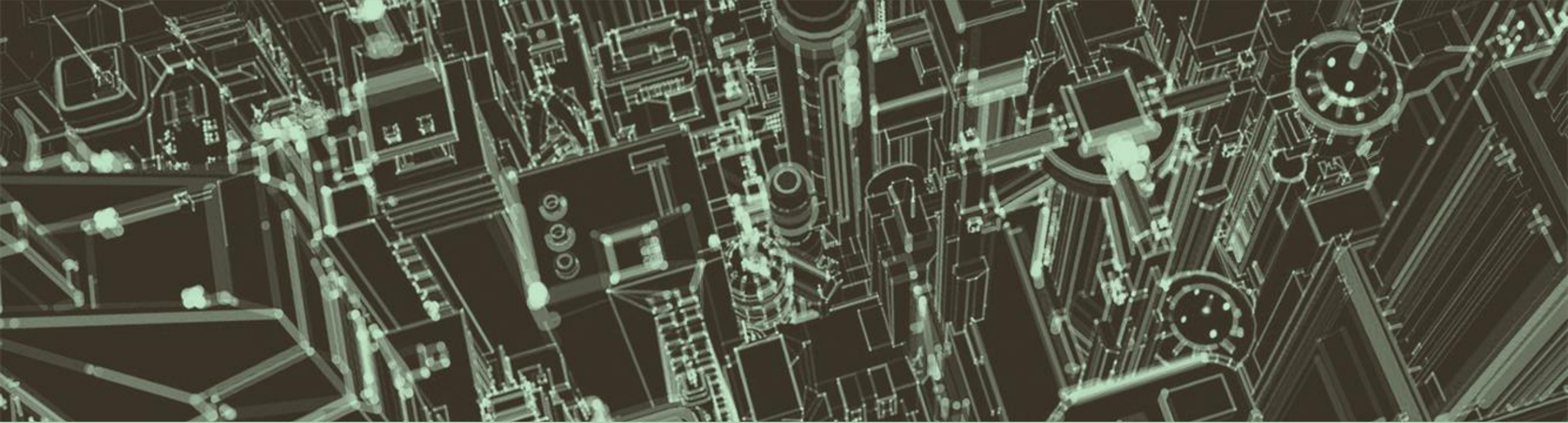
– John Piper

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

- Fourth, we must order our lives around the gospel.
 - It must take priority in all areas of life.
 - What are some ways to organize your daily life around the gospel?
- Fifth, we must share the gospel.
 - “If we would contribute to the health of our local congregations, we must be committed not only to harvesting the gospel for ourselves but to shipping it to others as well.”

Biblical Understanding of the Gospel

- Sixth, and last, we must guard the gospel.
 - The New Testament places this responsibility more on the congregation than even the pastors.
 - “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be eternally accursed.” Galatians 1:8-9
- The gospel calls for a radical response. It calls for both faith and repentance.



4. Biblical Understanding of Conversion



Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- The world treats a need to change with great suspicion, but every human being feels a deep need for change.
- “Human nature...is in a formative state. It is being changed into the image of the thing it loves.” – A. W. Tozer
- When we encounter the true gospel, we must (and will) change.
 - This change is possible despite the world’s skepticism.
 - This change is possible by the power of the gospel message.
 - This change is not just an adjustment, but a full turn, a new life of worshipping God instead of ourselves.

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- What will this change involve?
 - It is not merely mental acceptance.
 - There are two problems here: those who don't think they are converted when they are and those who think they are converted when they are not.
 - It is not merely moral resolve.
 - The main thing this change involves is beginning to rely on Christ alone.

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- How does this change happen?
 - Do we do nothing?
 - Some say that “if we do not save ourselves...then it is the simple fact that God has saved us,” but “the Bible teaches that in the process of conversion, we must do something.”
 - Do we do everything?
 - The Bible teaches clearly that we make this decision ourselves, but it is also obvious that the Bible does not teach self-salvation.
 - God must work saving faith in us!

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 11:9
- “But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually.”
1 Corinthians 2:14
- “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” John 6:44

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- In John 3:1-21, Jesus teaches that we must be “born again.”
- “Jesus taught that we must act but he also taught that we can act only if God’s actions are behind our own.”
- “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for...there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” Joel 2:32 (Rom. 10:13)
- “Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:24
- “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- The Bible teaches that the great exchange of conversion comes normally through hearing/studying God's Word.
 - Isaiah 55:10-11
 - “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.” Romans 10:17
- “Consider this carefully: God would not promise this if he were not the one ultimately responsible for bearing the fruit, for our conversion, for our response to him.”
 - “All who were appointed for eternal life believed.” Acts 13:48

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- God is responsible for bearing the fruit of his Word, of the gospel, in us, but he chooses to send his message through us.
 - Cornelius' conversion through Peter in Acts 10

“Conversion is the radical turn from an enslaved life of pursuing sin to a free life of pursuing and worshiping God. Conversion is a change of life, not merely a decision. This change is not a matter of moral rectitude, self help, or mere behavior modification. It is not accomplished by outward displays or religious practices like “walking the aisle.” It cannot be accomplished by human effort but only by the power of God. Conversion is a change so dramatic that it requires the intervention of God the Holy Spirit.”

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- So what can we do as church members?
- “The first order of business is to know our own souls. Are we trusting in the finished work of Christ alone for our salvation? Is there evidence of God’s grace in our lives? Are we growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, in the fruit of the Spirit, and in the virtues mentioned in Christ’s beatitudes?”
- The book of 1 John offers some practical tests for us to apply to ourselves...

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

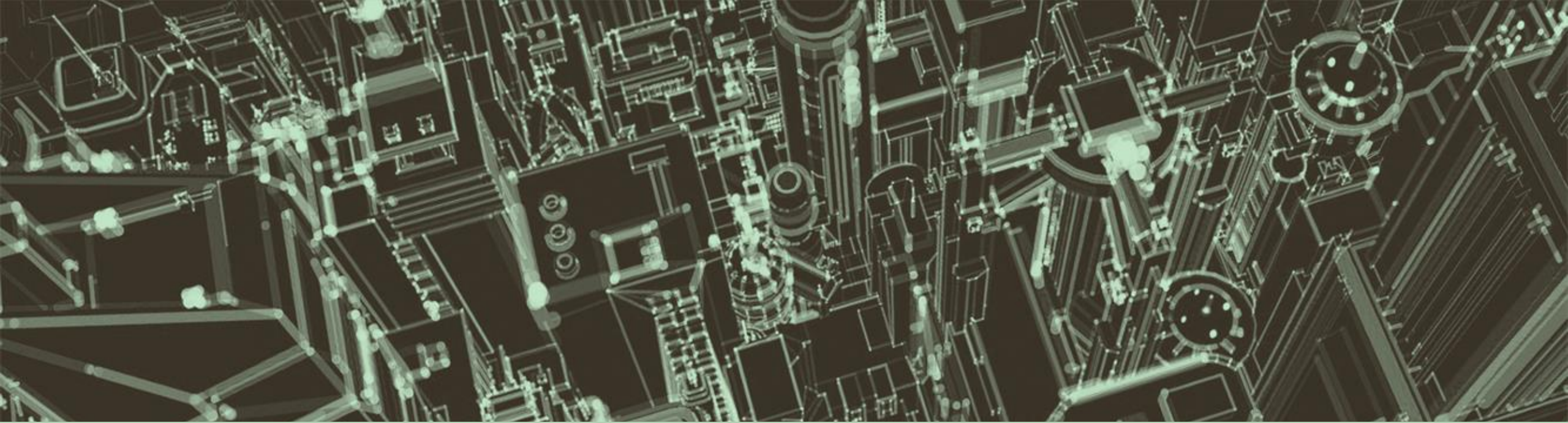
- Do we walk in the light or the darkness?
 - 1 John 1:6-10; 3:5
 - “Genuine converts to Christ grieve at their sin.”
- Do we love God the Father?
 - 1 John 2:15, 22-23
- Do we love other Christians?
 - 1 John 5:1; 3:14-15, 18-19
 - “If our love of other Christians is cold, we need to examine whether or not we have savingly believed on Christ Jesus the Son of God.”

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- Do we have the testimony of the Spirit that we are children of God?
 - 1 John 3:24; 4:13-14; Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15-16
- Are we persevering in the faith?
 - 1 John 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5
 - “Genuine faith is a persevering faith. This doesn’t mean that hard things in life don’t sometimes cause doubt or discomfort. But it does mean that the genuine Christian presses onward in faith, trusting God and his good plans and will.”

Biblical Understanding of Conversion

- “Asking these kinds of questions is best done in the fellowship of the local church, among committed and growing Christians who can help us see ourselves accurately.”
 - DO NOT isolate yourselves with these questions!
- In addition to an inward look, we need to look outward.
 - “When it comes to the work of evangelism, the healthy church member must properly understand who it is that actually converts the sinner; it is God the Holy Spirit.”
 - This means that “evangelism is not a matter of clever technique but of relying on the Spirit of God...”



QUESTIONS?

