

GNITN

#411

Chaos And Distractions

A Year Of Distractions

Way back in January of this year I did a [video](#) about 2024 being a year of distractions. Previous to that, in another [video](#) I said this would also be a year of chaos. In both videos I laid out the case for both and now that we are a quarter of the way through the year we find ourselves in a time of both this week. In the body of Christ at least the latest uproar is about a men's conference and two ministers definitely not agreeing on how it started. I debated if I should address it, but as I prayed I saw it as evidence of both distraction and chaos with more than enough blame to go around. I don't take this lightly since it is also becoming a point of division even in my own family. But if we don't learn from these events, then they will most likely happen again and again in a time when unity of the body and clarity of purpose in the Church will be desperately needed as this year goes on. We need not only unity and clarity but we will need spiritual discernment to combat the spiritual forces aligned against us. So far, we seem to be failing on all points and it is concerning. Allow me to use the example of what occurred in that men's conference to illustrate all my points.

If You Didn't Know

In Springfield, Missouri a church hosted a men's conference. That's not new since they do it all the time and up until this year, they came and went with little to no fanfare. To be fair, I have helped in the planning and support for various outreaches that featured men doing feats of strength like tearing phones books in half, blowing up hot water bottles and breaking huge blocks of ice. I know the value of getting the attention of people who would not ordinarily come to a church function. Having a monster truck or even a tank come into the venue isn't troubling to me. But this particular event opened with a man dressed in leather who ripped off his shirt then performed acrobatics on a pole. Yes, he swallowed a sword and then climbed up the pole and then came quickly down head first, things he'd done on popular talent shows around the world, winning one in Russia. And he defended himself in an [article](#) on *churchleaders.com* this way: *Magala continued, "Pastor Mark Driscoll's remarks about my act failed to recognize the difference between a male strip tease and a stunt performance rooted in art and sport."*

"Only an uninformed person would draw a comparison between my act and an inappropriate performance. I feel that this danger act is perfect for the Stronger Men's Conference," he said. "It provides inspiration to the audience and permission for them to reach new heights of what's possible in their lives."

Dan Meyer, who is the leader of *Sword Swallowers Association International* and a friend of Alex, and interestingly is a member of the church that Pastor Mark Driscoll leads, added this: *"It wasn't a 'raunchy male pole dance' or 'stripper' performance," Meyer said. "Alex is the top of his field as a master in the classical 12th century martial arts acrobatic discipline called Chinese Pole acrobatics which he performed at the Olympics."*

Meyer added, "This is WAY different than a male stripper. It's like comparing classical ballet with striptease. No comparison. The convention hired Alex because the theme was 'strong men' and Alex is the best at what he does!"

Magala ended his response this way:

Concluding his statement, Magala said that he is a Christian and has “always aimed to use my talents to inspire and entertain audiences in a way that respects my faith.”

“The act in question was designed to be a celebration of physical human achievements and is aligned with the James River Church’s purpose in bringing others into the light of God,” he said. “It’s essential to approach such performances with an understanding of their intention rather than reducing them to mere entertainment.”

More Division

Magala was no saint before he became a Christian and if one peruses his Facebook page [pictures](#), that is clearly evident. The moves he made at the men’s conference are also seen in these pictures and in a video from his YouTube [page](#) which for some, point to his stripper pole days. He certainly is talented, but there are things you see on his web site that are [troubling](#) for somebody who is wanting people to see him as someone who wants to give God all the glory. I can’t speak to his heart and he and others attest that he is a believer, however I did see a [video](#) he posted that shows him worshipping Buddha less than 5 months ago. The major concern of Driscoll and others who watched the performance was the spiritual dynamic around it and mixing spiritual beliefs like this in one’s life could be the reason. Many people on social media that I read debated over and over again about whether it was an innocent act or one that brought a spiritual darkness into the conference. When I say there is a huge divide over this, I’m not exaggerating. People are rarely in the middle on this with some saying they took pole dancing as a form of exercise and it was just a workout and others saying it was downright borderline pornographic. Most of the women were forgiving and supportive while others were aghast at what they say was a male stripper working the pole for entertainment. Even some who attended the event joked about seeing a pole dancer ripping off his shirt for show and what they would see next. For me, I instantly had bells going off in my spirit when I saw a snippet of what he did. I attested it to just the performance, but I now know there was more to it. Much more.

A Spirit Came In

This is where Christian leaders, Driscoll among them drew their lines in the sand. They said a spirit of Jezebel came into the conference and should have been addressed and wasn’t. A few YouTube videos I found to be good were [one](#) by Mike Signorelli, [another](#) by Jeremiah Johnson and [one](#) by Troy Brewer. The division between Pastor Lindell and Pastor Driscoll is bad and needs prayer and I believe they will work this out, however it is a distraction to the bigger issue and that is we are not discerning enough to not only sense when spiritual darkness is allowed to be in our midst and to then address it head on. As Pentecostals we should be leaders in discerning quickly and then acting promptly to rebuke demonic activities. I have been in charge of services where spiritual decisions needed to be made on whether it was of God, the flesh or if it was demonic. It’s not easy, but it comes with the proverbial territory. In this day and age of instant media exposure, situations like the one at the men’s conference can and will happen. It is hindsight, but this would have been a great example of how a prophet, even a flawed one is allowed to speak and in this case, how Holy Spirit could have flowed through all in attendance to recognize the controlling spirit working in our world and to repent of it having a part in our lives.

My prayer is that the body of Christ will do better next time. Specifically I pray that Brothers Lindell and Driscoll will be reconciled and that Alex Magala will get the discipleship he needs to grow in his relationship with Christ. Godly things can grow out of this. But we need to also be willing to say the hard things at even the most uncomfortable times and to be willing to respond to a prophet like Nathan asking us to repent. We may need to be the one with the hard word to deliver or we could be the one receiving it. Let us be obedient to speak and humble enough to repent. And let us all pray for Holy Spirit to rain revival down on His children to let the watching world know we're not always perfect, but we serve a forgiving God who will clean us up after we err. That's an outcome everyone should want in the end.