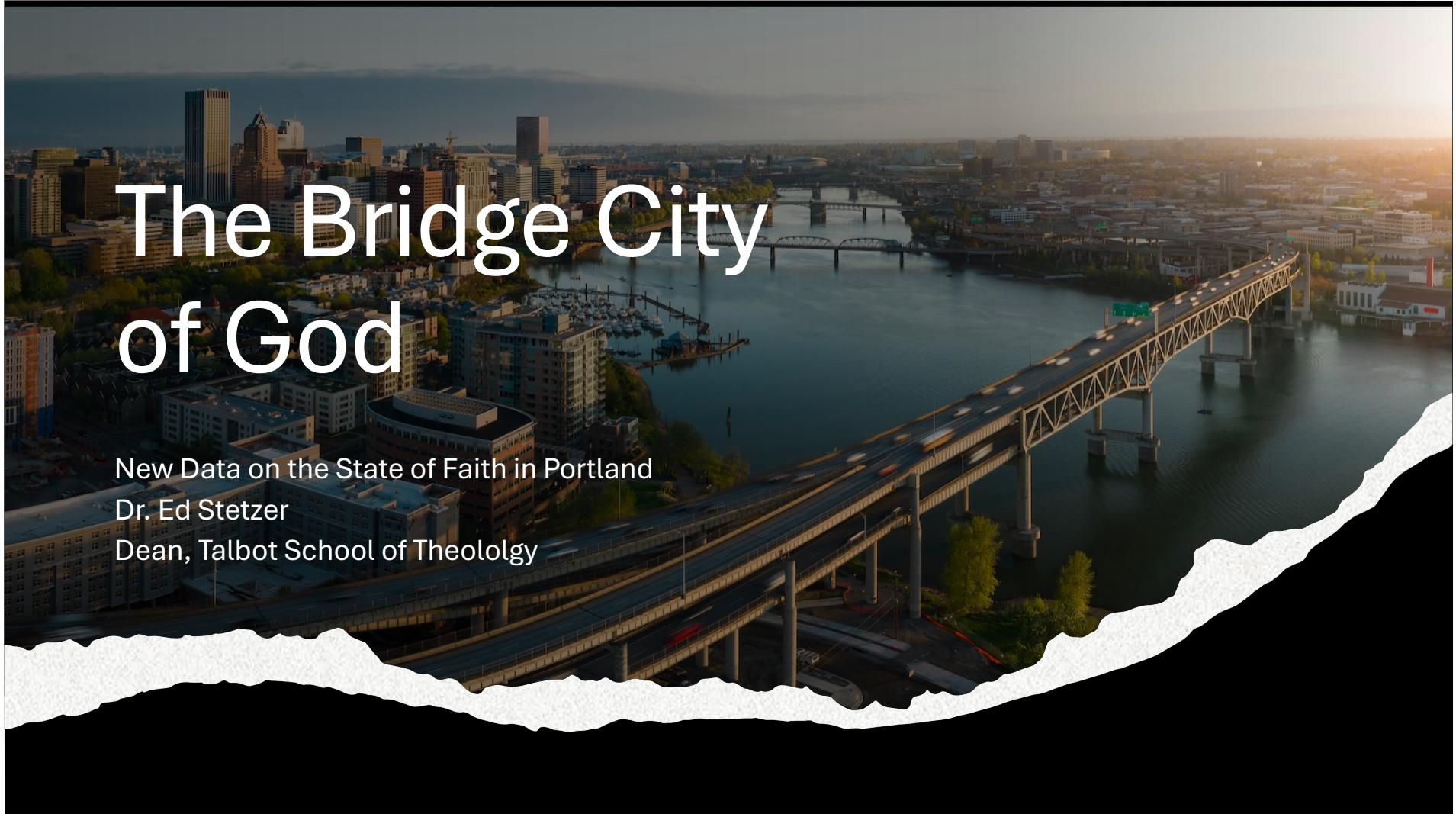


The Bridge City of God

New Data on the State of Faith in Portland

Dr. Ed Stetzer

Dean, Talbot School of Theology



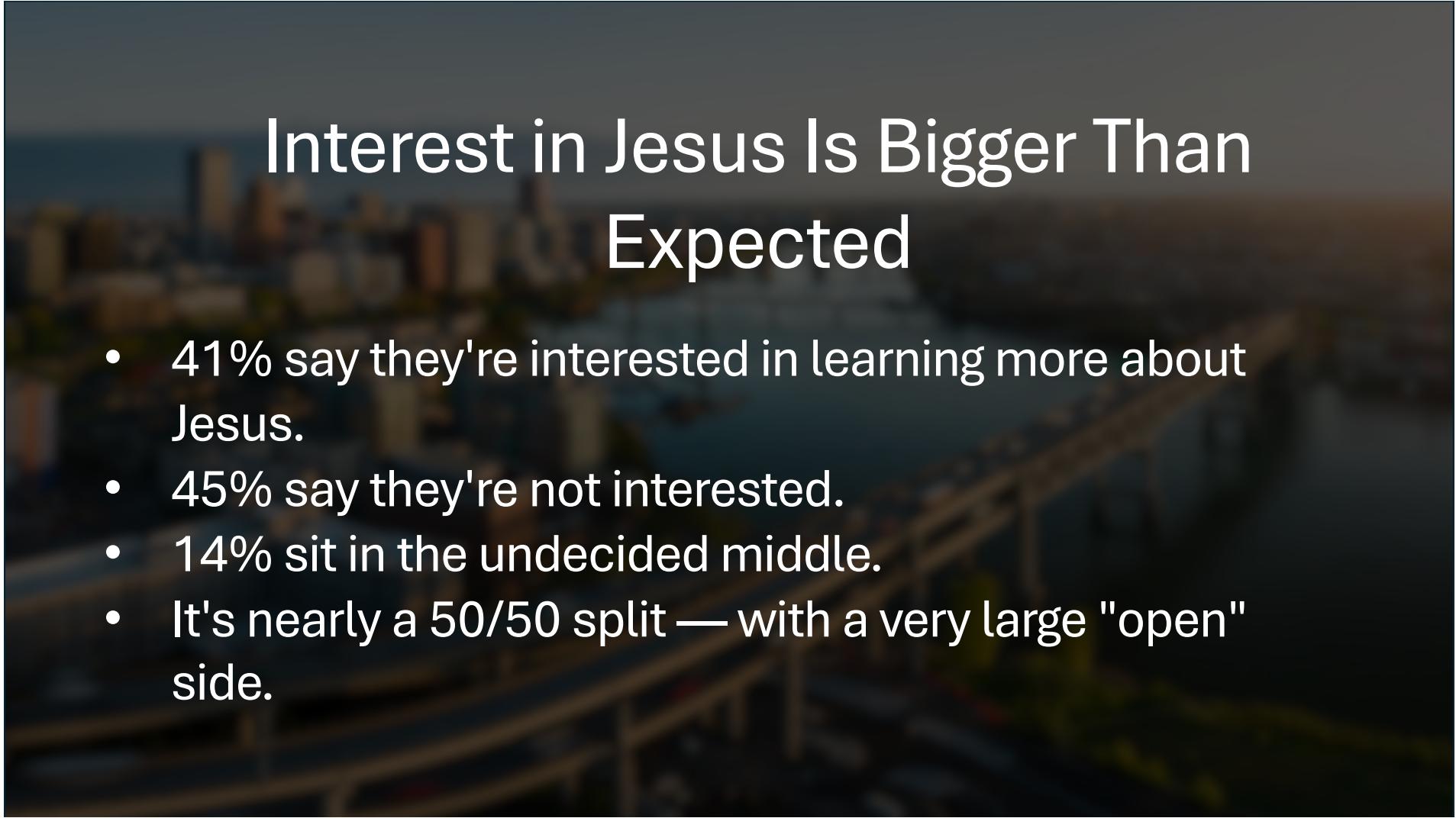
Portland's Spiritual Openness

- More than half of Portlanders are actively open to spiritual questions.
- 52% show strong curiosity about meaning, purpose, and "something greater."
- 53% show strong curiosity about the supernatural.
- Only about 12–13% say they're "not at all curious."

Portland's Spiritual Openness

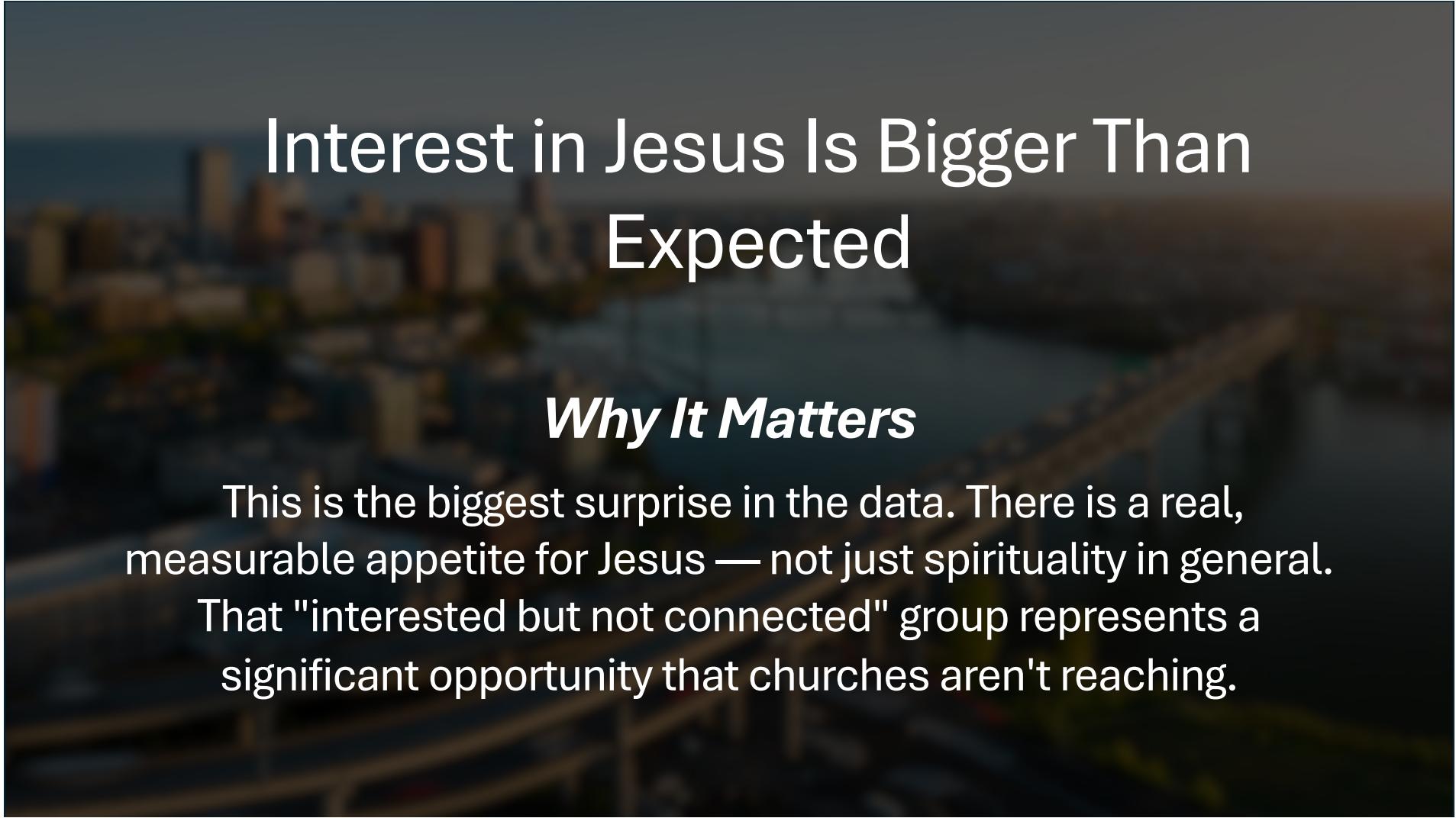
Why It Matters

Portland isn't spiritually closed — it's spiritually curious. People here aren't rejecting God; they're rejecting institutions they don't trust. This is a city full of seekers who don't know where to take their questions.



Interest in Jesus Is Bigger Than Expected

- 41% say they're interested in learning more about Jesus.
- 45% say they're not interested.
- 14% sit in the undecided middle.
- It's nearly a 50/50 split — with a very large "open" side.



Interest in Jesus Is Bigger Than Expected

Why It Matters

This is the biggest surprise in the data. There is a real, measurable appetite for Jesus — not just spirituality in general.

That "interested but not connected" group represents a significant opportunity that churches aren't reaching.

The Discipleship Gap

- Only 28% say they feel close to Jesus today.
- 39% say they feel distant.
- Among self-identified Christians:
 - 49% feel close
 - Only 9% feel distant
- Among everyone else:
 - 7% feel close
 - 71% feel distant

The Discipleship Gap

Why It Matters

Identity is not the same as discipleship. Many people still call themselves "Christian," but far fewer feel connected to Jesus. This gap is Portland's biggest spiritual challenge — and biggest opportunity for church leaders.

Neighborhood Presence Shapes Hope

- 45% of residents feel connected to their neighborhood.
- Neighborhood belonging is the strongest predictor of optimism about Portland's future.
- Trust forms locally, not city-wide.
- Portland works neighborhood by neighborhood, not from the top down.

Neighborhood Presence Shapes Hope

Why It Matters

The most impactful ministry in Portland won't be built on stages — it will be built on sidewalks. If belonging raises hope, then churches can raise hope simply by being faithful and present in their neighborhoods.

Who Portland Trusts (and Doesn't)

- Small businesses: 53% trust
- Nonprofits: 52% trust
- City government: 24% trust
- Faith communities sit in the middle — not distrusted, not fully trusted.
- Trust grows where people see consistency and proximity.

Who Portland Trusts (and Doesn't)

Why It Matters

People in Portland trust consistency more than messaging. They trust what they can see and who they can touch. This shifts ministry strategy from marketing to building real relationships.

The Long Game

- About half the city is optimistic about Portland's future.
- Nearly half are interested in learning more about Jesus.
- Spiritual curiosity is widespread and steady.
- Meaningful change in Portland is slow, relational, and long-term.

The Long Game

Why It Matters

This isn't a quick-win city — but it's a deeply reachable one. The combination of high spiritual curiosity + neighborhood trust + interest in Jesus points to a clear strategy: show up, stay put, and walk with people over time.

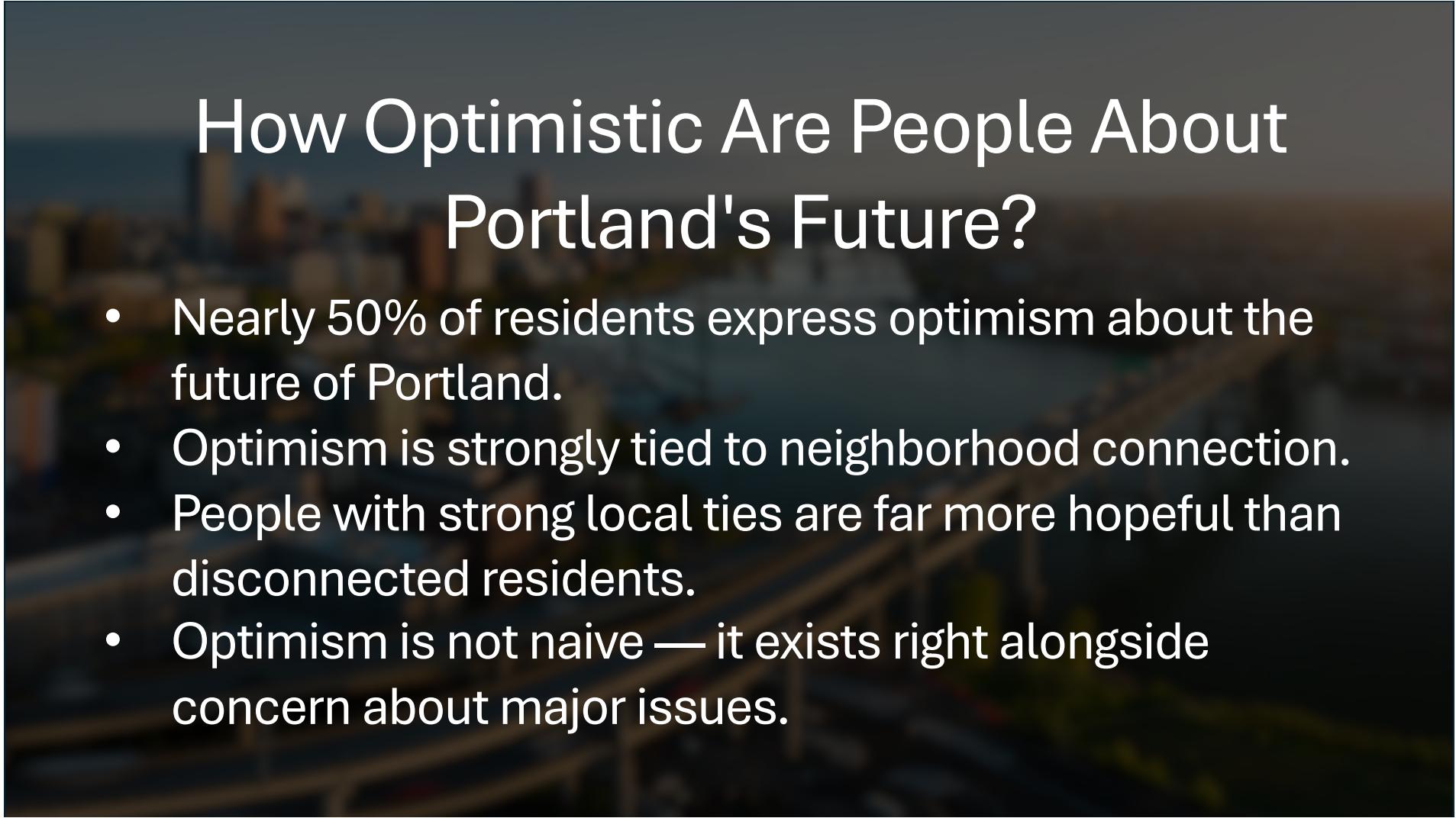
How Portlanders Feel About Their City

- Views of Portland are split almost evenly between positive and negative.
- About half rate their overall opinion in the "top half" of the scale.
- Younger residents (especially Gen Z) tend to be more hopeful.
- People who feel connected locally feel better about the city as a whole.

How Portlanders Feel About Their City

Why It Matters

Pastors often feel like "everybody is down on Portland." But the data shows a quieter, steadier group that believes in the city's future. These hopeful residents are ready to step up and lead, serve, and partner.



How Optimistic Are People About Portland's Future?

- Nearly 50% of residents express optimism about the future of Portland.
- Optimism is strongly tied to neighborhood connection.
- People with strong local ties are far more hopeful than disconnected residents.
- Optimism is not naive — it exists right alongside concern about major issues.

How Optimistic Are People About Portland's Future?

Why It Matters

Hope is alive in Portland — it's just concentrated in certain pockets. Churches can raise the hope level simply by creating belonging, safety, and relationship where they already are.

Staying or Leaving?

- Portlanders are mixed about whether they'll stay.
- Younger adults show stronger interest in staying than older cohorts.
- People who feel connected to their neighborhood are far more likely to stay.
- Safety, cost, and stability remain the biggest factors influencing decisions.

Staying or Leaving?

Why It Matters

Pastors are pastoring a transitional city. Helping people form ties — relational, spiritual, and missional — increases their sense of rootedness. Churches can become "anchors" in a city where people feel unmoored.

Portland's Top Problems

- Homelessness: 71%
- Housing cost: 69%
- Addiction and mental health concerns follow closely
- Portland's challenges are overlapping and long-term

Portland's Top Problems

Why It Matters

These are not headlines — they're signs of deeper spiritual needs. People want leaders who are honest about pain AND committed to healing. Churches that participate in practical solutions (housing, recovery, community care) gain trust quickly.



What People Most Want for Portland's Future

- "Bringing the community together" ranks as a top hope for Portland's future.
- Community safety and belonging are key desires.
- Residents want leaders who can work together across differences.
- Collaboration and unity matter as much as policy solutions.

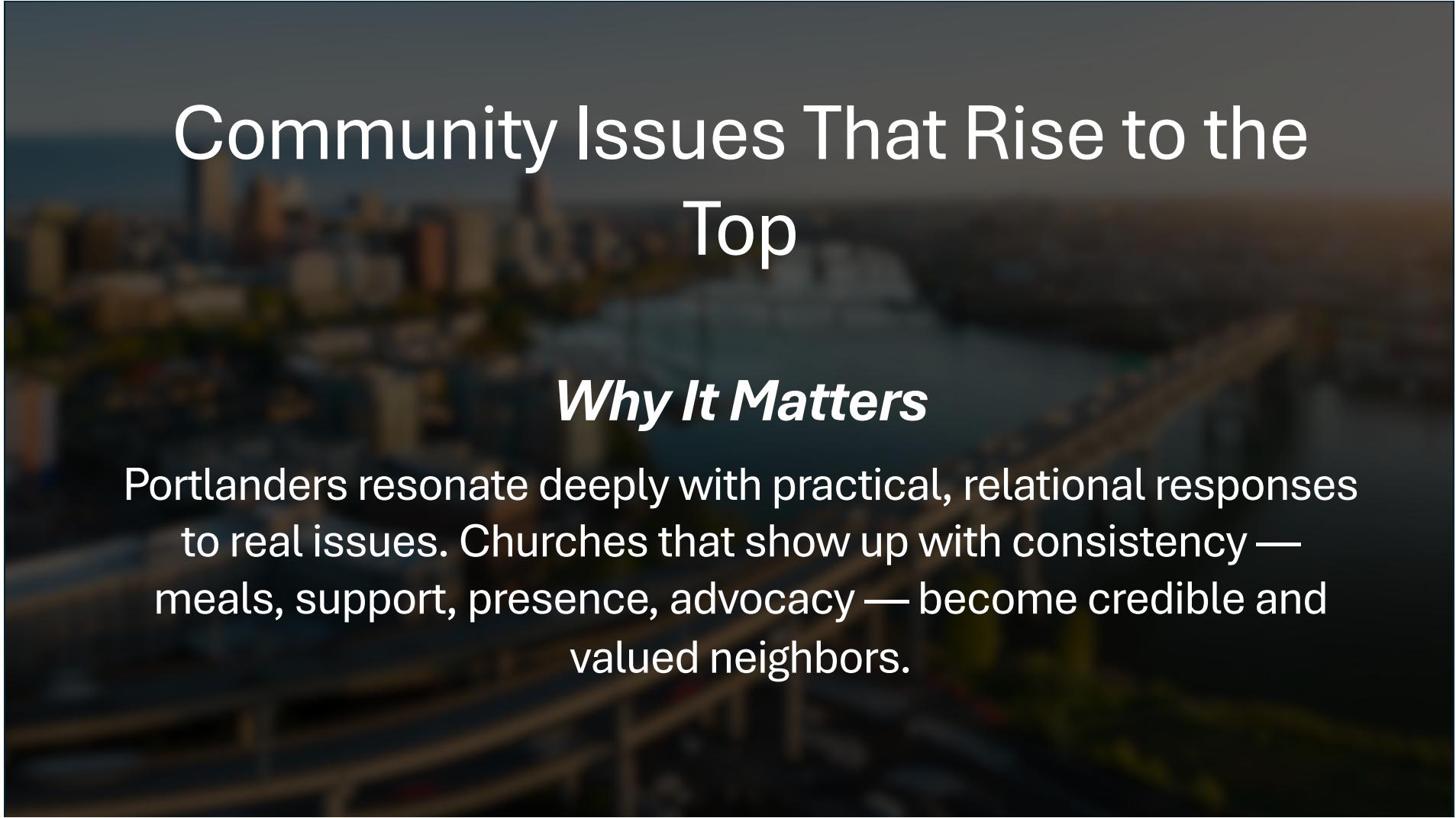
What People Most Want for Portland's Future

Why It Matters

Portland longs for connection — not just improvement. A city divided needs mature spiritual leaders in the room: people who can convene, reconcile, listen, and serve. The Church is uniquely equipped to do this if we lead with humility.

Community Issues That Rise to the Top

- Homelessness, cost of living, addiction, and safety sit at the top of nearly every segment.
- Concerns are city-wide, not limited to any demographic group.
- People are overwhelmed, not apathetic.
- Residents want to help, but don't know where to start.



Community Issues That Rise to the Top

Why It Matters

Portlanders resonate deeply with practical, relational responses to real issues. Churches that show up with consistency—meals, support, presence, advocacy—become credible and valued neighbors.



What This Means for Church Leadership

- Portland responds to presence, not pressure.
- Neighborhood connection is the Church's strongest asset.
- People want belonging, meaning, and a future — and they're looking for guides.
- Effective ministry in Portland takes consistency over time.



What This Means for Church Leadership

Why It Matters

This city doesn't need louder voices. It needs longer commitments. Pastors here get to model a different kingdom — one rooted in proximity, patience, and sacrificial love.