



WHAT IS SYNCRETISM?

And How Can We Avoid It?

Fire and Go: Lesson 22 | A Course for African Pastors

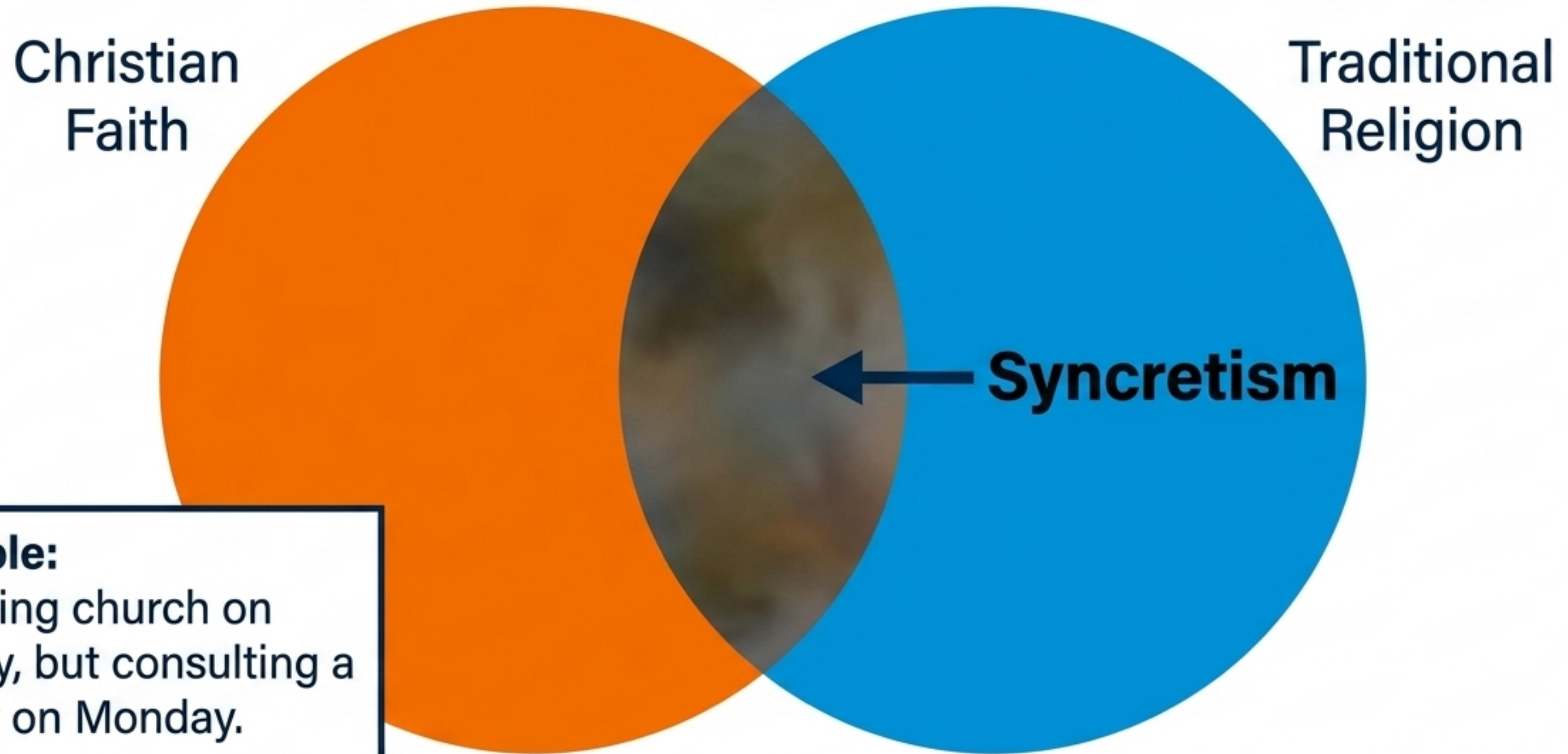
You shall have no
other gods before Me.
— Exodus 20:3

THE THREAT FROM WITHIN

- **Not a rejection** of the Gospel
- A **mixture** of the Gospel
- A **loss** of power

DEFINING THE MIXTURE

Syncretism = The fusing of incompatible religious systems.



Example:

Attending church on Sunday, but consulting a diviner on Monday.



THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

- **Ancestral veneration**
- **Consultation of traditional healers**
- **Use of protective charms**
- **Invocation of other spiritual powers**

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE

CONTEXTUALIZATION	SYNCRETISM
Adapts the FORM	Changes the CONTENT
Language, music, structure	Beliefs, demands, power
Preserves Gospel integrity	Dilutes Gospel truth
“How do we express the Gospel here?”	“How do we make the Gospel fit other gods?”

WHY DOES IT THRIVE?

1. Inadequate Discipleship:

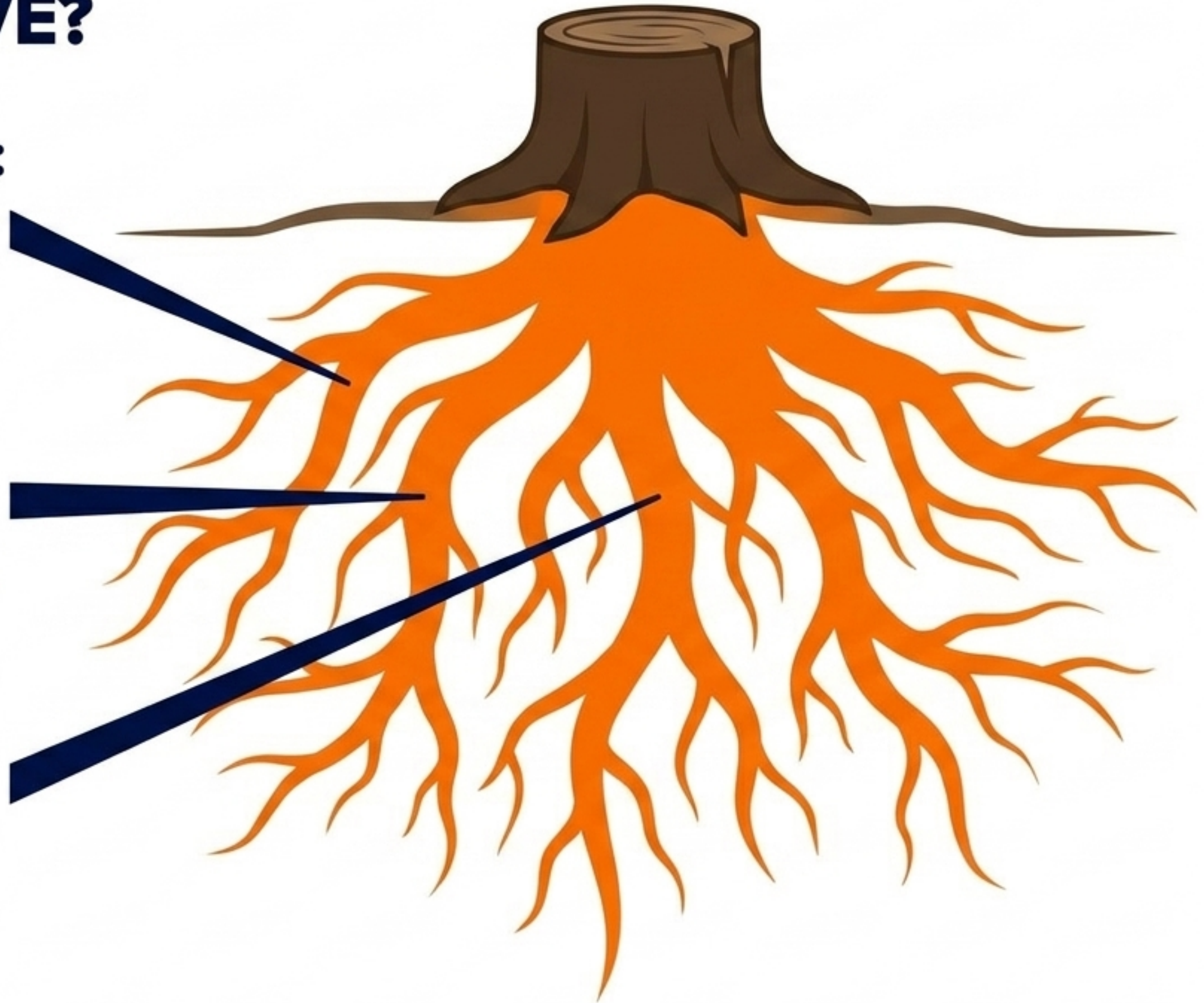
Rapid evangelism without deep teaching.

2. Western Blind Spots:

Inherited theology that ignored the spiritual world.

3. Unresolved Fear:

The underlying engine of mixture.



**“There is no fear in love; but
perfect love casts out fear...”**
– 1 John 4:18

When people are afraid, they reach for what they know.

IDENTIFYING THE FRUIT



THE CRISIS MIXTURE

Seeking traditional healers during severe illness.

THE RITUAL MIXTURE

Ancestral rites quietly performed at Christian funerals or namings.

THE PROTECTION MIXTURE

Wearing traditional amulets alongside Christian prayer.



THE THEOLOGICAL ANTIDOTE

Preach the Complete Sufficiency of Christ.

- Colossians 2:9-10 — We are complete in Him.
- He is the head over all principality and power.
- Every need (protection, blessing, healing) is fully met in Jesus.



THE SPIRITUAL ANSWER



Provide Biblical Alternatives.

- Take the spiritual world seriously.
- Provide genuine deliverance and healing ministry.
- Do not leave a spiritual vacuum for traditional religion to fill.



THE PASTORAL RESPONSE



Build Communities of Grace.

- Syncretism thrives in isolation and secrecy.
- Respond with pastoral care, not public shaming.
- Teach believers out of fear, don't just condemn their actions.

THE PENTECOSTAL ADVANTAGE

Filling the Vacuum with the Spirit

- We do not ignore the spiritual realm; we conquer it in Jesus' name.
- Gifts of the Spirit demonstrate God's supreme power over local deities.
- Experiential encounters with God destroy the appeal of false religion.

REFLECTION

1. What is the critical difference between contextualization and syncretism in your own words?
2. What common manifestations of syncretism do you see in your community?
3. How does a lack of discipleship contribute to this mixture?
4. How does the Pentecostal emphasis on Christ's sufficiency act as an antidote?



PRAYER FOCUS

- **REVEAL:** Ask the Holy Spirit to expose any hidden syncretism in your own life, ministry, or congregation.
- **COURAGE:** Pray for the boldness to address these issues with grace and biblical clarity.
- **FULLNESS:** Ask God to fill every spiritual vacuum in your church with the power of the Holy Spirit.



ACTION STEP

Conduct a Pastoral Assessment.

- 1. Review your congregation's practices around major life events (births, marriages, illness, deaths).**
- 2. Identify ONE specific traditional practice that has crept into these events.**
- 3. Develop a 4-week teaching plan to address it with Grace, Truth, and the Sufficiency of Christ.**