

# Kingdom Report

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## Christianity Without Tears

A shocking photograph appeared in my inbox from my bother in America. It was the platform entertainment for the annual Men's Conference in the largest megachurch of the Assemblies of God. This is the dead end of church as religious spectacle and Christianity without tears.

The photo below is from the opening night at Pastor John Lindell's annual men's conference at megachurch James River Assemblies of God in Springfield MO. From "The Roys Report" I quote...."The conference opened with an act by "bad boy" Alex Magala a daredevil sword-swallower who moonlights as a pole-dancing striptease artist at gay nightclubs."



James River is at the headquarters of the International Assemblies of God, its largest church in America of the largest Pentecostal church in the world.

I grew up in the Assemblies of God and have fond memories of youth camps where at the age of 12 I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Amid week long camps and nights of revival preaching and late hours of praying with hundreds of other kids till we came hoarse of voice. This is not the church I grew up in. But it is unfortunately all too often today the gospel of personal fulfillment and self actualization exported around the world by the American church culture.

This issue is vitally important to we the church of the 'Global South. What is obvious is that this is a symptom of a toxic culture that has infected the church in America and it is spreading like a virus. We are seeing signs of this all across South Africa and in

other places of the African church....church as visual spectacle and entertainment with the underlying message of "what can Jesus do for me." The answer all too often is a 'Christianity without tears.'.

There are tears and then there are tears.....

The tears of repentance....

There is a valid Christianity of no more tears. We come to the Lord with tears of repentance and sorrow for a wasted sinful life and emerge forgiven and rejoicing in the goodness and grace of God.

The Pentecostal movement grew enormously world wide in the decades of the 50's, 60's, 70's with mass evangelism and missions church plantings worldwide. The theme: It's the end times, Jesus is coming, this is the generation. It was powerful it was driven by the tears of compassion of dedicated missionaries and evangelists with compassion for the lost and the urgency of the hour.

And then came the 80's 90's new century 21 and the "end times" seemed less urgent, in fact nothing was working out as prophesied. In its place was needed reason for "forsake not the gathering of yourselves".....why Sunday church meetings, 100 times a year? Why hundreds of thousands of books, sermons, broadcasts, seminars, conferences, instant information download by internet, church plantings in every nation on earth.....what is the message for the age for the times. What brought people together?

The tears of disappointment...

Increasingly the message became centered on "What can Jesus do for me". No tears needed because supernatural "power and prosperity" can turn tears into joys of victory. But instead came tears of disappointment. In the midst of the increasingly complex presentations of what should be a simple gospel story people lost sight of the "T's & C's" that came with discipleship....take up the cross. Die to self. Seek first the Kingdom of God.

**There are tears and then there are the tears that are needed for this next great move of God all over the world.**

Let me turn our attention to the photo above and the crisis for the church of the new move of God.

We all know the answer to the Bible quiz question, What is the shortest verse in the Bible? "Jesus wept." (John 11:35). Let me describe to you the tears of compassion that Jesus cried even knowing that Lazarus would come up out of the grave in moments.

It is the compassion in the heart of God for all His human creation. It was that compassion described in Psalm 103:13 "**Like a father who pities his children so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame he remembers we are dust.**" Who will cry with Jesus and have compassion on the weak of the earth?

So let me sketch you an alternate scenario for pastor John Lindell's mega Assemblies of God church and their annual Men's Convention of thousands.

Suppose instead of inviting a professional pole dancing male stripper to visual for you how you too can have an amazingly toned and powerful body with discipline and exercise...just suppose he had instead invited the President of Malawi to address his "mighty men".

What? Why? Because the president of Malawi is Lazarus Chakwera who before he was president he was Pastor Chakwera the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God Churches in Malawi as well as the President of the Assemblies of God University there.

And why invite him to speak? Because if our brother Lazarus had the opportunity to address thousands of fellow Assembly of God men he would have probably ended up in tears as he poured his heart out.

Why? Because Malawi is now in its 3d year of drought and 40% of his people are on the verge of starvation and he made a call to the world for food aid. And his heart is crying to the Lord....help me!

Now what has that to do with thousands of men at an Assemblies of God men's convention in Missouri USA? How could he not share with them his tears for his hungry people? Well if a genuine prophet was present there he would have a word from the Lord similar to what Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 14:16. Seeing thousands of men, women and children all very hungry he told His disciples "Feed them". Because Jesus has not lost His compassion for the poor and the hungry. He is crying with bro Chakwera,

But pastor John Lindell could not say with the disciples "But Lord we only have 5 loaves and 2 fishes". Why? Because Missouri is in the middle of the great American Midwest farm belt - the greatest food production center in the world farmed by tens of thousands of the most knowledgeable and productive farmers in the world and here I can assure you of two things.

- the vast majority of those farmers are Spirit filled, Bible believing people of God
- and most of those are either members of the Assemblies of God or likeminded Pentecostal or Baptist churches.

The tears of a President and man of God of your own church is crying my people are starving and I can also assure you a good percentage of those men in that men's convention were Midwestern farmers....that would have touch their heart far more than a male stripper in their church.

And when a group of them on invitation from the President would go to visit Malawi they would be amazed. Why? because they would find a long strip of country that all along its eastern border has one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world. And they would say 'Hey there is land, there is abundance of water, forget the rain, we know how to fix this problem.'

And instead of meetings to see a male pole dancing stripper there would now be meetings of Spirit filled men who cry with the Lord for the hungry but know about tractors and seeds and irrigation and markets and processing and soil science and fertilizer use....and know not only how to grow food but cash crops and markets that will both feed a nation and put extra income into struggling families pockets.

This is the new era of compassion, a new way to express the tears of the Lord. The missionary and evangelistic and church planting teams from America have done a wonderful job for the Kingdom of God. The church has take root in Africa. It is now producing its own apostles and prophets and teachers and pastors.

But the work is not done. There are still tears of compassion from our Lord Jesus for the poor and the hungry and the sick. It will need new apostolic teams with different skill sets. But it will still need the same compassion and tears that won the souls of the lost.

This is not the time for church as entertainment venue. A church that has lost its ability to cry with Jesus for the cares on His heart. The message of this era is not "power and prosperity".

It is by our love expressed in compassion and tears that they will know that we are His disciples.