

It's Time to Stop Entertaining the Troops and Go to Battle

The days are changing fast, and so is the way many churches have chosen to operate. Churches are expanding, and with the expansion comes a breaking away from what many of us grew up with. Steeples and stained glass have given way to worship centers with black-box, theater-style stages that are optimized for flashy rock-style experiences, complete with laser lights that are sure to grab the attention of church attendees as well as the livestreaming viewers.

It's not just the church buildings that are changing, but also the way church is conducted. Gone are the hymns that our parents and grandparents sang with great reverence. Gone is the organist, who played, "Softly and Tenderly, Jesus Is Calling" or "Onward, Christian Soldiers. Now, there is roaringly loud modern Christian music in true rock concert fashion. There are laser lights, selfie stations, mass baptism "plunge parties" and social media hashtags.

Today, there is even "Church Merch": baptismal T-shirts, ball caps, coffee mugs and more. I guess you could say that the church has changed with the times. But, is that change a good thing? Yes, we can sing and dance if we want to. We can slide into the baptismal pool, which is now an inflatable hot tub. But all of these feel-good experiences do not add up to salvation. Is the "feel" real?

What has it all come to? Is it the church with the best Christian rock style band or the coolest waterslide baptismal? Is it the one that has the most delicious lattes or the "Christian-lite" sermons, leaving church members with spiritual emptiness alongside a bag filled with church logo

items and a specialty coffee to go?

The time for entertaining the troops is over, for we have entered a new season, one that calls for us all to put on the full armor of God every day, and not just for going to church. We are the church. The kingdom of God is within us. The spiritual warfare is more intense than it has ever been. "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, NIV).

The last days are upon us, and soon, we shall see the King of kings break through the clouds with power and great glory. While we may not know the day nor the hour, we certainly know the signs that Jesus spoke of, and they are coming to pass with great acceleration.

So, is it the music, the lattes, holiday cookie parties or the church merch, served to you with a Christian-lite 30-minute service, that keeps you attending your church?

If so, it is time to reevaluate and dive deep into your reasons. Church is not a social hour or an entertainment venue where the pastor becomes the star of the show. It is a time to be taught the uncompromising Word of God.

It's not time to preach a watered-down, compromising, ear-tickling sermon. There are people who are sitting or sometimes standing in these modern worship centers who are hanging by a thread and have come to find Jesus, the living Word of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

Just when we need to go to battle against the enemy of our souls more than ever before, it seems that there may be an enemy within our Christian camp, seeking to minimize the power of the name of Jesus. There is nothing new under the sun. This enemy has been at it for a very long time, and he is a master of deception.

As the days grow short, the enemy is trying to fool the very elect, if it were possible. Don't let it be possible. Do not take your eyes off of Jesus. To be forewarned is to be forearmed with the name that is above every name.

May the Spirit of all truth arm you, protect you and teach you the way and the where in which you should go.

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