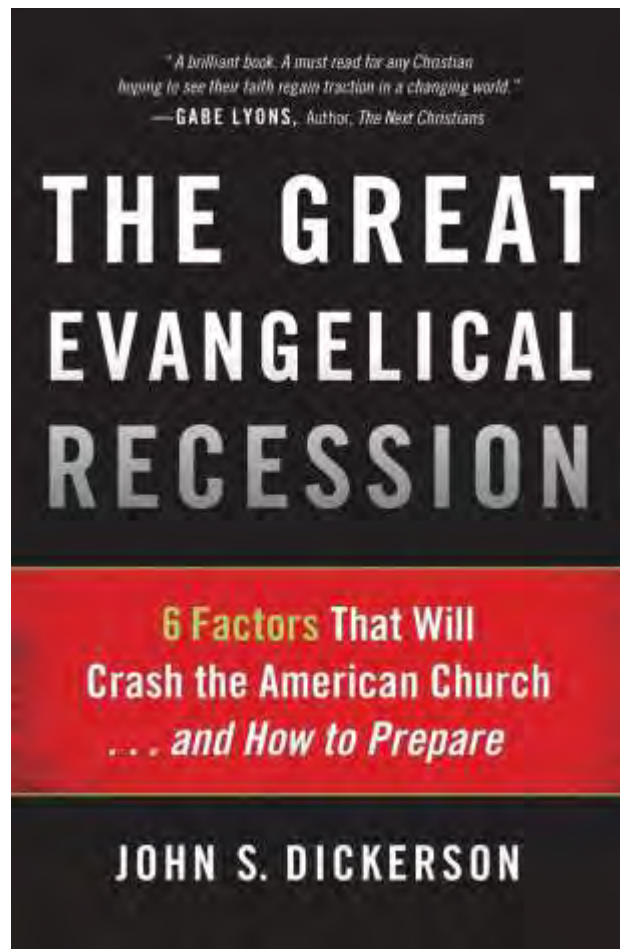


Unificationism and The Great Evangelical Recession by John S. Dickerson (2013)

Maarten Meijer
March 28, 2022



A candid evaluation of the status of the (evangelical) Christian church in the US. Parallels to the Unification Church are evident.

We began this study by noting that the evangelical church is not nearly as large as we have been told. To honestly assess our position, we must face another layer of brutal fact. We are losing the people we do have. If the church is the body of Christ, then that body is bleeding out. And it is not just our 20-somethings who are leaving, though they are exiting faster than any other group.

This may be the most disturbing of all trends we must face - our failure to retain our own children as disciples. Simply keeping our own kids would hold us steady with population growth. But we are not keeping our kids or holding our percentage in the population.

Research indicates that more than half of those born into evangelicalism are leaving the movement during their twenties. And the majority of them never return. This departure figure has never been higher in the United States. The number of those who return has never been lower.

Princeton professor Kenda Creasy Dean suggests that the loss of our youth is not an aberration, but

an indication of what's actually going on in the larger church, among all generations. She quotes Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, who put it this way: "Most American youth faithfully mirror the aspirations, lifestyles, practices and problems of the adult world into which they are being socialized. In these ways, adolescents may actually serve as a very accurate barometer of the condition of the culture and institutions of our larger society."



Maarten Meijer

Margaret Feinberg had it right when she said: " More than anything, the church is very, very tired - so many new programs, initiatives and events. In that place of exhaustion, we don't need the latest program or initiative as much as we need people who are falling in love with God and the Scriptures."

Healing the loss of our people - young and old - will require a shift in how we measure health. George Barna has found that most United States churches measure their success or failure by attendance: "Our research discovered that when Protestant churches attempt to evaluate their success, one of the primary elements they gauge is attendance. Rather than evaluate spiritual growth, most churches settle for measuring numerical growth, even though a variety of studies have shown there is little correlation between those two metrics."

Are we making disciples? Not just convincing converts, but making disciples? Not just filling the seats of auditoriums, but training the souls of transformed individuals? Are we valuing the quality of our discipleship more than the quantity of our attendance?