

America's Birthday Candles Are Dimming, and John Maxwell Knows Why

On this, the weekend of America's birthday celebration, the nation's cake reveals a number of candles snuffed out. Churches in America—as well as the Christian faith—are on the decline. A recent *Washington Post* article says for the first time in history, less than half of Americans now identify as church members. Leadership expert John Maxwell attributes this to a leadership crisis based on two shocking differences he sees between corporate leaders and pastors.

“Every time a church goes out, if you think of America like a big birthday cake ... every time a little candle goes out, America just gets slightly dimmer, and I think we're seeing that,” author, pastor and leadership coach Chris Sonksen tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

“If you look from 1950 to now, 2021, so 71 years, you'll see just a continual decrease in those who claim faith,” Sonksen says. “And you'll see a decrease in Christian churches and a rise in other faiths. ... If you just follow the last 70 years, you're 19 years away from Christianity being much further behind in the religious category.”

Sonksen met with Maxwell to discuss this decline, knowing Maxwell's oft-quoted maxim, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”

When Sonksen asked about the difference between corporate president leaders and Christian pastors and leaders, Maxwell's answer revealed the leadership crisis, he says, noting that Maxwell “didn't even blink” before responding.

“The corporate leaders are much hungrier to learn than the Christian pastors and leaders,” Maxwell told him.

Not only that, but the corporate leaders act out that hunger. They “Want to develop, and they’ll do anything they can to make that happen,” Maxwell said. He added, “I find it very sad that when I worked with the president of a wireless company, he’s much more passionate about selling cell phones” than the pastors he works with are passionate about their churches or gospel-focused ministry.

✖ To hear more from Chris Sonksen about why churches are declining and what we can do about it, listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* at this link, and subscribe to *Greenelines* on your favorite podcast platform for more inspiring stories like this one. Find Sonksen’s latest book, *When Your Church Feels Stuck*, wherever fine books are sold. {eoa}

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