

Date	September 5, 2010
Series	The Meeting
Title	Two targets – which are you aiming at?
Big Idea	The Meeting is not about your comfort or mine. It's about God's pleasure.
Text	Psalms 15:1
Speaker	Roger Valci

Sermon Warning – This sermon is not only transformative individually; it is reformational ecclesiastically.

Movies have rating to pre-warn people that certain content. To some degree this sermon needs to have a rating on it to warn you of what is about to come. I believe the message you are about to hear is **solid** in its Biblical content, but its **reformatinal** in its effect. **While the message is quite simple. It's ramifications very profound.** Though I wrote it to address **the confusing expectations here at Valley Christian concerning The Meeting (that is Sunday morning service)**, it would be safe to say that this problem is a prevalent one in the American church as a whole.

Some have told me that my preaching style is too direct. Perhaps not encouraging enough. Part of that is my personality. I am a “bottom line” type of person and I call it as I see it. I challenge people, not to show you what I see in the text that you may not. I, like Paul, exhort you **“to live a life worthy of the calling you have received”** (Eph 4:1). I believe it is my job to **“to equip you to do a work for God that He has designed for you”** (Eph 4:11-13). I do believe the church is NOT primarily about **sociology** (meaning social groups), but **theology** (the glory of God) and **missiology** (the mission of His church to reach a city). I never want to be rude, arrogant or insensitive to one's struggles. Like Jesus, I aspire to **“comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable”**.

Let's begin in prayer and then we will get started.

"I am not comfortable":

Perhaps the most quoted line to me from people in this church is: **"I am not comfortable."**

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with the direction the church is going.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with the way you preach.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with the expressive worship style you are allowing.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with your attire on Sunday.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with tongues on Sunday morning.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with the manner we do communion.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with the fact you call us to respond to the message with an altar call.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with NOT knowing each week what is going to happen in The Meeting.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **with you talking about the new building.**"*

*"Pastor, I am not comfortable **when you talk about money.**"*

"Pastor, I am not comfortable..."

I believe it is time we talk about **this "comfort" criteria** and how it relates to The Meeting.

Now it is true that **when we struggle**, one of the first places **we should go is to God and to His people**. There is a grace of comfort through God's people to us when we suffer loss and grieve. But listening to these comments, **I don't believe that is the comfort people are asking for**.

Neither do I think **it is the "comfort" that we want all our members and guests to receive when they come to the hill**. I trust that our greeters and ushers sought you out and celebrated your presence. I also hope that you found that our welcome team helped you and your family navigate our sprawling campus. I understand that it can be a daunting task finding the location of: 1) our nursery, 2) kids church or 3) adult classes. It was for me when I first drove up here. If we are not helping you as good as or better than Nordrom does, talk to me or Pastor Don and we will fix it. **At VCC, we want to make this pilgrimage, this visit for you and your family worth your effort.**

I do believe people may feel uncomfortable because **they are simply connecting dots that simply not true**. I tell myself and my team often: **"Establish fact BEFORE you release emotion."** *Do you really have all the facts? Are you seeing things correctly? Have you taken the time to talk to the leader to get clarity to understand?*

If at any time you don't understand what is going on here at VCC, **come meet with me personally or show up on a Wednesday night.** Each week we talk about the sermon and service and answer **ANY AND ALL QUESTIONS** about The Meeting or the course of this ministry. My team and I would love the opportunity to sit down with you to help you in your spiritual journey or to talk to you about the mission and ministries of VCC. **This week I will meet with people in the Jr. High on Tuesday night because I leave for the Men's retreat Wednesday afternoon.**

I am simply equipping people to reach a city God loves. I have never strayed from that core message. Some say fine and dandy, **but what does that have to do with The Meeting?**

1. I do believe the events in this room **set the spiritual climate for this entire hill** for both church and school.
2. There is much confusion about the goal of this room. Is it worship? Is it witness? I believe we must clarify the target in the room in order to be the witness God has asked us to be in the city.

That being said, you must know that are many problems with this **"comfort"** target.

1. **Comfort is a "relative" term meaning what "comfortable" for one person is "offensive" to another.**

"I am comfortable raising my hands in worship."

"I am not comfortable when other people raise their hands or kneel."

"I want to come forward to the altar when I worship."

"I am not comfortable with people getting out of the aisle during worship."

"I am comfortable with hymns." "I am comfortable with choruses."

"I am not comfortable when the kids are here."

"I am not comfortable with messages that force me to evaluate my life."

2. **Because of these wide range of opinions, you must see that "comfort" is an impossible target.**

There is no way I can make everyone in this room (with all the different personalities, different backgrounds, different giftings and different desires) "comfortable". The moment I try to "comfort" one group, I begin to "upset" another. **It's an impossible endeavor.**

3. **"Comfort" is also "consumer minded" in approach.**

Folks, the American church has created a **false target** about what The Meeting is all about. In our consumer mentality, many people walk through those doors expecting that **their preferences, their tastes, their interests** will be served. Some come in with **scorecards**. They sit there and say, *"Serve my needs or I go somewhere else or punish you by withholding my tithe."* **Comfort makes The Meeting all about "me".** To quote our resident Bible scholar, Tim Ludden, *"The church today is about meism – my needs, my wants, my desires, my pleasure."* I agree with Tim. We have created the church of "me".

I don't believe anyone comes to church expectation free. We all have them. We just are not honest with ourselves with what they are and whether they are Biblical expectations. And if my expectation doesn't happen, in my consumer mindset, some get up and leave saying, *"I will go shopping elsewhere."*

4. **Pastors have fed into this “meism” because we want people to “like” us.**

And I blame the pastors in our culture for feeding into this. **Let me tell you, pastors tend to be insecure people and often they connect their self-worth and success to what people think.** Because of that, they have a hard time not feeding into the “meism”. Why? **Because we want people to like us and we take it very personally when people reject us.** We want to be **successful.** We don’t want to be **criticized.** And if we don’t watch out, we will become “man-pleasers” and not “God-pleasers.”

Diagnosis: We have created a church about the consumer. Pastor’s feed into this because we are afraid of rejection and declining attendance numbers. In the mean time, God’s needs and delights are ignored.

Nicky Gumble of Alpha speaks of the Anglican Church.

*While the worldwide church has been growing, the Anglican church is declining. We have been losing so many people that **some have speculated that even God has left the church of England.** There was an article in Private Eye which was entitled, **“God to leave the Church of England.”** It says, **“Following the example led by several Anglicans, God has indicated that He too is leaving the church in England.”** **“Friends of God believe the issue of woman priest have been behind the Almighty’s sudden decision to convert to Rome.”** **“According some sources close to God, He has been unhappy with the direction the church has taken for some time and has now finally has enough.”** A church of England spoken said, **“Losing God is a bit of a blow, but it is just something we are going to have to live with.”***

Let me tell you loud and clear: **The Meeting is NOT about your comfort.**

A very troubling QUESTION:

Let me start out our Biblical journey with a very troubling question from David. Psalm 15:1 asks:

Psa. 15:0 A psalm of David.

Psa. 15:1 **LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?**

This question by David already challenges our American consumer expectations about The Meeting.

1. It infers that **certain conditions** must be met before one can enter The Meeting. It puts forward the thought that The Meeting is something that requires **preparation** before entrance.
2. It suggests that if certain requirements are NOT met, then either the worshipper is **denied access to the presence of God** or that God Himself, **may NOT show up**.
3. It eliminates the idea that The Meeting is **entertainment**. It's all about **encounter**.

Proposition/Preview:

If the target of The Meeting is not my comfort, then what is The Meeting about? I have a proposition I want to bring before you today. **It is the ONLY point I have in this message.** I want to: 1) present it to you, 2) then look at the Scriptures if its true and 3) then discuss both this morning and on Tuesday night its ramifications for The Meeting. The proposition is this:

"The Meeting is not about your comfort or mine; it is about God's pleasure."

All throughout the Bible, The Meeting has been about one agenda item – God's pleasure.

In the OT, the priests labored tirelessly in the tabernacle and then later in the Temple to cultivate and invite, the presence of God. It was both an **awesome** and **fearful** thing. The ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies was seen as the literal presence of God on earth. **No man dared enter it uninvited and without preparation.** People would come to worship and sacrifice and the priest would ensure that worshipper would honor God in the manner He had designed. The entire system: priests, sacrifices, worshippers, musicians, feasts and fasts was designed for one purpose – **the pleasure of God.**

In the NT era, the priesthood ceases and with it the need for sacrifice. We no longer need a mediator to enter the presence of God. The ark of the covenant is no the central location of God's

presence. God now chooses to dwell in human hearts. Even so, we see in the Scriptures the people of God regularly gathering each week to meet with Him. Yet, despite all these critical changes, **OUR ATTITUDE, OUR REVERENCE, EVEN OUR FEAR OF GOD NEVER SUBSIDES.**

In The Meeting in **Jerusalem**, God kills Ananias and Sapphira for robbing His glory and putting it upon themselves (Acts 5:1-11).

In The Meeting in **Corinth**, people are becoming sick and some dying because they are not taking the presence and pleasure of God seriously during communion (1Cor 11:28-32).

In The Meeting in **Ephesus**, is warned that God will turn off the lights and close shop (i.e. *“remove their lampstand from its place”* – Rev 2:5) because *“they have left their first love.”* History shows that is exactly what God did.

In The Meeting in **Rome**, Paul writes that when we scorecard the spirituality of your brother (you know judge them on a criteria you established on what is the “perfect” Christian), you insult God because God made people differently and you are attacking His beauty and design in what He created (Rom 15:2-4).

Folks, I believe we have an incorrect understanding of what it means to be in the presence of a holy God. When God shows up, really shows up (where His omnipresence turns to His manifest presence), everything changes.

Moses was told to *“Do not come any closer and take off his shoes.”* (Ex 3:5)

Isaiah falls on his face crying out: *“Woe to me!” “I am ruined” “For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”* (Isa 6:5)

Ezekiel fell on his face when he throne room of God with the four living creatures and the wheels (Ezek 1:28).

After fasting for three weeks, **Daniel** describes the terror that overwhelmed him and the men with him, having no strength and turning deathly pale when God spoke to him through an angel.

The disciples fell facedown to the ground terrified when Jesus transfigured before them (Matt 17:6).

Paul was flattened on his back, blinded and could not eat or drink for three days when the glorified Christ met him on the Damascus road (Acts 9:4-9)

John, on the Lord's day, in The Meeting, thought he died when saw the glorified Christ on Patmos (Rev 1:9-18)

Do we really think His glory has changed simply because our access to Him is different?

Do we really think that when we get to heaven, we will respond any differently than these?

When the glory of God descends in The Meeting, how can any of us not fall on our face and join with the angels in crying out: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Folks, our consumer Christianity has made my needs, my wants and my comforts the centerpiece of The Meeting. I can assure you this - **none of these I listed before you were "comfortable" in the presence of God.** Yet, in the terror, in the power, at the edge of divine glory, their lives were forever changed. **All of them left The Meeting never satisfied with some less than the beauty of His presence.**

What about the visitor?

I often get asked about the guests. **"Pastor I am embarrassed to bring someone to church if certain activities happen."** Let me give you my response to the visitor issue with a series of questions.

1. **When was the last time you brought someone to church?**
2. **Are you telling me that you are embarrassed by extravagant worshippers?** (Judas and the Mary – John 12:1-8, esp. John 12:7 "Leave her alone,")
3. **Are you embarrassed by what God delights in?** If God is delighted with people that kneel, get on their face, shout, sing, dance, all the spiritual gifts including tongues and prophesy, **are we really going to deny Him something in The Meeting that He delights in?**

The Bible teaches **witness through worship.** Foreigners were allowed to watch Israel worship in the tabernacle and even join in if they followed God's prescribed path. The court of the Gentiles in the Temple was the place outsiders would come and watch God's people worship Him. In the church in Corinth, Paul believes that the atmosphere of worship should be cultivate such a dynamic presence of

God, that the visitor will be convicted of his sin, feel the safety to confess it freely and then fall down and worship God exclaiming: "God is really among you!" (1Cor 14:24-25).

**The Meeting is not about your comfort or mine.
The Meeting is not about the visitor.
The meeting is about one thing and one thing only,
the pleasure of God.**

What pleases God:

Even though the mode has changed from OT to NT, we read in NT that God still expects and requires certain preconditions for entrance and encounter into His presence in The Meeting. This is certainly NOT an exhaustive list.

Beyond the typical preaching, praying and praising, what pleases God in The Meeting

1. **Right relationships (Psalm 15, Matt 5:23-24; 1 Cor 11:27-34; 1 Pet 3:7)**
2. **Gifts administered properly (1 Cor 14)**

Ward told me that he saw “VCC as a church that accepted **everyone**.” I found that was true for everyone **except those who have the gifts of prophesy and tongues**. People in this church have told me that “**If I all tongues and prophesy in The Meeting, I will leave.**” “**Why can’t these folks leave those gifts their car before they come into this room.**”

Folks, this simply is **unloving** and impairs our ability to demonstrate God’s love to those who do not know Christ. If people who are among us feel rejection in The Meeting, they those from the city who visit us will feel that too.

Besides, if we really adhered to this policy, then we would be editing every pastor and principal on this hill and quenching the Holy Spirit in our midst. Do we really want to do that?

We are NOT going to edit God by limiting the work of His Spirit. We are not going to edit the Bible because these gifts are in there. We are NOT going to edit people.

We will, I assure you we will, administer ALL the gifts properly according to the term in the Bible.

3. **People coming to The Meeting prepared to give (1 Cor 14:26)**

1Cor. 14:26 What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.**

4. **Tipping vs. Tithing (Malachi 1:6-14; 2:6-18)**
5. **Care for His house over our own (Haggai 1:2-11)**
6. **God interruptions (Acts 3-4)**
7. **No Scorecarding (The Pharisees – principals vs. practice)**

8. Respect for the Presence of God (1 Sam 2:12-25) – Eli's sons

1Sam. 2:12 Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.

1Sam. 2:13 Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand.

1Sam. 2:14 He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh.

1Sam. 2:15 But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw."

1Sam. 2:16 ¶ If the man said to him, "Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would then answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force."

1Sam. 2:17 ¶ **This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.**

9. Keeping The Meeting "Vegas free" (2Kings 16:10-18)**Conclusion:**

I believe the events, activities, attitudes and atmosphere in this room set the tone, pace and productivity of the entire church and school. As The Meeting goes, so does the entire ministry.

Annual Business Meeting

Sunday, September 26, 2010 at 6:00 PM

The Agenda Includes:

Constitution & Bylaw Changes | Annual Report | Ratifying the 2 Deacon candidates: Jocelyn Leano, Treasurer | Ramez Bahu, Member-at-large

We will email the Constitution and Bylaw changes, candidates photos and biographies this week. If you have changed your email address since becoming a member of this church, please notify us of your correct email address via the Touchpoint Card.

VALLEYCHRISTIAN

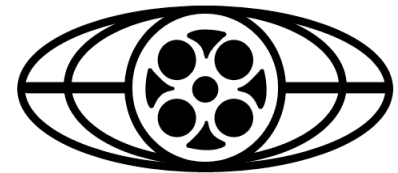
COME DISCOVER

God's Story **IN YOU**

RF

REFORMATIONAL IN CONTENT

**This material in this sermon will change
the way you view The Meeting.**



THE MEETING

plan your life around it

"I am not comfortable..."



THE MEETING

plan your life around it

Diagnosis

***We have created a church about the consumer.
Pastors feed into this because we are afraid
of rejection and declining attendance numbers.***

***In the mean time,
God's needs and delights are ignored.***



THE
MEETING
plan your life around it

A very troubling
QUESTION

*“Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?”*

Psalm 15:1

THE MEETING

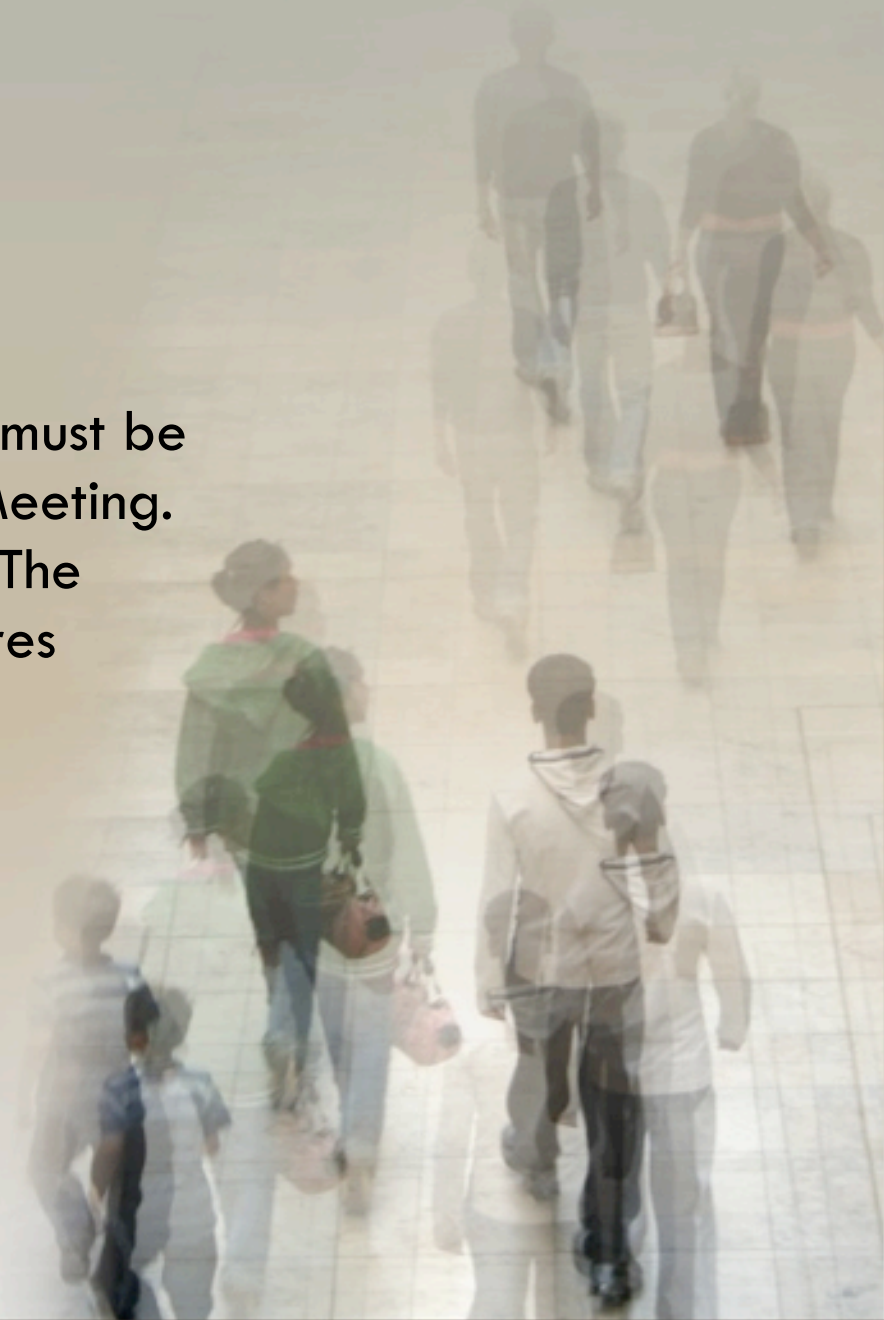
plan your life around it

1.

It infers that **certain conditions** must be met before one can enter The Meeting. It puts forward the thought that The Meeting is something that requires **preparation** before entrance.

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Who may live on your holy hill?”*

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THE MEETING

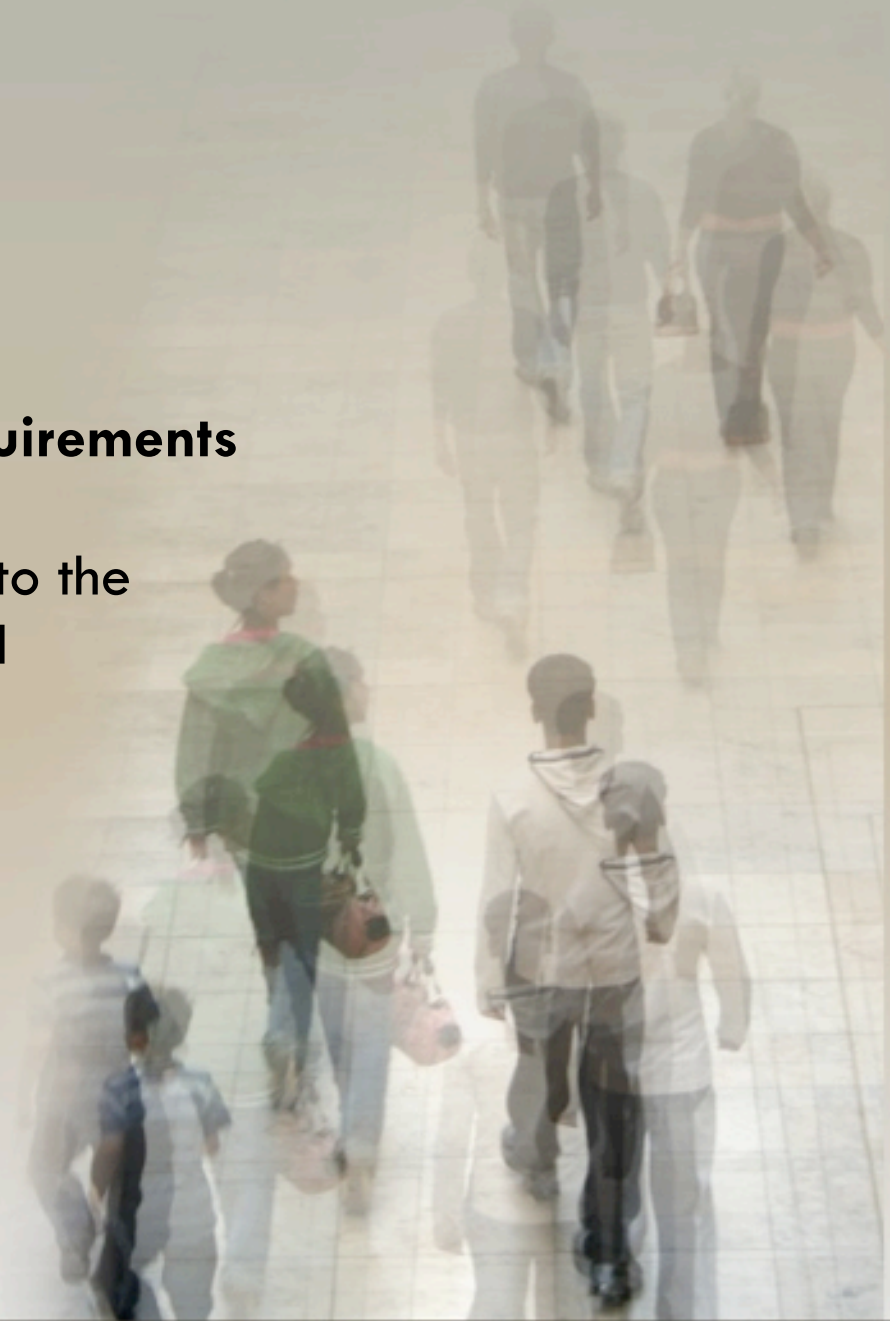
plan your life around it

2.

It suggests that **if certain requirements are NOT met**, then either the worshipper is **denied access** to the presence of God or that God Himself, **may NOT show up.**

*“Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?”*

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THE MEETING

plan your life around it

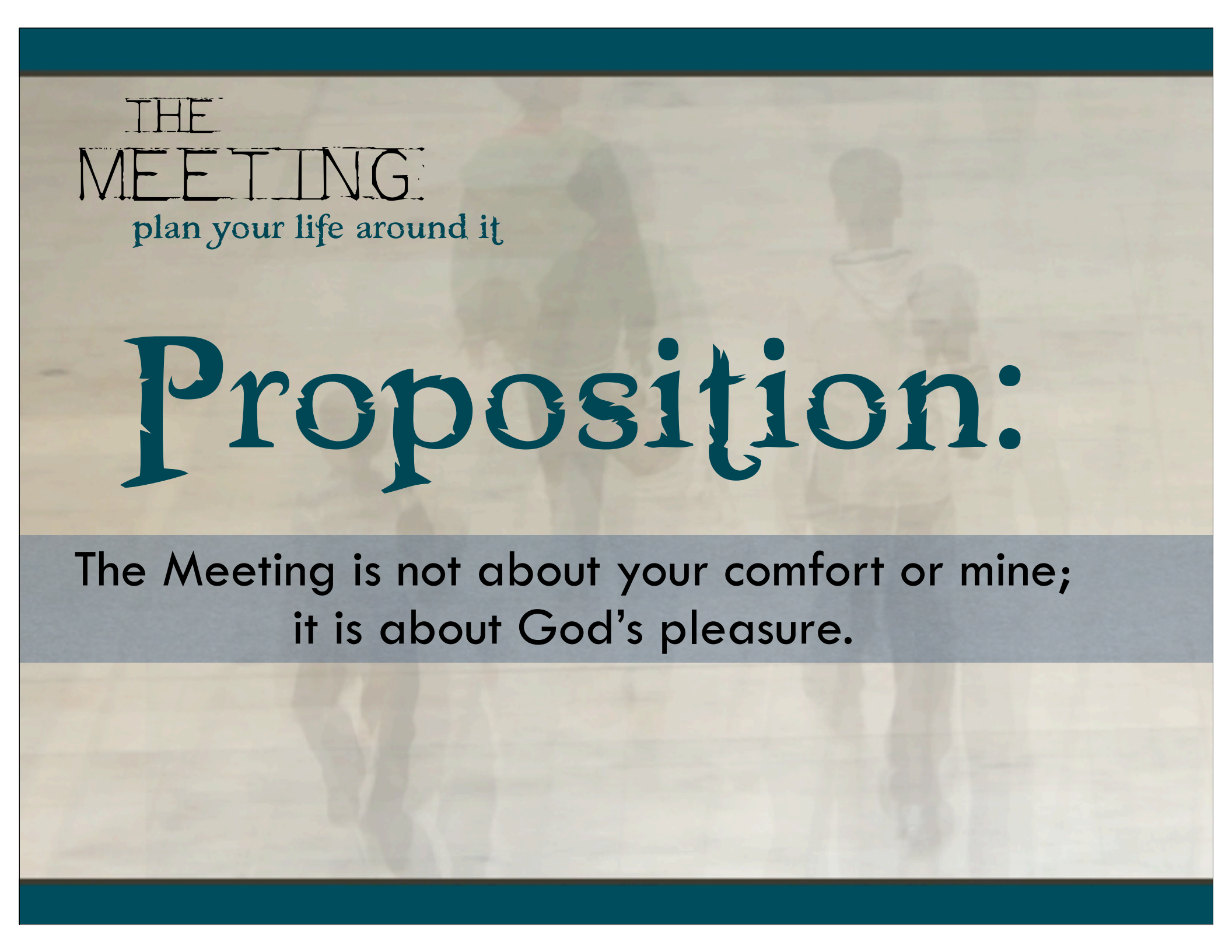
3.

It eliminates the idea that
The Meeting is **entertainment**.
It's all about **encounter**.

*“Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?”*

Psalm 15:1





THE
MEETING

plan your life around it

Proposition:

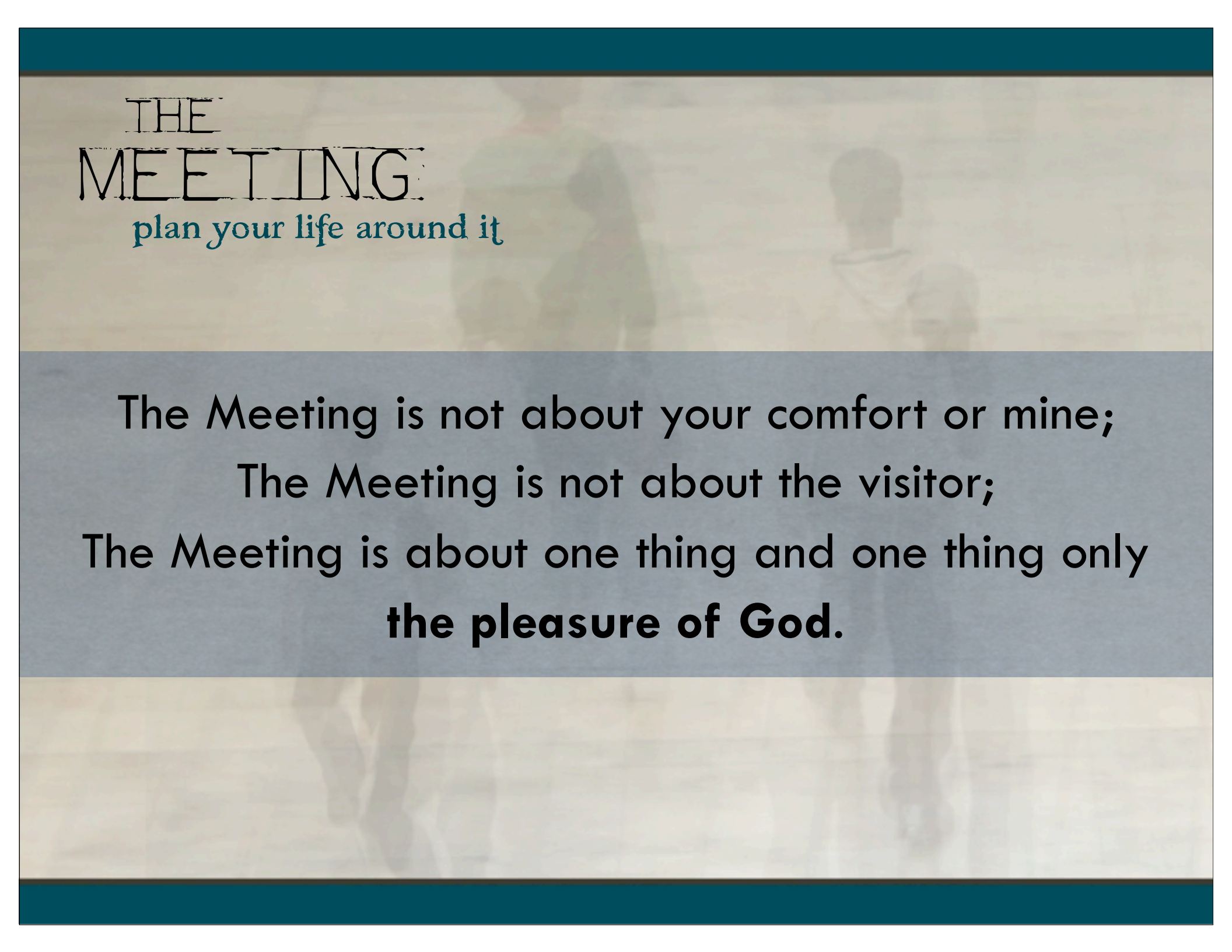
The Meeting is not about your comfort or mine;
it is about God's pleasure.

THE MEETING

plan your life around it

"Pastor, I am embarrassed to bring someone to church if certain activities happen."





THE MEETING

plan your life around it

The Meeting is not about your comfort or mine;
The Meeting is not about the visitor;
The Meeting is about one thing and one thing only
the pleasure of God.

Beyond the typical **PREACHING, PRAYING** and **PRAYSING**, what **PLEASES** God in **THE MEETING**

- 1.** **Right relationships** (Ps 15; Matt 5:23-24; 1Cor 11:27-34 and 1Pet 3:7)
- 2.** **Gifts administered properly** (1Cor 14; 1Thes 5:20)
- 3.** **People coming to THE MEETING prepared to give** (1Cor 14:26)

**THE
MEETING**
plan your life around it

Beyond the typical **PREACHING, PRAYING** and **PRAYSING**, what **PLEASES** God in **THE MEETING**

4. Tithing not Tipping (Malachi 1:6-14; 2:6-18)

5. Care for His house (Hag 1:2-11)

6. God interruptions (Acts 3-4)

**THE
MEETING**
plan your life around it

Beyond the typical **PREACHING, PRAYING** and **PRAYSING**, what **PLEASES** God in **THE MEETING**

7. **No Scorecarding** (The Pharisees - principle vs. practice)

8. **Respect for the presence of God**
(1 Sam 2:12-25)

9. **Keeping THE MEETING “Vegas free”**
(2Kings 16:10-18)

**THE
MEETING**
plan your life around it



THE
MEETING:
plan your life around it

Two Targets

Which are you aiming at in THE MEETING?

- Psalm 15:1