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The Full Gospel to The Whole World

Recently, I was posting at one of the numerous Christian Internet forums that I frequently visit. The discussion started out to be about spiritual abuses each poster had experienced in the churches they once attended. I had heard everything from the constant begging of money to the feeling that these people were always feeling defeated and always being portrayed as being 'in rebellion' within the midst of their 'victorious church'. Even though many of the posters stated at that time in their life, they loved those churches, they always remembered that there was a 'sense of connection' between other members of the congregation that was missing. Even though the worship was 'hopping', their children had a 'blast' in children's church, and they felt welcome, the connection and interaction with other members stopped once they drove out of the parking lot.

At various points along their journey, tragedies and crises came and went. However, when these people tried to connect and interact with their fellow church members outside the four walls of the church for help, no one wanted to hear their cries for healing, intimacy, and ministry. Instead, their energies went towards keeping the spiritual machine up and running and the need for nurture and doctrine was stuffed away 'in the name of God'. The people who claimed to be your friends of love inside the church turned out to be acquaintances of apathy outside the church. Instead of getting love, help, and support to survive the tragedy, they were told that the tragedy was due to some 'secret sin', 'disagreement with a televangelist', or they did not put enough money in the offering plate.

It was at this point that the forum thread turned from the subject of a lack of love in the churches to the subject of a lack of a genuine power of God in their churches. What happened when these people finally broke down because of the inability to obtain 'preventive maintenance'? Why did the pep rallies that made them feel powerful on Sunday did not carry over to Monday through Saturday and therefore made these people feel like they lacked power? Many felt as if they were discarded and thrown away because their tragedy and their sin were deemed 'beyond repair'. Their churches that disciple and addressed their sin suddenly became 'seeker-sensitive' wanting visitors that they could mold into their idea of what a 'real Christian' is based on an evangelism strategy that was based more on 'demographic target marketing' than Biblical outreach.

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Therefore, these people now felt unworthy to belong to their churches they invested, time, prayer, worship, offerings, and service in. There was no other choice but to leave the place once called their 'spiritual home'. When these people started to talk about their experiences, their detractors were quick to deem these people as 'bitter' and told them to 'get over it.' As these people began to search for their new spiritual home, they discovered the things they detested about their last church were in operation in these churches they visited. The only difference between the visited church and the one they left was the demographic makeup of the congregation. Even though the demographics were different, the desire to cater to a specific 'niche market' was common. Eventually some of these people who left their previous church eventually found a church to attend but feel like it was not the complete church they were looking for. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these people did try to find a church and assimilate but after feeling the attempts were futile, gave up on church. Some of these people eventually decided to 'home church'. Others decided that church was really 'relationship evangelism' where conversations occurred with strangers over Starbucks coffee about spirituality on Sunday mornings. Others went to the Internet in search of the intimacy and power that they craved and started blogging about their experiences.

After it was all said and done, and all the alternatives were tried without success, many came down to a heartbreaking conclusion. These people have come to the conclusion that **the church today lacks the power that the Bible said they could have**. Today, they are still asking why?

If you look at the numerous churches in America, one would think that the church is full of power. However, we see people leave the churches at an alarming rate. In fact, the people who leave their churches and leave their associates of apathy are now realizing that maybe we are guilty of 'having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof'. Even in my city, there are many churches, but there are very few great churches. It is bizarre that when you read the Saturday morning religion section of the newspaper, there are ads for newly formed churches every week meeting in schoolhouses, hotel conference rooms, etc. Whether the church meets in a schoolhouse, a church building, or has all the numbers, money, architecture, and acreage, if the true presence of the Lord is missing, then it's futile. We preach unity within the city but we form more churches daily. Usually, when the new church is formed, the formation is based on a church split gone haywire, a church planter who believes that they have the 'ultimate' solution as to why the church is lackluster, and/or someone who is not called to plant a church, but thinks he or she can do it better than their last pastor or denomination. In fact, many church-growth experts tell a church planter that he needs to know the 'target social demographic' and go out and 'spy the land' and meet likeminded people within the 'target social demographic' before he even begins the formation of the church.

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The problem with the majority of these churches is that each one is trying to carve out a 'niche' in the name of competition in order to appear 'different' from the other churches when they preach from the 'same' Bible every Sunday. It is the 'difference' that is highlighted in the 'sales pitch' of the church when that church seeks out new members. Church advertising has gone in a similar vein to car advertisements where the advantages that stack in their favor are mentioned in comparison to the church down the street. Observing the latest church-growth and seeker-sensitive movements, the 'niche' is usually formed out of two separate mentalities:

- **The 'niche market' church.** In this church concept, the idea is to select a certain 'demographic target market' and specifically concentrate on the needs, culture, and socio-political issues that this 'target market' care about. In fact, many church planting experts believe in the 'niche market' philosophy to the point where this market needs to be identified before the church plant begins. Some examples of the 'niche market' church are churches that deem themselves 'a family church', 'a gen-x postmodern church', 'a baby boomer church that wants a more traditional atmosphere', 'an evangelical politically conservative church', 'a socially active church', 'a inner city church', 'a pentecostal chandelier swinging church' or 'a seeker sensitive, Jabez praying, God chasing church'.
- **The 'niche doctrine' church.** In this church concept, the idea is to select a certain 'doctrine' and specifically make the apostolic foundation, worship, teachings, and focus of the church mindset to that particular doctrine. In 'niche doctrine' churches, the five percent of the Bible that deals with the specific doctrine that is concentrated on ends up being the one-hundred percent mindset of the church. Some examples of a 'niche doctrine' church are churches that deem themselves 'a warfare deliverance church', 'a Holy Spirit church', 'a faith church', 'a prophecy church', or 'a KJV only church'.

Even though the 'niches' are different, many of the core operating philosophies are the same. In fact, even the focus on a particular 'segment' of person or Christian is the same. Each 'niche church' is consumed in competition to 'outdo, out perform, out save, and out market' other 'niche' churches when we should be in unity to fulfill the Great Commission. Many 'niche churches' are founded over what people do not like about their churches and create one to cater to their likes instead of forming one on a strong apostolic Biblical foundation. Some 'niche churches' go as far as to believe that the church is so full of problems that it takes the 'niche church' to 'restore the niche segment' in order for God to 'move' upon his people once again.

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For example, in a 'niche market' church that caters to the eighteen to thirty year old population segment, they believe that if they outreach specifically to this segment, then God will solve all the church's problems while raising up this 'Joshua generation'. In a 'niche doctrine' church that caters to a spiritual warfare doctrine, they believe that if everyone in the church learns spiritual warfare, the God will restore the church and the nation to some 'former glory' when the warfare and repentance has reached a certain echelon and the church members have reached a certain level of 'purity'.

What ends up happening in the long run is that both types of 'niche' churches become guilty of preaching a 'partial gospel' to a 'partial niche market church'. In fact, you may be thinking right now that 'we went after this certain economic class and we now have a church of five hundred. Therefore, this seeker-sensitive stuff must be of God' or 'we started focusing only on spiritual warfare and we saw strongholds broken that brought over a million dollars in the offering plate in order to build our new training center. This is of God; these church growth specialists know their stuff.' However, we fall for the glitz, glamour, and eye-candy in the sanctuary of sensationalism instead of falling down our knees in reverence to a Most Holy God.

What really attracts us to the 'niche' church? Is it the great hour long musical show with syrupy love songs to Jesus that gives us a feel good vibe? Is it the lighthearted lecture that makes us feel good about ourselves to where we do not have to think about dealing with sin in our life? Is it the fact that the pastor agrees with our opinion instead of the Bible and we love the sensual gratification of personal experience better than the commandments of the Word? Or is it really the fact that the 'niche' target market caters to your self-centered 'niche' personality that makes up the majority of your lifestyle and spiritual theological basis? Have we exchanged the Biblical teaching of freedom in Christ and who we are in Christ for codependency based on the approval of our leaders opinions called 'God said' to determine our self-esteem?

What do you mean? It is human nature to go to the familiar and non-risky. People who love worship are highly likely to go to churches that value and overemphasize worship to the point where little biblical word is preached. People of a certain economic or ethnic background are likely to go to churches that reach out to people of the same economic or ethnic background and either shun or make unwelcome people of a different economic or ethnic background. Therefore, it comes down to the brass tacks of "What can this church do for me?"

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In many ways, this is a selfish mentality. Why do I say that? Because Christianity is instead a selfless gospel that tells me to die to my flesh daily and carry my cross daily in order to reach the lost, heal the sick, cast out devils, care for the poor, widowed, and orphans, and fulfill a Great Commission. Instead of doing the things mentioned earlier in this paragraph, we end up serving the 'niche' and making sure the 'niche' is exalted before God. All of this done in the name of being 'seeker sensitive' proclaiming that by presenting the 'niche' gospel, we have 'thought outside the box'. However, upon further review, all we really did was to expand the dimensions of the box we are still inside of.

We take pride in our two hour long Christian aerobics called worship with our children running around the sanctuary unsupervised with no respect taught to them about worshipping God and our five minute sermonette from the latest 'purpose driven' devotional manual fearing that a ten minute sermonette will cause our ADD and our ADHD to rise up and our children's church leaders becoming incapable of controlling their classes with rowdy children. We take pride in portraying Jesus as a postmodern baby boomer that would have a rock climbing wall in the sanctuary in the name of "What Would Jesus Do" while our children only learn how to finger-paint instead of foundational doctrine in the children's church. We take pride that Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem in order to advance the causes of the Republican Party rather than dying for my sin. We take pride in portraying Jesus as a boycotter of a certain deodorant manufacturer because they advertised on a television show with 6.25 scenes a woman in a short skirt and 1.00 instances of the word 'crap' used. If I had misbehaved in Sunday School or ran around the church during the praise and worship when I was a child, my grandmother would have taken me out of the sanctuary and given me a lecture on reverence in the presence of God and then marched me back into the sanctuary with the expectation placed on me to behave. Then she would have told my parents and my parents would have disciplined me again. Yes, we are sensitive to the seeker more than we are sensitive to the presence of God. What a shame. All done out of a root of selfishness to get for me instead of exalting Christ, the one who shed his blood to wash my sins and save my soul from hell. We have allowed shaky experiences to replace firm foundations of the Word, developed talents to replace spiritual gifting, and tingly emotional feelings to replace faith in God.

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We brag about our New Testament emphasis and use the New Testament in our outreach. However, our 'niche church' mentality of God only wants to touch our certain 'segment' actually parallels the Old Testament of God wanting to only bless the descendents of Abraham. God told Moses and Joshua when they went into the promise land to kill all the enemies of God in that land. The Bible clearly tells us that this did not happen. However if you look at the New Testament that gave us the blueprint for the New Covenant, we see a different method of evangelism that makes the 'niche market' and the 'seeker sensitive' unscriptural.

Mark chapter sixteen, verses fifteen through twenty states this (NKJV version listed below):

15And He (Jesus Christ) said to them, "Go into **all the world** and **preach** the **gospel** to **every creature**. 16He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20**And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.** Amen

If you are familiar with this section of verses, these verses are commonly known to us as 'The Great Commission'. These are the words (written in red in many Bible versions) of Jesus Christ, not the church growth experts, not the seeker-sensitive staffs of a seeker-sensitive church, not the 'chief prophet' in the 'niche doctrine' church, and not the spiritualized director of sales and marketing called 'pastor of community' in the 'niche market' church. The first thing we notice in verse fifteen is the tense that the verse is written. Notice that the verse is a command and the first word of the verse is a verb signifying an action. If one broke down this verse, one would realize that the subject in this verse is 'you understood'. Therefore, this command applies to both you and me and therefore must be enacted in our Christian walk. If you look at the words in verse fifteen in bold print we notice four specific things mentioned:

- **all the world:** The word 'all' in Greek is the word 'hapas' which means 'everywhere' in a singular tense. In fact, Strong's Concordance states that the Greek word 'pas', that is a part of the word 'hapas' means 'go everywhere thoroughly'. Thoroughly means 'from the beginning to the end'. In other words, we are to obey The Great Commission with a focus of going from one end of the world to the other end of the world into all the nations and not specifically our 'niche market' or 'niche doctrine' segment.

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The word 'world' in Greek is the word 'kosmos'. This word is designated in the realm of the world as being 'an orderly arrangement' in reference to both established nations and the inhabitants of those nations. If Jesus used a word to describe the world as an orderly arrangement, then how should we approach our outreach to the world? Very simple, we should approach our outreach with decency and order as detailed in 1 Corinthians 14:40. Not in an atmosphere of kookiness, confusion and chaos in the name of being 'fools for Jesus'.

- **preach:** The word 'preach' in Greek is the word 'kerusso' which means to 'proclaim' and 'herald' the divine truth. Therefore, we can easily see how we are supposed to communicate the gospel. We are to proclaim the truth, not compromise it. We are to go out and tell the full story of the gospel, not leave out certain parts because we fear offending someone or we fear making mad the person with the money or influence in the local society.
- **gospel:** The word 'gospel' in Greek is the word 'euaggelion' which means 'a good message'. In fact, the root word for 'euaggelion' is where we get the English word 'evangelism'. What is the gospel? The gospel that is to be preached is the good news that Jesus Christ has come to earth as the Savior of the world and through his death on the cross, the breaking of his body and shedding of the blood, and resurrection on the third day, provided the way to save people from sin and hell in order to restore them to full relationship as sons and daughters of God. While preaching this gospel, the emphasis needs to be made that apart from God's intervention, the entire world is lost and without hope because of the original sin from Adam that constitutes our sin nature. In displaying the gospel, we need to live out the message of the gospel through relationships while promoting the core values of Christ.
- **every creature:** The word 'every' in Greek is the word 'pas' that means 'whole' and 'all'. In fact, this is the same word that makes up the Greek word 'hapas' that is used to describe the English word 'all' mentioned earlier in this verse. Like the description of the English word 'all', the sense of thoroughness is implied. Where earlier, in this verse, it is implied that we are to go to every nation, the word 'every' in the phrase 'every creature' means that we should go out and outreach every person.

The word 'creature' in Greek is the word 'ktisis' which means in the realm of God 'every person God created'. I find this interesting in light of the verse in Genesis 1:26-27 where "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

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Based on the explanation above of the four specific things in bold mentioned in verse fifteen we can easily learn three four important concepts:

- Church was never meant to preach a full gospel to a partial 'niche market' demographic on planet earth.
- Church was never meant to preach a partial 'niche doctrine' gospel to the entire world.
- Church was never meant to preach a partial 'niche doctrine' gospel to a partial 'niche market' demographic on planet earth.
- Church was meant to be the assembly and fellowship of believers where the FULL gospel was to be preached to the entire world and to the body, soul, and spirit of every person.

In verse sixteen, we see the conditional statement that can only be obtained once the condition of verse fifteen is in the continual process of fulfillment. After a disciple of Christ has gone out into the world and preached the gospel to the people, then the people preached to has a choice to make. They can choose to believe (the word in Greek means "to have faith") in God and then be baptized (the word in Greek means 'to make wet and wash as in water baptism and is the same word found in Matthew 3:16 in reference to the water baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist' and eventually be saved (the word in Greek means 'delivered and made whole'). Therefore, when one chooses to have faith and be water baptized to be saved, they are delivered from their sin and made whole and healed from the death their sin caused.

We also see in verse sixteen, what happens to those that choose not to believe after the disciple of Christ has gone out into the world and preached the gospel to the people. The verse states that that person who chooses not to believe will be dammed. The Greek word for dammed is 'katakrito' which is the combination of the word 'kata' meaning 'against and in opposition' and 'krino' meaning 'judge and condemn' therefore meaning in this text of "...who does not believe will be condemned" can be interpreted as "who does not believe shall be judged and condemned for being against and in opposition to Christ." This is easily seen because the person chose to reject the only way to salvation in Christ.

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We can also now properly discredit the concept of universalism that is starting to pick up steam within certain segments within Christianity. Universalism is defined as 'the theological concept that all souls will eventually be saved via the grace of God already provided by Jesus Christ's death on the cross'. Therefore, in universalism, there is really no need to fulfill The Great Commission even though Jesus said to because all will be saved anyhow. Knowing that we have clear instructions to preach the full gospel to the whole world in order for people to be saved, how can universalists state their case when verse sixteen tells us that the person preached to will have to make a choice whether to believe and be baptized in order to be saved and made whole or choose to reject and be judged and condemned for being against and in opposition to Christ?

In verses seventeen and eighteen, we now see the chronological order of this text continue. Where we saw in the previous verse how the ones who reject Christ are eventually dammed to their end, we see in these verses what happens to those who choose to believe and have faith in Christ. The two verses state:

17And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

The word 'signs' in verse seventeen in the Greek is the word 'semeion' which means 'supernatural miracles'. Notice here that the word supernatural is used to describe the signs. This means that the signs do not come from natural sources. Instead, this means that the miracles that will follow those who believe come from heaven provided by Jesus via his breaking of his body and shedding his blood and arising on the third day. It is because of the victory of Jesus at Calvary and his rising from the dead that the miracles are possible. The word 'follow' in verse seventeen in the Greek is the word 'parakoloutheo' which is the combination of the Greek word 'para' meaning 'nearby, beside, and in the vicinity' and 'akoloutheo' meaning 'accompany'. The word 'believe' in verse seventeen in the Greek is the same Greek word 'pisteuo' as stated in verse sixteen that means 'faith'. The word 'name' in verse seventeen in the Greek is the word 'onoma' which means 'name of authority and power'. Literally, we can write the first part of verse seventeen like this. "And these 'miracles from Jesus' will 'be literally beside and in the same vicinity' of those who 'have faith': In my name and authority, they shall....

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- **cast out devils:** As Jesus expelled a demon away from the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5, we see the promise fulfilled later on Acts 16:16-18. In this text, the Apostle Paul expelled a 'spirit of divination' in the name of Jesus Christ out of a young woman whose soothsaying abilities were used by her masters to make a great profit. This particular promise represents the continuous power of victory over Satan passed on from Jesus to his disciples.
- **speak with new tongues:** This promise was fulfilled in Acts chapter 2 at Pentecost. The Greek words for 'new tongues' are 'kainos glossa' which literally translates to 'unfamiliar languages apart from your native language'. The purpose of this promise was to have the ability to spread the Gospel to nations that had never heard the Gospel before. The Apostles spoke Hebrew and therefore, a way was needed to these men of one native language to have the ability to communicate the gospel to the utter parts of the world as quickly as the gospel spread throughout the world. It would have taken years to become fluent in languages to the point of both being understood by the natives and also to command a state of authority to speak to the crowds for mass conversions. This also attests to the power of Jesus Christ for a man of God to come to a foreign land in the clothing and language of his native land to suddenly be able through spiritual impartation to speak the language of the nation he was now located.
- **take up serpents:** This promise was fulfilled in Acts 28 where the Apostle Paul had a viper fasten itself to his hand. The Bible does not state that the snake bit his hand but that the snake did fasten itself to Paul to the point where the viper could attack and bite Paul. Usually, these verses are taught by leaders as if Paul was bitten. However, the scriptures show that Paul handled the snake with no harm and no snake bite until he was able to shake the viper into the fire where eventually the viper was burned to death. Noticed that the way the Acts 28 story is told, it is **not** that Paul purposely picked this snake up and flippantly put God to a foolish test. Therefore, if you ever experience a church group (very common in the Appalachian Mountains) that as part of their services handle snakes for a long time to signify confirmation of their power in God, this is unscriptural. These people really put the Lord to a foolish test.

(Continuing with verse eighteen) And

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- **if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them:** No where in the New Testament is a specific instance of this recorded. Some ancient history accounts claim that Barsabas (mentioned in Acts 1:23 and Acts 15:22) drank a poisonous draught (similar to beer), and by the grace of the Lord, received no hurt while others died. However, if you ever experience a church group (very common in the Appalachian Mountains) that as part of their services drinks strychnine for a long time to signify confirmation of their power in God, this is unscriptural. These people really put the Lord to a foolish test. I found it interesting that when I studied this section of verse and researched it online, that some Bible commentaries and Internet apologetic web pages mentioned that it was ironic that Mohammed (the 'prophet' of Islam) died and is still dead as a result of poisoning.
- **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover:** This portion of Scripture was confirmed many times as the Apostle Paul and Peter in Acts 5:15, Acts 19:12, and Acts 28:8. Paul even stated in James 5:14 that the sick should call for the elders of the church to pray for them and anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord for their healing.

It was after this command and the promises if the command was properly filled that Jesus, in verse nineteen left the earth and went to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. This was a fulfillment of verses previously spoken in John 14 and John 16. Jesus Christ's work on earth was completed and therefore had to go back to heaven to be with the Father in order for the Holy Spirit to come down days later at Pentecost. Notice that this last command of Christ has turned out to be the most important command of Christ in the history of the modern day church. The church could not have grown and expanded world unless this command was fully followed.

We see in verse twenty, the disciple's obedience to the commands of Jesus. The verse states that:

And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen

The four things that I had highlighted and discussed in part three of this article were done and obeyed:

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- **they went out everywhere:** There are two things of mention in this statement. The first part of the verse stated that they went out. This is a critical part of the entire Great Commission because it shows an outward motion to reach a harvest instead of an inward mentality practiced by many churches today. In many churches, the evangelism is geared towards only getting people in a church via some church sign or some advertising in the religion section of their local newspaper. Worse is the church that makes a group of people go through red-tape committees before performing the task at hand and when approval is obtained, the opportunity is squandered. In this case, the Great Commission has turned into the Great Permission. This outward motion shows a proactive approach instead of a bunker-driven reactive environmentally controlled sanctuary where people feel protected from a world they feel is out of their control.

The second part of this verse stated that they went everywhere. The Greek word for 'everywhere' is the word 'pantachou' which literally means 'in all places to all people'. The New Testament shows this traveling everywhere happening and eventually reaching the entire world in due time.

- **they preached:** We see that they preached when they went out. The Greek word for preach is the same Greek word 'kerusso' that was used in Jesus Christ's command earlier in verse fifteen.
- **they preached the gospel:** Even though the text does not specifically mention the word "Gospel", we can clearly see as recorded in the New Testament and in history that these eleven men and the disciples they disciplined preached the Gospel of Christ that was contrary to the world. In fact, history books record that all eleven disciples and Matthias (elected in Acts 1) were persecuted and eventually died as martyrs for the Christian Faith.

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- **they went out everywhere to all people:** As I stated earlier, the Greek word for 'everywhere' is the word 'pantachou' which literally means 'in all places to all people'. The New Testament shows this traveling everywhere happening and eventually reaching the entire world in due time.

In the last part of verse 20, we clearly see what happened when these disciples clearly fulfilled the entire command spoken to them by Jesus. We see:

- **the Lord working with them:** When you look up the phrase 'working with' in the Greek, the Greek word is 'sunergeo' which is a derivative of the Greek word 'sunergos' which means 'companion in labor; working together with'. This is a refreshing revelation of the concept of co-working. In fact, we get the English word 'synergy' from this Greek word. We can clearly see here that by going out and fulfilling the entire command of Jesus, that Jesus worked with and beside them as a cohesive unit to help them fulfill The Great Commission.
- **confirming the word:** The word 'confirming' in the Greek is 'bebaioo' which is defined more as 'establishing' than what we know as the modern day definition of the word confirm. In fact, the word 'establish' is defined by Webster's Dictionary as 'to set up permanently and make stable'. As we see, it was the Word of God that that was being 'set up permanently in order to be stable' by the Lord himself. The Greek word for 'word' used in verse twenty is 'logos' which refers to the Word of God (John 1:1) and Christ in reference to written doctrine and Scripture. Paul explicitly stated in numerous Scriptures such as Philippians 1:15-16, 2 Corinthians 4:5, and 1 Corinthians 1:23 that he 'preached Christ'. Knowing that the word 'logos' refers to the written word of God in reference to Christ, the verse is now clear to see that the gospel preached is Christ with reference and foundation based on the Scriptures. Therefore it is necessary that when fulfilling the Great Commission, we use the written Word of God to establish a firm foundation of Christ in the lives of people instead of a 'rhema' word of 'God told me'.
- **the accompanying signs:** This phrase really works in conjunction with the earlier phrase 'confirming the word'. The word 'signs' in this verse is the same Greek word 'semeion' that Jesus stated in verse seventeen and explained earlier in this article. These supernatural miracles appeared as promised when we read the New Testament. If you look at the word 'accompanying', the Greek word used here is 'epakoloutheo' instead of the Greek word 'parakoloutheo' mentioned in verse seventeen. Where the Greek word 'parakoloutheo' referred to 'accompanied beside and nearby', the Greek word 'epakoloutheo' used in verse twenty is used as 'accompanied after' the word of God was established. In other words, the signs mentioned in verses seventeen and eighteen did not manifest in front of the believers **until after** the disciples laid down the firm foundation of the word of God using the written word. The order of the word and the signs is very critical here.

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We see here the complete commands of the Great Commission. We see that there is a conditional order as to how The Great Commission is to be carried out. We see that we first must go out everywhere, we must proclaim Christ using his Word, we must proclaim Christ to every body, and then we will see supernatural miracles follow that confirm the power of the Word of God. Based on the fact that Jesus Christ said these words, we should have a church that is flowing in power. However, we see in many churches that power is lacking and we wonder why.

Why are we not seeing the power of God in our churches today even though we dance up a storm, sing the latest worship songs, bring in the hottest Christian speakers, and have the best aesthetically pleasing facilities? Why do we not feel the power on Sunday carry over to the rest of the week? Why do we feel victory on Sunday but defeat Monday through Saturday? I believe that the differences between what the words of Jesus state versus how church growth experts and seeker-sensitive 'experts' believe and enact are the difference between white and black.

- Jesus told us to go everywhere and reach everybody. Some church growth experts taught us to focus on and go after a certain social demographic in the name of 'niche marketing' and cater your sermons and activities around the culture of that particular social demographic.
- Jesus told us to go everywhere and reach everybody. Some church growth experts and expert theologians knowledgeable in a certain doctrine focused on catered sermons and church foundations around 'pet doctrines' creating a 'niche doctrine' church around the love and interests of a particular personality and makeup of a person.
- Jesus told us to go everywhere and reach everybody. Many church growth experts and expert theologians performed the worst-case scenario by establishing church foundations around a lethal combination of 'niche doctrines' and 'niche demographics' creating a 'segmented' church.
- Jesus told us to preach the Gospel and evangelize with the 'logos' written word of God to establish solid and firm believers. Seeker-sensitive experts and improperly trained pastors formed shaky churches and based their shaky foundations on a 'rhema' spoken word creating shaky and unstable Christians. Everything that happened in these churches was based on 'God said' instead of the Scriptures. Questioning 'God said' using the Scriptures was equated to questioning God and the pastor's anointing and the shaky foundation that God said would shake was justified by these pastors as 'the great attack of the enemy and the persecution of the remnant'.
- Jesus told us in Mark 16:17 and the scriptures confirmed later in Mark 16:20 that the signs followed and confirmed the truth of the written word when the logos written word was established. Improperly trained pastors or pastors so desperate for a sign from God really believed that the signs came first in order to search for a Scripture to force-fit and reinterpret to

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where it appeared that the word confirmed the signs. The foundation of a church was based on some supernatural sign instead of the Word of God.

- Jesus told us in Mark 16:16 that the person outreached to will have to choose to believe (and understood to repent of their sins) or choose not to believe (and understood to not repent of their sins). Church Growth and Seeker-sensitive experts taught us to focus and pamper the physical needs of the seeker only and not emphasize the need for the seeker and us to be 'sin-sensitive' and repent for our sins.

Jesus told us exactly how to do outreach, convert disciples, form churches with the foundation of the written word, and experience the supernatural miracles once the other conditions were met. Why have we allowed the seeker-sensitive movement and the church-growth experts to 'reinvent the wheel' in reference to evangelism and covertly the fivefold model of position in church government? In Ephesians 4:8-24 we clearly see, as listed below (NKJV version):

8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this, "He ascended"--what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. 17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

We see verses eight through ten confirm the Scripture as told in the Gospels in reference to the crucifixion and the ascension into heaven. In verse eleven, we see that Christ established the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. In verses twelve through twenty-four, we see

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what responsibilities these fivefold ministers have to the established body. What has the church-growth and seeker-sensitive movements done with the fivefold gifts?

- **pastors turned into politicians:** Instead of being the shepherds that disciple, nurture, and protect their congregations, many pastors within these realms of thought have decided that compromise and diplomacy has replaced the concrete ways of the Gospel. The distinct line that separates sin from holiness that is supposed to be upheld has been muddled when sin is overlooked and compromised in exchange for money from a person obtained by illegal, sinful, and oppressive means. Worse is the church that is supposed to fulfill the Great Commission because Jesus told us to whose pastor is really an ambassador and diplomat to a political party that promises to undertake the church's responsibility in exchange for votes if elected. The Christians are supposed to go out and fulfill the Great Commission, not the fortune 500 corporations and not government.
- **prophets turned psychologists:** Instead of being the prophet that performs the word of the Lord per Ephesians 4:12, many prophets have instead turned into pop-culture psychologists who instead of hearing the Lord for direction, rely on the signs and trends based on plotted data and logistics. Worse is the prophet who is basically a numerologist by relating numbers to dates such as the example of "I woke up at 6:15 AM one morning and God told me that he is going to do something 'extra-special' on June 15th this year." In another version of the prophet turned psychologist, how many have claimed a personal word from the Lord came to them such as 'my child, despair not any longer for your breakthrough draweth nigh, Thus saith the Lord' only to find out that they are really excellent readers of body language and excellent observers of human behavior because they read facial expressions, shoulder shrugs, and general attitude / aloofness?
- **evangelists turned physicians:** Instead of reaching out to the unsaved and allowing the Lord to convict them of their sin, the guilt of the sin and the fact that sin exists is explained away as pathogenic disease, sickness, psychosis, neurosis, or paranoia. Sin patterns are not treated as personal responsibility for actions done out of the condition of the heart but instead treated as a 'addiction', 'generational curse', 'sickness', or 'poor training'. How many people claimed to be set free from a destructive habit claimed that they are now 'addicted to Jesus'? The real truth is that Jesus does not want anyone to be sick or addicted to any substances, habits, or religious rituals of dead works. Jesus wants us to be free beings that go out to reach the lost, make disciples, set the captives free, etc. Sin is a root problem that needs to be treated by taking up our cross, crucifying our flesh, and if needed, Godly spiritual warfare and not treated like a chemical imbalance or a psychosis that can be analyzed and solved with a simple pill.

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- **apostles turned presidents:** Instead of reaching out to build churches based on the logos word and a firm foundation, many 'apostles' desire total power, authority and recognition as the leader of a move of God because of a 'rhema' word called '...thus saith the Lord'. In the mind of an apostle turned president, the rhema word is deemed above and beyond the Bible and doctrine. Where the rhema (spoken) word is always confirmed by the 'logos' (written) word, the apostle turned president will use the 'logos' word to confirm the 'rhema' word as being the 'new thing' God is doing and the spoken word is held in more authority than the written word of God. This eventually places more stock in the rhema word and the constant search for a new and fresh rhema word to the point where the logos word is deemed irrelevant for both day to day living and in terms of doctrine. Usually, churches are formed with the apostle at the top where these churches submit to him and pay tithes to him but the apostle submits to no one and pay tithes to no one.
- **teachers turned patriarchs:** Instead of teaching and discipling Christians to be free, independent, think for themselves, and eventually take up spiritual meat per 1 Corinthians 3 and 1 Corinthians 10:3, they teach their disciples to be codependent, only accept teaching from the teachers, and rely on the 'milk' from the teacher. In extreme cases such as the shepherding movements of the 1960's, the teachers went as far as to make their disciples who to marry, when to go on vacation, what color and style of clothes to wear. The discipleship turns from developing mature believers that will eventually disciple others into a eternal father-child relationship where the child has to rely on 'daddy teacher' to meet and pray for his needs instead of being mature enough to claim his needs according to His (God's) riches in glory.

All of the biblical fivefold gifts are to be used to per Ephesians 4:12-13 "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" When the biblical fivefold gifts are used per the purposes described in Ephesians 4:12-13, then we Christians will per Ephesians 4:14-15 "...no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--." The proper discipleship unto maturity in order to be able to eat spiritual meat is needed per Ephesians 4:16 to develop "the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Therefore, when the fivefold ministers fail to be the biblical ministers commanded by the bible and turn into Christianized politicians, psychologists, physicians, presidents, and patriarchs, they in turn contribute to the development of a immature and dysfunctional body that is reliant on the 'milk' (or 'rhema' word) improperly deemed as 'meat' they feed instead of the 'meat' of the word of God.

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Instead of being seeker-sensitive, it is time to become sin-sensitive to the sin in our lives and in the lives of the outreached and deal with it while growing in maturity in Christ. Instead of bashing the 'politically correct', we need to quit being 'spiritually correct' and obey the Scriptures. It's time to let the Bible define the fine line between sin and 'tolerance' (that the 'spiritually correct' deem those who disagree as 'intolerant'), true worship and 'feel-good diversity' (that the 'spiritually correct' deem those who disagree as 'bigoted'), and ministry of needs and 'sensitivity' (that the 'spiritually correct' deem those who disagree as 'insensitive'). We are not 'spiritually-challenged', we are immature, sick, and dysfunctional babes in Christ drinking milk instead of being mature believers drinking meat. We are guilty of seeking the seekers and 'chasing God' through our man-made ideologies when God states in the Great Commission that when you go out everywhere, preach the gospel to all people, God is right in our midst working with us, establishing the Word, and providing supernatural miracles that confirm his Holy Word. Instead of forming a church based on a survey of what people do not like about church like Willow Creek did, it's time we form churches based on the Biblical instruction of true fivefold ministers laying down a firm foundation producing solid Christians instead of baby Christians swayed to-and-fro by every new wind of doctrine. Instead of turning the Bible into a sugar-coated, non-offensive, politically-correct manual re-interpreted to less define the fine line between sin and righteousness, we need to proclaim the gospel as a non-compromising straight and narrow way to Jesus Christ. Instead of portraying Jesus as a pathetic pop-culture prophet preacher with media-messiah aspirations and political ambitions to change legislations and not the hearts of the people, we need to demonstrate the Jesus that is a healer, a deliverer, a manifested of signs-and-wonders, a wisdom teacher, a preacher who addressed our humanity and our sin, and a bringer of repentance of sin inside of us

What we have really done is created an industry called 'parachurch' that was gifted in a specified interest area originally designed to aid and assist churches to fulfill their full calling when the church was weak concerning the parachurch ministry's specified interest area. Eventually, the parachurch became absorbed into mainstream Christianity to where the parachurch which was supposed to be a supplement to the church became the philosophy of 'niches' (demographic or doctrine) that ended up being the foundation of church instead of the full logos word of God. The parachurch now church became successful and marketed their successes to the desperate pastors of small congregations who equated numbers, money, and big buildings as 'anointing' and saw their member leave their churches for the 'bigger church'. The desperate turned their congregations into 'selfish-sensitive; still-seeking' people who valued experience over doctrine and feeling over faith. The real anointing that breaks yokes was replaced by the 'annoying' that placed yokes of burdens to keep the well-oiled machine running creating Christian clones instead of disciples in Christ. Church turned from an army of believers into a corporation ran by CEO's instead of God's Generals. The Great Commission turned into multi level marketing while

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evangelism turned into spiritualized sales where goals, forecasts, and quotas mattered over power, humility, and anointing.

By failing to preach the full gospel to the whole world, we created the shaky foundations based on 'niche' philosophies that we call church. As many 'seekers' continue to come inward, some of the 'seekers' eventually became 'sensitive' to the inner voids not filled and these people who are 'still-seeking' are leaving because the root core of the issues of the heart were never addressed. The experiences of surface-level Christianity failed to reach the heart of the matter. The 'still-seeking' are 'still-searching' for a spirituality that provides real answers to the real questions, deals with the real circumstances, provides relevance to their real life, and heals the real emotions consumed by the presence of their real problems. Their desperation cries out similar to the words of the last verse in the U2 song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" which states:

I believe in the kingdom come
Then all the colors will bleed into one
Bleed into one
Well yes I'm still running
You broke the bonds and you
Loosed the chains
Carried the cross
Of my shame
Of my shame
You know I believed it
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for

Many of the 'still-seeking' have come to the conclusion that there has to be something more to Christianity than going from bestseller book to bestseller book, trend to trend, and conference to conference. The 'still-seeking' have determined that much of the 'new thing' in Christian circles is the same old stuff repackaged and renamed to look 'new and improved'. The church that failed to preach the full gospel to these people is the church that psychoanalyzed Jesus to be no more than their 'buddy'. The church that fulfills the Great Commission is the church that walks in true victory and preaches Jesus as Lord, Savior, Advocate, healer, and Deliverer. No matter what label (Baptist, third wave, Methodist, riverite, Lutheran, postmodern, independent, fundamentalist, home church, emergent, Charismatic, seeker-sensitive, etc.) we deem ourselves as, if we fail to properly fulfill the Great Commission, we end up producing unstable, self-centered, and ineffective Christians.

We are not supposed to be 'Christian consumers' who are looking to be marketed. We are called to be worshippers along with being hearers and doers of the Word. The church is not about you, the pastor, the building, or the worship leader. The church is about the assembling of a mature body of Christ destined to accomplish God's call and not some personal agendas made 'thus saith the

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Lord'. That is what is wrong with the 'seeker-sensitive', 'emergent', and 'PoMo' churches. They cater to and appease the flesh as experiences take value over the Word as they evangelize likeminded and like-cultured individuals with a 'selected niche doctrine' that cuts out what they do not want to hear and really need to hear. Why do many of these churches never mention the real place called 'hell'? Why do many of these churches shun the elderly seasoned Christians who possess spiritual wisdom? Why do many of these churches look like a SRO theater and play god-neutered worship music that sounds as distorted as their theology? If we are not careful, the mission field that we are supposed to reach outside the walls of the church will eventually have to have it's horizons expanded to include the scattered remains of 'Jekyll and Hyde' Christianity such as the PoMo, emergent, and third day churches that went berserk and created 'spiritually schizophrenic', enraged, and nebulous doctrines that catered to the dysfunctional and bred more dysfunctional Christians.

In summary, there is only one effective way to reach the un-reached. That way is to obey the Great Commission that tells us to go everywhere and preach the full gospel to everybody. The evidence of the shallowness in biblical foundation is evident all around us. The church that once influenced society has now become the institution that has allowed society to influence their practices, mandate, and agenda. The church that was supposed to be about Christ and his unselfish love turned into a selfish expression of 'bless me, cater me, pamper me and spoil me'. We appear to be heading from an evangelical church that preached to the choir to a postmodern church that is preaching only to the likeminded congregation and not the outside world. Why do 'niche demographic' churches that label themselves as 'family worship centers' have the most extracurricular activities that cause people to be away from the 'families' they idolize and can't figure out why divorce runs rampant in their congregations? Why do 'niche doctrine' churches feel like they have to have a service most every evening called 'renewal' just to feel empowered and can't figure out why their followers eventually burn out and feel powerless? We need to show Great Commission Christianity to all people in all nations, not the chaotic, confused, calliope, and circus mentalities that the past forty years of "Californianity" (Jesus Freaks, TBN, third day, PoMo, emergent, etc.) had done to appease our selfish desires, niche demographics, and niche doctrines. It is time that we quit being the acquaintances of apathy and become the Great Commission obeying Christian church preaching the full gospel to the whole world.